



SENTINEL

NEWSLETTER OF THE QUIET PROFESSIONALS

SPECIAL FORCES ASSOCIATION CHAPTER 78

The LTC Frank J. Dallas Chapter

VOLUME 14, ISSUE 9 • SEPTEMBER 2023



Burying the Dead with Dishonor Part II



**SOAR XLVII—
Registration
is Now Open!**

TERP in an APP

**Michael D. Echanis
Honored by Chuck Norris**



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SENTINEL

VOLUME 14, ISSUE 9 • SEPTEMBER 2023

From the Editor



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: On [POW/MIA Recognition Day](#) we stand to honor the nation's Prisoners of War and Missing in Action troops. POW/MIA Recognition Day is commemorated on the third Friday of every September, which falls on September 15 this year. In the cover photo, a member of the U.S. Army Special Operations Command Black Daggers participates in the National POW/MIA Recognition Day ceremony at the Pentagon in 2019. (Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class James K. Lee/Department of Defense)



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Funding for the SFA Chapter 78 Sentinel is provided by

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The *Sentinel* is published monthly by Special Forces Association Chapter 78, Southern California — *art direction and design by Debra Holm, Dinwiddie Holm Graphics*. The views, opinions and articles printed in this issue do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Army or the United States Special Operations Command, the Special Forces Association, or Special Forces Association Chapter 78. Please address any comments to the editor at sfachapter78@gmail.com.



How Miller
Sentinel Editor

Our cover shot is to highlight that September 15 is National POW/MIA Recognition Day. There are 1578 MIAs from the Vietnam War in Southeast Asia still to be returned.

Chapter member Jim Cragg has put together a collection of resources available to SF past and present, to help us all take advantage of V.A. benefits.

SOAR XLVII Las Vegas will be in October again this year, in Las Vegas. Registration is now open to members, Special Operators, and guests.

Chapter member and author Jim Morris has seen a lot of changes in the tools available to Green Berets in the field since his days serving with Project Delta and elsewhere. In "Terp in an App," he describes an unbelievable tool that is making its way to becoming available to downrange operators. It is creating a lot of anticipation about how well this Joint Acquisitions Task Force product from SOCOM could immediately make the whole team more effective.

Marc Yablonka shares two book reviews that were run in the *Hmong Daily News* earlier this year. *Nightmare in Laos* and *Standing Ground* describe the horrors Kay Danes and her husband Kerry endured for a year in 2000–2001 Laos. Only publicity and the Australian Government enabled their release.

Since Greg Walker has been contributing to the *Sentinel*, I kept seeing references to his 1994 work, *At the Hurricane's Eye*. I decided it was time for me to purchase and read it, figuring it would tie some elements of SF history together. Well, it certainly did, and I found myself enjoying the whole book and writing a review. A recurring theme was Stormin' Norman Schwartzkopf's finally finding a comfort zone in how to use SF know-how and dedication to help accomplish his overall mission, a microcosm of SF's struggle for "Regular Army" acceptance.

In "Burying the Dead with Dishonor Part 2," Greg Walker shares with us some of the investigative reporting that he still does. The need for secrecy to accomplish the mission in El Salvador caused many incidents to be covered up, many times to the detriment of the families involved. [You can read Part 1 in the July Sentinel.](#)

Then Greg tells us how SF's Mike Echanis joined Chuck Norris's school and guided them into his own personal combat methods, which are the basis of what is still taught today. The school has posthumously awarded Mike a 5th-degree black belt.

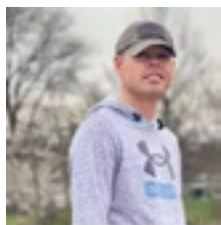
And please enjoy our July Chapter 78 Meeting Pics. ❖

How Miller
Sentinel Editor

From the President | September 2023



Gregory Horton
President SFA Ch. 78



Nusrat Ahmad Yar

I would like to start my column this month to take a moment in remembrance of Nasrat Ahmad Yar, 31. Yar was a former US Army interpreter and EOD specialist, who was assisted in fleeing Afghanistan by US Veteran Groups. He immigrated with his family from Afghanistan to the United States in 2021. On Monday, July 3, he was shot and killed while driving for Lyft in Washington, D.C. Ahmad Yar served alongside the US Army Special Forces in Afghanistan for a decade before moving to America following the Taliban takeover. He lived with his family in Virginia and was working at the ride-share company for extra money. He also worked as a tow-truck driver. Just another citizen in the quest for the “American Dream” cut down in his prime.

Our Chapter has been working on plans to develop a sponsored shooting team to compete in local and regional meets. One of the ideas is to sponsor a Special Forces Team (Active or Retired) to compete in the Tactical Games Nevada Regional 2023. This is a fitness and shooting event (see <https://www.thetacticalgames.com/event/the-tactical-games-nv-regional-2023/> for further information) and will be held on September 2-3, 2023. The Prairie Fire Organization (<https://www.prairiefire.com>) will be putting on the event at their range complex located at 1 Front Sight Rd., Pahrump, NV 89061. Our Vice President, James McLanahan, will be putting the team together so if you are interested, please contact myself (sgtpeleon@gmail.com) or James McLanahan (james@primalrisk.com).

The Chapter is also working on setting up a Dining In with C Co, 19th SFGA to be held in September. This should be an excellent event with some great speakers, raffles, and dancing to a great DJ.

During a great give and take discussion regarding information about VA services, several points of interest were brought up. We immediately realized that it would be very beneficial to have a guest speaker come in and give us more extensive information on the ins and outs of accessing the VA services. We are working on this and should have a speaker for our next meeting.



Cadet Ronald Taylor receiving a SFA Chapter 78 challenge coin from Chapter President Greg Horton at the July 15 Chapter meeting.

And finally, we had Cadet Ronald Taylor, USMA, who briefed the members on his experiences as an All-Source Intelligence Analyst in Afghanistan at Bagram, AFB, with the Maryland National Guard and his current status as a West Point Cadet. We enjoyed his description of Academy life and wish him well on his pursuit of excellence at the Academy.

Greg Horton SGM (Ret)
President
SFA Chapter 78

Our next Chapter meeting Saturday, September 16, 2023

LOCATION: The Pub at Fiddlers Green
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)

SFA Chapter Meeting Schedule

SFA Chapter 78 meetings are held on the 3rd Saturday of the month at the Joint Forces Training Base in Los Alamitos, California.

**Mark your calendar for the following scheduled dates for 2023:
September 16 • October 21 • November 18 • December 9**

Green Beret Resource List: Assistance with VA Services

By Jim Cragg

Editor's note: Chapter 78 member Jim Cragg, who also heads his American Legion Post, has provided us with a list of resources available to Green Berets, both active and veteran.



For guys still on active duty, they go to the Care Coalition to get their packets handled before ETS:

<https://www.socom.mil/care-coalition>



The Green Beret Foundation is a great help:

<https://greenberetfoundation.org/va-benefits-and-claims-program/>



The VA provides their own VSO program;

<https://benefits.va.gov/benefits/>



I didn't list the Veteran Service Officers provided by the clubs like American Legion, AMVETS, DAV and VFW, but they have served me well at the Legion personally.

I think it's really important that guys know there are services to up their disability rating, and that once they get permanent P&T, that they still need to go to the VA to show they are having ongoing treatment or they can be reviewed and reduced. ❖



SOAR XLVII REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN!

October 16–17, 2023

The Orleans Hotel & Casino

4500 West Tropicana Avenue • Las Vegas, NV 89103

SOAR, the SOA's reunion, is held in conjunction with the Annual Meeting, fostering an environment for camaraderie and fellowship to strengthen those friendships forged in battle and the opportunity to make new ones. Seminars, meetings and interactive workshops are offered keeping the membership up to date on programs, services, current events and other topics important to the membership. The 4-day event culminates with the annual banquet celebrating our members and honoring our fallen.

**Reserve your room online at
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or call 800 675-3267**

Use the following Group Code when making your room reservation:
ASP3C10 (Alpha-Sierra-Papa-Three-Charlie-One-Zero)

Room rates are guaranteed through 11 Sept 2023
Sun through Thurs – \$49 + \$15.99 resort fee + tax per day
Fri and Sat – \$99 + \$15.99 resort fee + tax per day

Register for SOAR at:

<https://form.jotform.com/SpecialOperationsAssociation/2023-soar-registration>

**For the schedule of events, updates,
and other information:**

<https://specialoperations.org/soa/soar-xlvii/>

TERP IN AN APP

By Jim Morris

One of the main things that makes Special Forces special is language capability. The ideal is for every SF soldier to be capable in one language and able to limp along in a couple of others. This ability has contributed greatly to making SF the magnificent defense policy tool that it is.

But not every SF troop has this capability. It takes a while to develop, and it is not uncommon for a Green Beret to be deployed before he acquires it. Or to be sent where they speak another language, or to know the dominant language in an area, but be training minorities or tribal people who speak another language entirely.

So, more often than not, Special Forces teams are dependent on interpreters, some good, some not so good. Good or not they all have an agenda, which may or may not correspond with the team's. Sometimes their agenda corresponds with that of the enemy.

Fear not: USSOCOM is developing a “Terp in an app” for the operator's beefed up cell phone. It's not a Star Trek universal translator, but it can do things that device cannot. According to Jim Smith, acquisitions executive for USSOCOM's Joint Acquisition Task Force the device can not only do Voice to Voice (VTV) translation but Visual Environment Translation (VET). The device is being developed in cooperation with the Stanford Research Institute.

According to COL Jarrett Mathews, acquisitions director for JATF, an operator will be able to talk to his counterpart in English, and an audible translation will come out of his phone. The counterpart replies in his language and the operator gets an audible English translation.

It can do this with military terms, slang, and accents. It can also tell the operator what part of the country the accent comes from, which might be a good way to catch infiltrators.

The first few prototypes have been deployed with 10th SFGA, which has responsibility for the Ukrainian Theater. A typical review is, “This device is off the f-----g chain good.” The Task Force is fielding over two dozen upgraded prototypes to all Theater Special Ops Commands or TSOC's, this Fall.

By the time it's fully adopted the operator will be able to use it to read signs and graffiti.

The beauty part is that after using the app for two or three months the operator will have acquired enough of the language that much of the time he will not have to use it.

Programs already exist in major languages and more exotic ones are in development.

It's expected that this gadget will be team equipment in a couple of years. ❖



High Level Translation
(DLPT 3/3)

A SEAL speaks to a woman using the translation device. (USSOCOM)

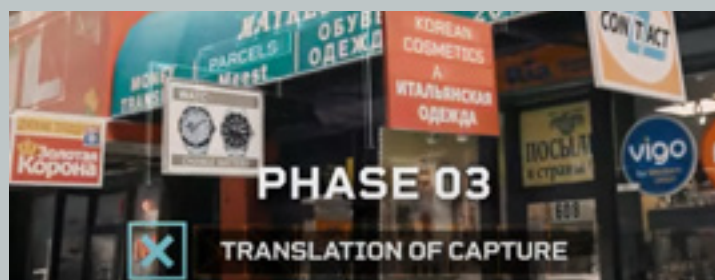
The JATF development plan illustrates the capabilities provided by the most recent updates to its handheld language translation devices.



The portable voice to voice translation device, currently a phone or laptop, provides real-time translation fully disconnected—zero-cloud. (USSOCOM)



The device will identify and capture text, identifying signage, including wrapped text and graffiti. (USSOCOM)



The device will translate captures. (USSOCOM)



The translation will be superimposed onto the captured areas. (USSOCOM)

Book Reviews

Nightmare in Laos: The True Story of a Woman Imprisoned in a Communist Gulag and *Standing Ground: An Imprisoned Couple's Struggle for Justice Against a Communist Regime* by Kay Danes

By Marc Yablonka

Originally published in the Hmong Daily News on July 6, 2023
(<https://hmongdailynews.com/nightmare-in-laos-relived-p552-120.htm>)

NIGHTMARE IN LAOS RELIVED

I have long known that Laos, after the secret war ended in 1975, became one of the most corrupt and dangerous countries in the world. I got a sense of that danger when, in 1990, I reported from Vientiane on the state of the Catholic Church in Laos for the National Catholic Register.

A few years later, a “highly-placed” American friend, whom I coincidentally met in the Laotian capital when he was laying plans for a joint venture between himself, his investors, and the Lao government for Vientiane’s first three-star hotel since the end of the Vietnam War, was thrown out of the country at the point of a gun, his entire financial investment absconded with by the Pathet Lao government.

I thought Laos could never get more perilous for a westerner than that...until I read globetrotting humanitarian Australian Professor Kay Danes’ book *Nightmare in Laos: The True Story of a Woman Imprisoned in a Communist Gulag* (Maverick House Publishers, Ireland, pp. 303, \$5.29 from Amazon).

Nightmare in Laos, published in 2006, and its revised edition, *Standing Ground* (New Holland Publishing Australia, Ltd, 2009, Kindle \$9.99) describe in the most vivid and horrific detail possible how Kay and her husband Kerry, a soldier with Australia’s special forces unit, SAS (Special Air Service), then managing the Laos office of the British security firm Securicor, which protected Australian businesses in the country, were thrown into Vientiane’s infamous Phonthong Prison. They languished there for an entire year, between 2000 and 2001, on completely trumped-up charges, revolving around a sapphire mining company they provided security for.

“My days and nights were filled with constant fear because I was living in an uncertain dream,” wrote Kay.” But there were prisoners who had never put their face to the sun as I had, or felt the green leaves of the trees brush against their skin.”

The prison structure itself resembled hell on earth.

“Two prison blocks stood side by side, separated by two large concrete sewage tanks,” Kay wrote. “All the human waste went down the squat style toilet into the large concrete tanks, but the pipes were cracked, so the waste flooded underneath the cells.”

The torture, repeated beatings in attempts to gain confessions from both Kay and Kerry for a crime they did not commit (absconding with sapphires and several thousand dollars) continued for most of the year they were locked up in Phonthong. And they were not the only ones to have suffered thus.

“Our captors locked some prisoners away in darkness for indefinite periods. Time, it seemed, had no relevance in these small cells (0.5 m X 1 metres) they called the ‘Dark Room.’”

“Every prison in Laos had at least one dark room, and those that went there barely survived. Or if they did, they were never the same again. The dark room was a place where wills were broken,” she wrote.

It was not only in the dark room where torture occurred. In *Nightmare in Laos*, Kay describes her husband Kerry’s horrific interrogations:

“The police put a plastic bag over his head and almost suffocated him. Another time, they stood on the wooden blocks secured around his ankles and nearly broke them both. When he refused to sign his false statements [always in Lao, which he could not read], they beat him. They pushed him to his knees and wrenched his arms up behind him,” she wrote.

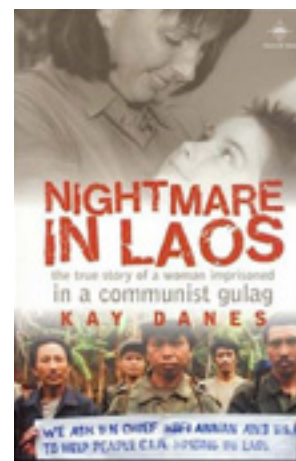
Kerry never broke, for “it was all about control,” which he had learned in his special forces training, and which he had advised Kay.

In a very twisted way, Kay feels grateful to the prison for one thing.

“I learned so much in Phonthong Prison that I would never have learnt on the outside. The secret genocide of the Hmong was something no one ever mentioned. In fact, most Laotians we had worked with had never so much as mentioned the word ‘Hmong,’” she revealed in *Nightmare in Laos*.

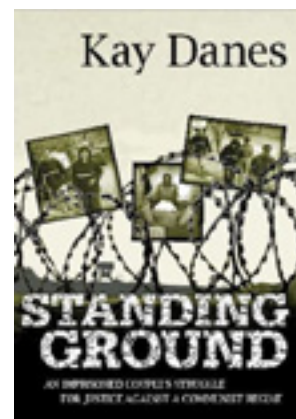
“I sat with political prisoners who, allegedly, did not exist, and yet they lived and breathed the same foul air as I did. I learned from them things I never knew before,” she wrote about her Hmong cellmates.

Kay further enlightened about her compassion for the Hmong.



[*Nightmare in Laos: The True Story of a Woman Imprisoned in a Communist Gulag*](#)

By Kay Danes
Maverick House Publishers
(January 1, 2006)
303 pages



[*Standing Ground: An Imprisoned Couple's Struggle for Justice Against a Communist Regime*](#)

By Kay Danes
New Holland Publishers
(March 1, 2009)
400 pages

“Like many Hmong who had left Laos, there was no Embassy to support them if they got into a problem. They were a people without a country, displaced. How terrible to imagine life like that. To be stuck in a country governed by a regime that didn’t care if you lived or died.”

After months of communist physical and mental abuse, Kay and Kerry were allowed periodic consular visits from the Australian Embassy, which tried every possible desperate measure to free them while their captors continued to play a game that could only be described as extremely cruel.

Phone calls to their children back home followed. Phone calls that tore at everyone’s heartstrings. Everyone, that is, except their sadistic captors’, of course.

Kay described their first call thusly:

“My world spun as I heard our eldest daughter’s voice for the first time in months...I listened to the heartbreak in my children’s voices as they took turns to tell me how they were. I listened and I cried because they cried...the tears like torrents ran down my cheeks,” she wrote.

There was so much more that Kay wanted to tell them, but with her and Kerry’s captors’ mere feet away; she dared not.

“I wanted to tell my family everything I’d seen and endured. I wanted them to know that they locked us in cages, mocking us through the bars.”

She wanted to tell them about “the endless suffering that filled my days. I wanted to tell them that the blue sky shone above me when they let me outside my cell, but the birds that flew overhead only reminded me of how much I longed to be free.”

After months of languishing in prison, in June 2001, Kay and Kerry finally got the Lao version of their “day in court.” However, it hardly resembled that which is afforded prisoners in democratic countries worldwide.

They were sentenced to four years in prison for embezzlement of state assets, and three additional years for destruction of evidence, and also charged with tax evasion. That in spite of a 317-page book that had been prepared by their defense. A book that was never even perused by the three judges who presided over their trial. In addition, Kay was ordered to pay a US\$66,847 fine for the supposed “tax evasion.”

After worldwide press coverage of their capture and kangaroo court trial, months of wrangling between the Australian and Lao governments, complete with veiled threats on the part of Australian diplomats that the good relationship the two nations enjoyed might be damaged, in November of 2001, Kay and Kerry Danes left Laos for their Australian homeland.

Though the Danes’ ordeal ended 22 years ago, it’s quite safe to say that it stays with them to this day. Readers will be moved to suffer along with them in both of Kay’s books on the subject.

Post Script: In a recent LinkedIn message I received from Kay, she informed me of something I never knew until reading *Nightmare in Laos*. That she and Kerry knew my “well-placed” American friend, too! But chose only to identify him by his first name.

Why? Because he endeavored to assemble a group of ex-CIA agents to rescue them from Phonthong Prison. Unfortunately, our mutual friend passed away before the mission could ever be carried out. ❖

At the Hurricane’s Eye by Greg Walker

By How Miller



[At the Hurricane’s Eye](#)

By Greg Walker
Ballantine Books
(1994)
288 pages

Greg Walker, author of “Burying the Dead with Dishonor,” parts 1 and 2, has informed us of doings in El Salvador and other locations. He also wrote a very interesting and informative book on the evolution of Special Operation Forces from WWII through the first Gulf War in 1991. Briefly, it is titled *In the At the Hurricane’s Eye*. He puts a heavy emphasis on explaining the often-fraught relationship SOF has had with the “Regular Army” through that period and still must navigate. He is also very balanced in how he relates

SEALS, Rangers, SOAR (160th), and others to SF, pointing out each outfit’s strengths and how they have been used in the past, both correctly and incorrectly.

He pulls no punches in describing the struggles between the services for their “piece of the pie” and how that has contributed to some major snafus, told in fascinating detail, giving very constructive “lessons learned.”

It is interesting to note that Greg takes no credit in the book for the significant role he played in the “Ground Truth” operation that Schwarzkopf found so valuable in his execution of the war. He did write a story for the *Sentinel* about that, though. (<https://www.specialforces78.com/ground-truth-for-commanders-the-special-operations-forces-integration-detachment/>)

An interesting sub-plot is the turnaround in Stormin’ Norman’s attitude toward SOF, and there’s another surprise at the end of the book, where Greg lists numerous articles that he has authored under pen names. Of course, he continues to be a credentialed journalist for *Military Veterans in Journalism* and a regular contributor to the *Sentinel*.

This book is very much worth the read, and it helped me appreciate the struggle to come up with the joint special operations command and cooperation we appear to have today. A lot has changed since he wrote this in 1994. His theme of the groping struggle for the regular services to be comfortable with using SOF to accomplish tasks that others can’t is what works best for all concerned. ❖

Burying the Dead with Dishonor

Part II

By Greg Walker (ret)
USA Special Forces

Editors Note: *If you have not yet read Part One of Greg's story, you will find it in the [July Sentinel](#) on our website [SpecialForces78.com](#).*

*The White House
August 5, 1987*

Dear Sergeant Hodge:

Nancy and I are thankful that you are in good hands and on the mend. All of us—your family, friends, colleagues in uniform, and Americans everywhere—are praying for your speedy recovery.

When you went to El Salvador to take on this difficult and dangerous assignment, you carried with you the hopes of your fellow citizens. You carried as well the aspirations of the people of Central America for a future of peace and freedom. As Commander in Chief, I want you to know how proud I am of the fidelity and courage with which you did your job.

You must feel especially keenly the deaths of the other [service] members...we are mindful of their sacrifice, and we recognize the grief that is yours at their loss. We will never forget them, and we thank God that we have men like them and like you whose willingness to serve makes all of our liberties possible.

May God bless you and grant you health and strength in the days ahead.

*Sincerely,
Ronald Reagan*



SSG (ret) Timothy Hodge

SSG (ret) Timothy Hodge
United States Army Special Forces
July 21, 2023

“With great respect—reading through this, memories and recollections, really brings home the gravity of the situation I was in. For several years, I never knew anything about the chopper going down and the loss of lives that were in my behalf. When I was told about the chopper going down and everybody dying, I was told the reason for the delay in my knowledge was so that I would not take on the burden of knowledge that they sacrificed their lives for mine. I don’t know if it was a fair trade, but I have had 36 years now—36 years and six days. I don’t know what to think.

“Please pass my heartfelt gratitude on to everyone who has written narratives of memories and descriptions. People asked me if I ever went and saw any of my old friends from Group... No, they need to know that they are invincible. We all knew we could die. No one, absolutely no one told me I might live.”

That others may live

The mission of the U.S. Helicopter Detachment in El Salvador during the war was to provide support to the U.S. Military Group (MilGrp) and U.S. Embassy. Priorities of flights were determined by the U.S. Military Group Operations staff. Missions included day and night extractions of U.S. military advisers from various remote or urban locations and MEDEVAC assistance to U.S. personnel. Pilots were required to be mountain qualified, night vision goggle certified and up-to-date, and deck (naval vessel) qualified.

On July 15, 1987, the Helicopter Detachment standby crew, pilot in command CW2 John D. Raybon, copilot 1LT Gregory Paredes, and crew chief SP4 Douglas Adams, received notification for a MEDEVAC mission from MilGrp Operations. The crew was directed to fly to the Salvadoran training base (CEMFA) at La Union to transport SSG Timothy Hodge, a Special Forces combat adviser, who had been wounded that evening. Chief Raybon was to fly first to the landing zone at the 1st Brigade Headquarters in San Salvador. There he was to pick up two Special Forces medics and two senior U.S. military officers and then to proceed to CEMFA, roughly 75 nautical miles to the east. After departing the Salvadoran air base at Illopango, the crew were given a mission change. They were now to proceed to San Miguel as a Salvadoran MEDEVAC helo and crew were enroute to CEMFA, just 16 minutes from the military hospital at San Miguel. Once there, Chief Raybon was to stand by for further instructions.

Raybon's helo departed Illopango under night vision goggles at 2235 Hours, arriving at the Brigade helipad at 2245H. Picking up the four passengers, Raybon lifted off within minutes and headed toward CEMFA. Within a minute's time, Chief Raybon was redirected to San Miguel. Eight minutes later, at 2255H, MilGrp Operations was advised by Mr. Raybon that they were encountering thunderstorms and were returning to Illopango. At 2256H, Detachment Operations attempted contact with the UH-1H but received no response. Repeated attempts to contact Mr. Raybon failed and the Detachment OIC began calling the tower at Illopango. Also called were U.S. personnel at San Miguel and CEMFA, as well as other locations along the flight path. All attempts to locate the aircraft failed. Detachment Operations then launched additional U.S. helicopter support from Illopango in an effort to locate the missing aircraft.

On July 16, 1987, at 0255H, Detachment Operations was informed that local civilians living near Lake Illopango had discovered the aircraft, confirming it had indeed crashed. At 0305, due to ongoing combat operations elsewhere in the country and an earlier firefight between guerrillas and base security at Illopango, a UH-1 began transporting additional U.S. military advisers, security personnel, and medical personnel to the accident site. One survivor was located and transported down a steep incline to a MEDEVAC aircraft. He was taken to the military hospital in San Salvador and arrived at 0615H. The other U.S. personnel onboard were determined to be deceased and were lifted out of the crash site by helicopter. They would soon afterward be transported to Gorgas Army Hospital's morgue in the Republic of Panama for positive identification and autopsy.

Their deaths would mark the highest number of U.S. military/para-military casualties as a direct result of the war in El Salvador since U.S. military operations began in that country in 1981. All total, in 1987,

eight Americans were killed in either direct combat with FMLN guerrilla forces or in aviation crashes flown in support of either extraction or MEDEVAC missions.

Back in the United States, Congress wanted to know what was truly happening in El Salvador.

CEMFA – A modern day Fort Apache

Established in 1984, the military training center at La Union, CEMFA, was a magnet for guerrilla forces in the area. Two Special Forces operational detachments, ODAs 2 and 13, were deployed to La Union from the 3/7th Special Forces Group then stationed in Panama. Almost immediately CEMFA began seeing surveillance activities mounted by the guerrillas, and the first troops in contact (TIC) action between U.S. advisers and their Salvadoran troops resulted in valor awards being authorized (in 1997) for SFC Hubert Jackson and SSG Robert Coughman, both from ODA 13.

In 1985, the base was overrun in a nighttime attack by an estimated force of 300 guerrillas. Over 40 Salvadoran soldiers were killed during the battle. The Special Forces team then stationed at CEMFA and commanded by Captain Danny Eagan managed to rally the troops under their command and repulse the attackers. In 1997, all those "Green Berets" involved in the desperate fight that night were awarded Bronze Stars with Valor devices for their actions under fire.

In the aftermath of their nearly successful attack the FMLN released a statement claiming the primary objective of the assault was to capture or kill the U.S. combat advisers at CEMFA. From that point on guerrilla actions focused on the training base and its surrounding ranges, some upwards of 5 kilometers from the base itself, required the Americans to be on constant alert as well as fully armed.

"I arrived at CEMFA July 5 or 6 July 1987, I believe," recalls Tim Hodge today. "One of the first things we did was familiarize ourselves with the base and the perimeter. I remember making a recommendation for a limiting framework to be set up for the .50 caliber machine guns on the towers. There was great concern of a minimum of 10% of the Salvadorans on the base being insurgents or sleepers. I remember being given the number of 3500 soldiers and personnel on the base at any one given time. It would've been too easy for them to sweep across the inside of the compound with the 50 caliber machine guns positioned as they originally were. The Salvadoran soldiers were armed at all times.

"We alternated nights sleeping and pulling guard duty between the team house and a strong point close by. Occasionally there was the sound of gunfire, and rocket-propelled grenades, or RPG 7s, directed into the base. I never went anywhere unarmed. I would be armed with my 1911-A1 side arm and my CAR-15. At night, during my shift for guard duty at the team house or at the strong point, I would carry a 12 gauge shotgun with 100 rounds in a dump pouch, my CAR-15 with 6, 30-round magazines in ammo pouches, two 180-round bandoliers in a butt pack, and 3 canteen covers. Two of these were filled with water and the third contained five grenades. Hanging on the wall next to my bed was my M-79 grenade launcher with 6 flares in a carrying bag. We anticipated an attack, as we were advised by our Intel people could occur at any time."

Indeed, per the detachment's team sergeant, a Vietnam veteran, individual weapons, in specific the CAR-15s, were always within arm's reach. They were kept ready with a live magazine inserted, no round in the chamber, safety off.

SSG Tim Hodge **Special Forces Communications Sergeant**

"On July 15, 1987, I was in the team house, in the medics' room. The medics room and the rest of the team house was in a masonry structure with steel doors. All of this was inside a reconfigured cotton warehouse on CEMFA. It was late in the evening; I have no memory of the clock time. I was in the room with my back to the refrigerator. I was standing and facing the opposite wall where the air conditioner was.

"I remember the sound of the report of a rifle. I remember pain. I remember thinking, 'Where did that come from, and who shot me?' There are long periods of time that are blank. I remember SSG Morgan Gandy, one of the two medics, giving me mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. I remember how sweet the air tasted. I remember a brief period of time looking at the roof of a helicopter. I can remember receiving mouth-to-mouth resuscitation in flight.. I was in and out of consciousness during the flight and only have a vague recollection of the hospital, the nursing staff dressed in white.

"These are the memories that I have until I arrived at a hospital in the United States. I was later told later that I was at Lackland Air Force Base in the ICU. I was there for one year and then transferred to the spinal cord injury ward at a VA hospital in Ohio."

SSG Morgan Gandy **Special Forces Medic – July 15, 1987**

"At roughly 2200H, myself and another medic, along with SSG Hodge, were off duty. We were rough housing for about three minutes in our quarters, stopping to help Tim find his watch. He'd taken it off earlier.

"I was standing by my wall locker. SSG Hodge was near our refrigerator and near the center of the room. The other medic on the team came over from his side of the room. He took my CAR-15 off its rest on the wall, chambered a round, and fired in what I considered a swift, violent motion. The bullet struck Tim in the left side of his neck. He fell to the floor. The other medic and I immediately began combat life-saving measures and were able to stabilize Tim. A MEDEVAC was requested to come from San Miguel.

"We had an M-5 medical aid bag positioned on top of the fridge in case of emergency. There was a guard duty cot close by, and my CAR was hanging above it on the wall by its sling, full mag inserted, no round in the chamber. It was SOP to pull a rotating guard from 2200-0600 due to the potential for attack. I remember that SSG Hodge walked into the room with a big smile on his face. Timothy took about one step towards me when our other medic entered the common area. He grabbed my CAR-15 off the wall, jacked the charging handle to the rear, grasped the pistol grip, and fired one round from the hip. The blast came from behind me on my right, directed toward Timothy.

"I remember thinking it was a reckless thing to do... It was not like him fooling around with weapons. I looked at SSG Hodge, who stepped forward then backward, still smiling, then collapsed to the floor. I

saw three holes in the thin wall behind him, and it registered in my mind they could have been bullet fragments, bone or both. Master Sergeant JD Pruitt came in and took my weapon from the cot where it had been dropped. I grabbed the M-5 bag and went to work. The other medic immediately came to assist.

"A single bullet had passed through the base of Tim's neck. It cut the jugular vein and compromised the jugular artery. I knew that his cervical spine had been compromised and that quite possibly bone fragments of the spinous process of C-4 or C-5 had exited the wound along with the bullet. Tim began to develop a massive hematoma from blood trapped beneath the skin, even though we were applying heavy manual pressure to his lateral neck. I wanted to clamp off the vein with hemostats, but the other medic disagreed and was worried that we might cause further damage to Hodge's cervical spine. He was correct. We started large bore IVs.

"We put Tim into a litter and got him as warm and secure as we could. MSG Pruitt came in and told us the MEDEVAC was delayed due to heavy fog. He asked me, 'How long we keep Tim alive?' Tim had not said a word yet, but at that moment he looked in my eyes and barely whispered the word 'AIR'... I started rescue breathing for him immediately. The other medic and I took turns breathing for Timothy and treating his wound and symptoms the best that we could.

"We were informed early in the morning the original U.S. MEDEVAC had crashed into a mountain, killing everyone on board except for one soldier. The helicopter that took SSG Hodge to the military hospital in San Miguel, El Salvador, arrived there safely."



SSG Morgan Gandy

Colonel (ret) Kevin Higgins Special Forces OPATT – San Miguel, July 2023

“The MilGrp built a nice asphalt heliport on the 3rd Brigade cuartel (1985). It included berms for eight helos. Alas, the Salvadorans only used the heliport to conduct morning PT. The Salvadoran pilots preferred to squeeze the three UH1Hs inside the 3rd Brigade quadrangle, where formations were held. One of the three helos would land 25 meters (or less) from my room. This created havoc, dust and FOD blowing everywhere. We duct-taped every crevice in our window frames to keep the dust and tiny pebbles out, but to no avail.

“The Salvadoran helos liked daylight flying. It was all logistics runs and command visits during the day. But they flew at night. They flew medevacs and support to units in contact. No admin flights. So, at 0200 hrs, if the helos cranked up, I jumped out of bed and got my uniform on. That meant something was happening.

“This happened often. Almost every night.

“When Hodge was injured, the Salvos launched that helo before I could ask. This was their chance to show their gratitude to the USA. The ‘We don’t fly at night’ comment can only have been misconstrued from ‘We don’t fly admin missions at night—only fire support and medevac.’

“I was at the Krobach crash site that night in 1987. The UH1H was flying nap of the earth, and the skid caught the treetop. It was a 20-foot tree, standing all alone out in the cow pasture. It was also in Lolotique, not far from where Picket would meet his fate in 1991.

“If [Raybon] had to do it over, he could have lifted off from 1st Brigade and head directly south to Comalapa and the Pacific, following the littoral Hwy to San Miguel. But in July, even that route could have been socked in. Plus, that would have added 30 minutes time of flight. Raybon probably imagined that every minute counted, not knowing that Hodge was already being treated in the best trauma operating room in Central America.

“By 1986, MILGP El Salvador had a superb Motorola repeater network set up across El Salvador. The 21 major volcanoes made for good high ground to set up the repeater sites. Our repeaters were co-located with ESAF sites.

“Salvador is a small country, so I would estimate that the advisor’s hand-held Motorola had at least 80% coverage of national territory. However, during the critical hours when MILGP was looking for the Raybon UH-1H, I mainly stayed on the landline in the hospital with MILGP. That was a clear and dedicated connection.

“Despite these decent lines of communication, the reports indicate some lag time (but not much) in trying to establish ground truth.

“I remember hearing an inbound helo coming into San Miguel that night, which lifted our spirits, but only momentarily, because the ESAF officer quickly said, ‘That’s ours.’

“I worked in Honduras (2013–18) then El Salvador (2018–21). They love WhatsApp. In an incident such as this, they would have quickly established a WhatsApp group that would have kept everyone apprised.

“But for 1987, that Motorola was an excellent communication network for the MILGP.”



The helipad at San Miguel. Three Salvadoran UH-1H helicopters were stationed here 24-7 to fly MEDEVAC and combat extractions such as the one sent to CEMFA for SSG Hodge on July 15, 1987.

July 15–18, 1987 — Interviews, Ilopango Air Base /El Salvador Military Hospital, San Salvador

LTC Don Elder MilGrp Operations Officer

“The mission was generated by me. It was initially a mission to transport medics and the U.S. adviser to the El Salvador Military Hospital to the National Training Center [CEMFA] south of La Union. Initially, it was to evacuate a U.S. adviser that had been shot in the neck. The shooting was an accident. Normally, El Salvadoran Air Force (ESAF) helicopters do that, but they only had some 14 UH-1Hs flying out of about 43. They have been involved in a big operation that has taken a toll on them.

“When the aircraft became overdue, we really began an earnest attempt to find them. San Miguel had earlier indicated our UH-1H had arrived, but it turned out to be a Salvadoran UH-1H. We contacted everyone along their route of flight. At 0244, I got a call from the El Salvador military that a local national had advised them that an aircraft had crashed and gave them the approximate location. I contacted Mr. Salazar and had him meet Colonel Ellerson [MilGrp Commander] at HELO Operations...they launched in a UH-1 toward the reported crash site near the northeast corner of Ilopango Lake.

“They located the site near the top of a high ridgeline. They managed to find a place to set down. There was a survivor, but due to the terrain and location, a hoist was needed. A Salvadoran UH-1 with a hoist was requested, but it had mechanical problems. Another one was dispatched, but it also was not operating [the hoist]. We got Special Forces people there, and the Salvadoran military provided security. They rigged ropes and a sling, lowered the survivor down the ravine, and transported him to our UH-1...the others were obviously dead. Colonel Ellerson wanted to get the bodies out as soon as possible along with our U.S. security people for safety reasons. We have local troops at the site now but I won’t guarantee it is secure. There is really no way to secure it. We tried not to disturb the area any more than was necessary to get the survivor and the bodies out.”

CW3 William Hasenauer, Pilot Pilot in Command Recovery Helo

"MilGrp was concerned about the gunshot victim. We were concerned about our lost contact with our aircraft. We tried to make them understand about the lost contact, but I guess they initially had problems of their own. I talked with the duty officer. We decided to launch another aircraft to attempt contact.

"We went out to the aircraft. It had already been pre-flighted, so we launched. We tried all the radios to contact them. We went to the north side of the lake and to the east. Then we came back and worked around the south side of the mountains and continued to make radio calls...we turned out our lights and used only the goggles.

"I saw it [the storm] coming. At that time, I witnessed cloud-to-cloud lightning out to the east. He [Mr. Raybon] must have flown into it. We got his call that he had run into a thunder bumper and he was coming back. We lost comms and shortly after that, it started raining and lightning here... The visibility was reduced to less than a mile, but it is a little different here with all the lights on the airfield.

"They [Salvadoran base security] had flares going up... There was a firefight going on just on the other side of the airfield.

"I picked up Jose Salazar and the local fisherman that hitchhiked up here to report the accident to the staff duty officer. While we were going out, Jose was talking to him. He [the fisherman] never heard the crash. Mr. Rameriz [Salvadoran farmer who witnessed the crash] told him about it. We circled around. We were trying to find the easiest way in. We dropped Colonel Ellerson, Jose, and our crew chief on higher ground. There was a field up there with a dead tree. After a few attempts, we got in. It was the closest place to them. We went back and got seven more and dropped them off at the lower area. We used only the lower area from then on."

Sergeant Major (ret) Thomas Grace Special Forces Medic – Crash Survivor

SFC Thomas Grace, the sole survivor of the crash, was interviewed while in the hospital in San Salvador. He was one of the two medics picked up at the First Brigade helipad in San Salvador by Mr. Raybon. Grace was unable to recount the entire event but answered some questions.

"...I was sitting in the left rear of the aircraft, looking out of the left side. When we took off, it was relatively clear. As we flew along, it began getting worse. We encountered heavy rain and clouds. I remember thinking, 'Why aren't we turning around?'"

The Crash Site

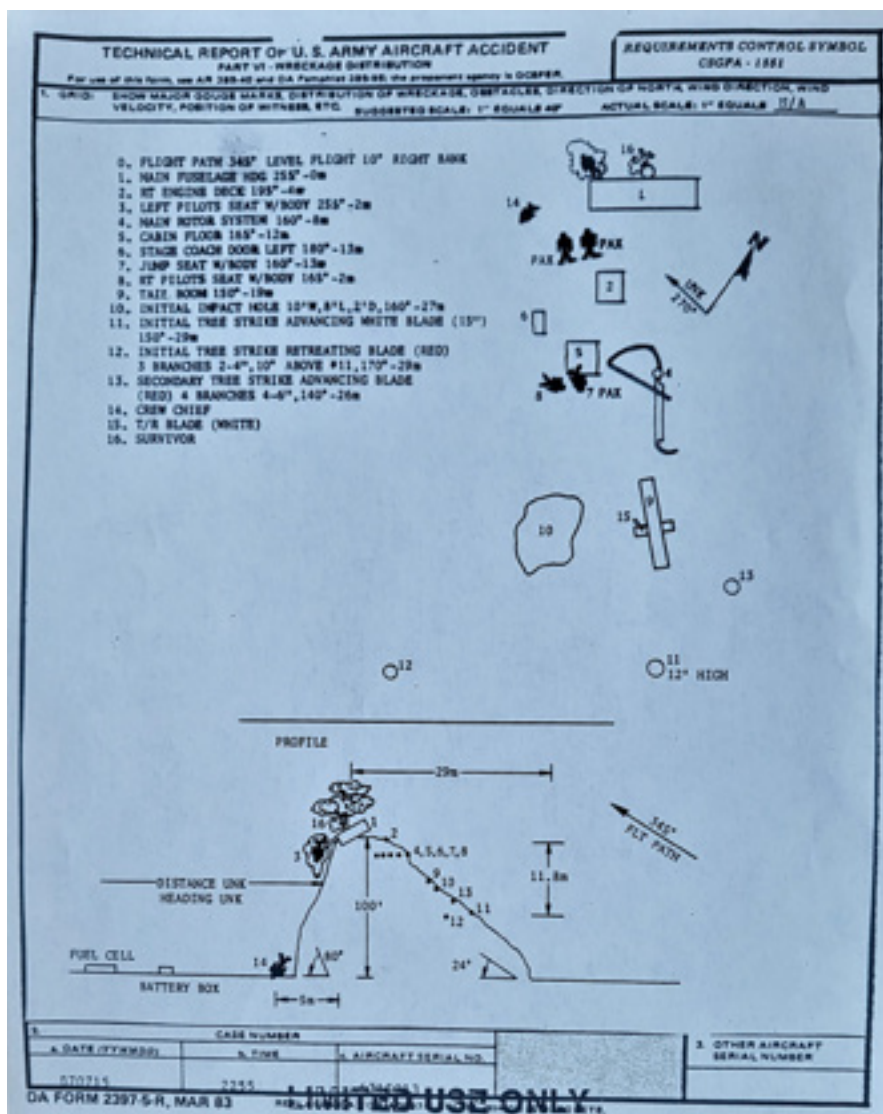
Mr. Raybon's UH-1H, aircraft ID number 6915013, impacted a hillside roughly 33 meters below the ridge-line. It was observed moments before the crash by a local resident, Mr. Rameriz, and his family, who had a

small farm there. Rameriz made his way about 450 feet from his home up to where he found the wreckage. He saw bodies strewn around the crash site and moved one, thinking the man was still alive. He was not.

Where Tom Grace was thrown from the aircraft upon impact and survived, all those others onboard but for one were likewise, despite being buckled in, thrown from the helicopter, which impacted the hillside at an estimated 80 knots, or 92 miles per hour. Autopsy reports show the bodies of those killed suffered catastrophic injuries. The Army would strongly recommend to the families involved that the remains of their loved ones not be viewed in lieu of this.

Rameriz, upon discovering the crash, returned to his home and then told a local fisherman who had a motorcycle about the crash. That individual then made his way to a Salvadoran security checkpoint and reported the incident. It would take nearly four hours for the information to make its way to U.S. MilGrp personnel and a rescue/recovery operation mounted.

During this time lapse, it appears the guerrillas involved in the fire fight reported by CW3 Hasenauer, or their support elements in the immediate area, also discovered the wreckage. Of the personal weapons and ammunition listed in the Fort Rucker crash report as being



Official illustration of the crash site and location of those killed as well as the single survivor.

onboard, none were reported recovered. And personal effects such as rings and watches were likewise not reported as being recovered either in San Salvador at the military morgue or the morgue at Gorgas Army Hospital in Panama.

Cause of crash—bad weather or a second aircraft near miss?

“I was not aware of this. But Ilopango would have been a busy place during the night. The FAS helos launched at night on two conditions: Medevac or a unit in contact. The three UH1Hs in San Miguel serviced Usulután, San Miguel, La Unión, and Morazan. Ilopango took care of the rest of the country. The likelihood that Raybon would cross paths with another helo near Ilopango was high.”—Colonel (ret) Kevin Higgins, Special Forces, July 1, 2023

“Mr. Walker, the Aviation Safety Network, Flight Safety Foundation, is not affiliated with the U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center. The Flight Safety Foundations is an independent, non-profit organization. I wished I could find this incident for you, but it is not in our database.”
—Joy Purinton, Combat Readiness Center, Fort Rucker, Alabama, May 30, 2013

In 1993, an Army helicopter pilot who had been stationed in San Salvador sent me a picture. It was of a UH-1H that had crashed in Lake Ilopango on the same day and year that Chief Raybon’s MEDEVAC flight had gone down. It was reported those onboard remain in Lake Ilopango.

While researching this story, I was referred to the Flight Safety Foundation and its Aviation Safety Network (ASN) report. This report has long been a reference for Army aviation crews. For example, the crash of UH-1H, ID number 69-15013, is available through the ASN. I ran the aircraft identification number for the UH-1H as it appears in the photo I was sent now decades ago. Aircraft registration number 69-15383 is reported to have crashed on July 15, 1987. No fatalities are listed; no number of occupants is listed; the crash is listed as being military related with the caveat “Little or no information is available.”
— <https://aviation-safety.net/wikibase/77028>

And the Aviation Safety Network’s report on Chief Raybon’s aircraft — <https://aviation-safety.net/wikibase/200466>

Regarding the events of that tragic evening at Ilopango, one individual with extensive knowledge of the war in El Salvador and this specific incident offers the following. I am honoring his request for anonymity given his role. “The ‘cone of silence’ remains. That said, agree Rucker’s [crash report] is excellent. Continue to just present the facts. That should bring the real truth to the surface and bring recognition to those involved.”

The masking of the ownership and circumstances of UH-1H #69-15383 may be tied to the March 26, 1987, crash of a Salvadoran UH-1H piloted by CIA aviator, Richard Daniel Krobock. Krobock, a former Army aviator and officer, had joined the CIA just five months before his death. He was on a search and rescue (combat extraction) in support of ongoing U.S./Salvadoran special operations when, while flying nap of the earth under NVGs, one of his skids struck a tree top. Krobock was well suited for duty with the CIA. His military career included Ranger School, Flight School, Airborne School, Armor School, and Military Intelligence School.



The commander at CEMFA at the time of the two events wrote this letter to Ms. Lujan. It, along with the Salvadoran chopper crew that flew on a moment’s notice to get Tim Hodge to San Miguel, speaks well of our Salvadoran counterparts.

“Mrs. Lujan, it is a pleasure and an honor to greet you with this letter. Forgive the breach of etiquette since I have not had the pleasure of meeting you in person. My reason for writing is to extend my condolences upon the death of your husband, Colonel Lujan, who had recently reported for duty in El Salvador to work alongside the armed forces of my country.

“When your husband arrived in my country, he was assigned to the Military Training Center of the Armed Forces (CEMFA), at the exact moment that I was appointed. In the short time your husband was with us, he was admired, respected, and highly esteemed. He won our hearts with his kindness, his hard work, his empathy, and his leadership.

“We know you have lost a noble, compassionate, and talented man. The grief you and your daughter and son feel is the same for us. The overwhelming feelings of sorrow are reciprocal. I know God will give you the strength to endure this irreparable loss. I also take this opportunity to put myself at your service and the service of your children.

“Likewise, I want you to know that the Military Training Center of the Armed Forces of El Salvador (CEMFA), including the Directorate, officers, cadets, non-commissioned officers, soldiers, and administrative personnel, remain saddened by the loss of a great friend and great comrade in arms.

“I close by expressing my personal condolences and letting you know that my prayers are with you and your family.

“God bless you!

“Coronel Juan Armando Rodríguez Mendoza

“Executive Officer, CEMFA”



Wreckage of the second UH-1H at Lake Illopango on July 15, 1987. In the “fog of war” that night did a CIA piloted helicopter experience a near-miss with Chief Raybon’s Huey with the ensuing accident taking place? And what of the crew’s fate that night? Were they also recovered or do their bodies remain in Lake Illopango to this day?

The young aviator joined the CIA in October 1986 while stationed at Fort Ord, California. He was assigned to the Agency’s Directorate of Operations, Special Activities. On March 26th, Krobcock was the radio communications officer onboard his aircraft. While returning from a successful extraction during an Agency operation the helo crashed, killing all onboard. Although no cause was given for the accident, Colonel (ret) Kevin Higgins visited the crash site that same night. According to Higgins, Korbcock’s aircraft was flying across an open field, nap of the earth, when it struck a treetop. “It was the only tree, about 20 feet tall, in the field,” recalls Higgins today. — <https://aviation-safety.net/wikibase/200250>

With the combat related death of Special Forces sergeant Greg Fronius on March 31, 1987, followed by the combat related death of Captain Richard Krobcock, and then the July 15th deaths of another six Americans with two Special Forces soldiers injured/wounded, as well, the U.S. Congress was demanding answers as to what was really going on in El Salvador?

At stake was the War Powers Act— “...officially called the War Powers Resolution—was enacted in November 1973 over an executive veto by President Richard Nixon.

“The law’s text frames it as a means of guaranteeing that “the collective judgment of both the Congress and the President will apply” whenever the American armed forces are deployed overseas. To that end, it requires the President to consult with the legislature “in every possible instance” before committing troops to war.

“The resolution also sets down reporting requirements for the chief executive, including the responsibility to notify Congress within 48 hours whenever military forces are introduced “into hostilities or into situations where imminent involvement in hostilities is clearly indicated by the circumstances.”

“Additionally, the law stipulates that Presidents are required to end foreign military actions after 60 days unless Congress provides a declaration of war or an authorization for the operation to continue.” — <https://www.history.com/topics/vietnam-war/war-powers-act>

Burying the Dead with Dishonor

Several years after his wounding in El Salvador, Tim Hodge called the teammate who was responsible for his life-changing injury. Hodge felt no animosity toward the man he considered one of his closest friends at 3/7th SFG(A) in Panama. In fact, the same individual had immediately come to his aid along with SSG Morgan Gandy.

When Tim asked his friend, now reassigned to another Special Forces unit stateside, what had happened that night he was told “I can’t talk about it. It’s classified.” They never spoke again. The soldier had been court-martialed after the incident, demoted one rank, and allowed to remain in the Army as no criminal intent was found to have occurred. A records check shows he completed his military career and passed away nearly a decade ago. He is buried at Arlington National Cemetery. Those who knew him offer he never recovered from the knowledge that his errant handling of SSG Gandy’s weapon had cost his friend, Tim Hodge, so much.

And that it had brought about the deaths of six other Americans sent to bring SSG Hodge to safety.

There was exceptional heroism and certainly honor in the actions of all those involved in the MEDEVAC effort of July 15, 1987.

There was no honor to be claimed by those who misrepresented what had occurred, at both CEMFA and Illopango, and either openly lied to or quietly mis-directed those questioning the circumstances of the two events so as to sustain the public policy of no combat role for American service personnel in El Salvador. This deception included the grieving families, too.

This policy would continue through 1992 when the UN-brokered Peace Accord was signed and El Salvador’s 10-year long civil war was ended. In 1996, through a grass roots political effort, the Congress of the United States authorized the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal and accompanying combat awards and decorations for all those U.S. service personnel who served and fought in El Salvador. — <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a3uy8Ey23ls>

Lest we forget. ❖

View this story online at SpecialForces78.com to read more by Greg Walker about the 1985 attack on CEMFA. Two articles are available for viewing from *Behind the Lines*, January/February and July/August 1993, really bring home the true danger of serving at CEMFA.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Greg Walker is an honorably retired Special Forces soldier. His awards and decorations include the Combat Infantryman Badge (2 awards), the Special Forces Tab, and the Legion of Merit. Walker was part of the MTT to El Salvador in 1984 that established the National Training Center (CEMFA) in La Union. Today, Greg lives and writes from his home in Sisters, Oregon, with his service pup, Tommy.

Michael D. Echanis Honored by Chuck Norris



From left to right: President Ken Gallagher, UFAF; Mr. Dan Branson (Security Professional); Mr. Cam Echanis; Ms. Liz Echanis; Grandmaster Rick Prieto (UFAF); Master Greg Walker (Farang Mu Sul); and Mr. Randy Ford (Wounded Warrior, Afghanistan). Not pictured is Mr. John Echanis (Cousin). (Author Collection)



Wounded Warrior and legendary martial artist Mike Echanis and Chuck Norris, 1977, Virginia Beach, Virginia. Mike taught a Black Belt only class at the Hilltop Karate Studio when he wasn't training selected Navy SEALs from SEAL Team TWO in close quarters fighting and special weapons and tactics at Camp A.P. Hill in Virginia. He was to join the Norris Brothers in Los Angeles and become part of their film empire when he was killed along with former "Green Beret" and CIA operative, Chuck Sanders. (Author Collection)

By Greg Walker

On July 8, 2023, at the International Training Convention and World Championships in Las Vegas, Nevada, "American Warrior" Michael D. Echanis was posthumously ranked by Chuck and Aaron Norris with a 5th Degree Black Belt in the Norris System of self-defense. Grand Master Rick Prieto, who likewise knew and trained with Echanis in 1977 at the Norris Hilltop Studio in Virginia Beach, Virginia, offered this to the 500 plus attendees at the evening banquet. "Few know Mike Echanis became a part of the Norris karate family in 1977. Mike introduced Chuck, Aaron, and myself to self-defense and street combatives that worked. Until then we've been teaching Tang Soo Do karate and point fighting. Mike's input and instruction became the foundation for what we teach today in the UFAF curriculum. But most of all, Mike was family, and this honor is long overdue."

Liz Echanis, Mike's sister, and Cam Echanis, his brother, accepted the honor during the banquet. "We now have our brother back," Liz told me afterwards.

Echanis was inducted into the Black Belt Magazine Hall of Fame in 2014, the Special Forces Association in 2017, and now the UFAF in 2023. In 1978, Echanis was promoted posthumously by Hwa Rang Do Grand Master Joo Bang Lee during a traditional mourning ceremony in Downing, California, to Black Sash, 4th Degree. Mike was killed on September 8, 1978, in Nicaragua while serving as a CIA operative in the fight against Communism in that country.

This is the first and only time since the UFAF, established in 1979, has extended a posthumous ranking as authorized by the Norris Brothers, Grand Master Prieto, and Grandmaster Gallagher. ❖



Master Echanis was posthumously ranked by the Norris Brothers and Grandmasters Prieto and Gallagher as a 5th Degree Black Belt for his contributions to the Norris System of self-defense and street combatives. (Author Collection)

SFA Chapter 78 July 2023 Chapter Meeting

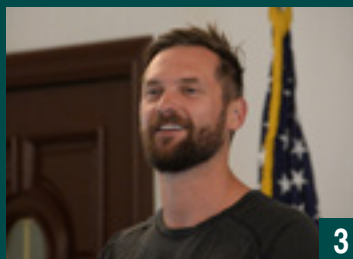
Photos by Rick Carter



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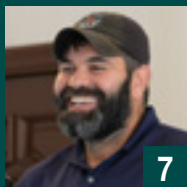
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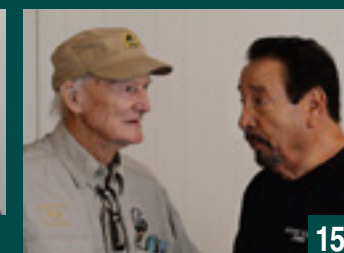
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- 1** Cadet Ronald Taylor, USMA, serves as an All-Source Intelligence Analyst in Afghanistan at Bagram AFB, with the Maryland National Guard and is currently a West Point Cadet.
- 2** Chapter Treasurer Richard Simonian, Secretary Gary Macnamara, and President Greg Horton
- 3** Chapter Vice President James McLanahan spoke to the group about putting a team together to compete in the Tactical Games Nevada Regional 2023.
- 4** Chapter President Greg Horton leading the meeting.
- 5** Sal Sanders **6** Gary Macnamara **7** Nimo **8** Ham Salley
- 9** Kenn Miller **10** James Carter **11** Don Deatherage
- 12** Nick Blau and Erik Berg **13** Don Gonneville and Bob Crebbs
- 14** Left to right, Mark Miller, Brad Welker, and Kenn Miller
- 15** Lonny Holmes and Ramon Rodriguez **16** Jim Cragg

- 17** Robert Casillas and Jim Lockhart **18** Jim Light
- 19** Robert Casillas, Ham Salley, and Jim Cragg
- 20** Gary Macnamara, Cadet Ronald Taylor, and Nick Blau
- 21** Richard Simonian's 91st birthday was celebrated at the meeting.
- 22** Richard blew out the candles on his cake on the first try.
- 23** Chapter members applaud Richard after singing.

Visit SpecialForces78.com to read the *Sentinel* online and learn more about SFA Chapter 78.



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