



# SENTINEL

NEWSLETTER OF THE QUIET PROFESSIONALS

SPECIAL FORCES ASSOCIATION CHAPTER 78

The LTC Frank J. Dallas Chapter

VOLUME 14, ISSUE 12 • DECEMBER 2023

Book Review for New Release:  
***Hot Mics and TV Lights***

**Killing the Pacifist Myth of  
Father James Francis Carney**

From *SOG Chronicles: Volume I*  
**Operation Tailwind (Pt. 4):  
As NVA Hordes Close In  
SOG Pulls An Intel Coup**

**Army Special Operations  
Forces Timeline**



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# SENTINEL

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## From the Editor



How Miller  
Sentinel Editor

A few years ago, I read Marc Yablonka's delightful and informative book, *Vietnam Bao Chi: Warriors of Word and Film*, which was reviewed by Kenn Miller in the [June 2019 Sentinel](#), about a broad swath of war reporters who covered the Vietnam War (including Jim Morris). After many entertaining pieces contributed to the *Sentinel* and elsewhere, Marc has teamed with Rick Frederickson to write a book focused on the AFVN radio network. You've undoubtedly heard of the famous "Good Morning Vietnam"

greeting made famous by Adrian Kronauer (played by Robin Williams), but there was much more to the story, as eloquently described by our Jim Morris in his review.

In his article about Father James Carney, our Greg Walker brings clarity to more of the complexities of the fight to defeat the communist attempt to take over Central America and more in the 1980s. Though he was a Jesuit priest of long standing, James proclaimed himself a Christian Marxist and took up arms in Nicaragua and Honduras. As with so many things during those conflicts, there is a lot of disinformation to wade through to reach the truth. Greg is still actively bringing the truth to the light of day. You can even [link to a previous Sentinel article](#) related to this story, also by Greg.

Next, you can sign the petition to honor SOG and then read about one of the multitude of dangerous missions carried out by our secret SOG warriors:

Our John Stryker Meyer shares a chapter from his *SOG Chronicles, Volume 1*. The book covers Operation Tailwind, a highly successful raid deep into Laos to help take pressure off a CIA operation that was in trouble. The bravery of SF Medic Mike Rose throughout this operation resulted in him receiving the Medal of Honor. This chapter highlights an important intelligence coup during the difficult operation. John also continues with his work on his SOGCAST podcast series. This podcast is available on most major providers. Links are included and can also be found on the home page of our website, [SpecialForces78.com](#).

Author Jim Morris' new book is a trilogy of three of his books in one. Any one of these would be worth the price. His very personal perspective takes you right in to the action.

There are many places to gather facts for a timeline of U.S Army's Special Operations Forces, but ARSOF has put together a succinct and authoritative history. It covers from psyops to the 160th SOAR, SF, Rangers, and more. It includes a lot of great photos as well as covering up to early 2020.

Please enjoy these, along with our chapter meeting pics and let us know if you have interesting SF stories to share, especially those that show experiences related to specific SF MOS's.

How Miller  
Sentinel Editor

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FRONT COVER: A U.S. Special Operations Forces member conducts combat operations in support of Operation Resolute Support (RS) in East Afghanistan, April 2019. RS is a Nato-led mission to train, advise, and assist the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces and institutions. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Jonathan Bryson)



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# From the President | December 2023



Gregory Horton  
President SFA Ch. 78

Well, the winds of change are blowing strong in my family. As I have mentioned to the membership, I will be moving to Oklahoma to realize my lifelong dream of having a ranch with my children there. And to add to the change, my son's last day in the Army was yesterday. This means that we will both be undergoing bittersweet transitions. I have been honored to be the President of Chapter 78, working with some of the finest men and women I have met and, whenever I had a question, I always had

the sage advice of the members to help me out. People in the civilian world wish they had a panel of experts like here in the Chapter and in the Special Forces Association to provide help. And as my son pursues his lifelong ambition to become a Police Officer, I will be there to help mentor him with my 40 years of Law Enforcement experience. So, it should be apparent that I believe strong support mechanisms are essential to help guide us through our varied endeavors. I want to talk about two things that are in place to help our members and families.

The first is the Chapter 78 Corporate Ambassadors-at-Large program that we are standing up. Jim Cragg and Len Fein have stepped up to begin this program and are well suited to give guidance to assist and empower any member or their family who are starting out or even have an established business. A little background on these two.

Jim is a businessman and mega volunteer (American Legion, Chapter 78, etc.) but one of the best duties he has taken on, is acting as a mentor for Academy cadets. They come out on their summer program and Jim introduces them to the ins and outs of the business world.

Len was a major corporate officer in Toyota and has helped Jim out with imparting expertise to the Cadets and has helped others out with the nuances of running their own business.

Now, I want to emphasize that this is just the start. I realize that there are many other members with vast business expertise that could help this team (Richard immediately springs to mind). Please do not hesitate to step up to help! And on the other hand, if any of our members (or veterans, friends, or family) needs a helping hand with business operations, remember the assets we have here!

The second part of this message is the SF4Life organization that the Special Forces Association has. Hundreds of Green Berets are discharged from the military each year. The SFA website for the SF4Life programs puts it very succinctly,

"Approximately 650 Green Berets are discharged from the military each year. The process is not always smooth. Plans often must adapt to unexpected challenges that test our values and purpose. Most of us eventually overcome, get established in our communities and new careers, and later look back on our transition as an essential part of who we are. Some of us later wish the transition could have involved less "suck." The Special Forces Association understands all this better than any other veteran organization and is uniquely positioned to help the SF veteran."

The Team House website also has contacts for various Mentors that have volunteered to help people that are entering this transition period. Most of us have stories of this process and sharing them with others can be very beneficial to give them tips and to also allow them to see the light at the end of the tunnel. I wish there were mentors in 1972 to help me as I worked in a market, went to school, and fought through the labyrinth application process for LAPD. The uncertainty, lack of communication, and other kinks were frustrating. But in true Los Angeles City fashion, after weeks of zero communication, I got a phone call asking if I could start the Academy in two weeks.

The bottom line is that there are now resources out there to help. Please take advantage of them or help them if you can. It makes us stronger.

Get ready for the Christmas Party on December 9th, at the Bahia Corinthian Yacht Club. Social hour will start at 1400 so come on over and hang with your friends. We will have fantastic speakers and entertainment and do not forget those dancing shoes! I will send another notice ASAP for your planning.

Our regular meetings will pick back up on January 20 at our normal venue, the Joint Forces Training Base in Los Alamitos.

Greg Horton SGM (Ret)  
President  
SFA Chapter 78

## Chapter 78 Christmas Party

Saturday, December 9, 2023

Bahia Corinthian Yacht Club

[1601 Bayside Dr, Corona Del Mar, CA 92625](#)

1400 Cocktail Hour • Program Start Time 1500

With Guest Speaker, Nils C. "Chris" Sorenson  
Colonel, US Army, Retired

Libations • Raffle • DJ and Dancing

### COST

\$40.00 per person, same for guests

**Special Note:** Members of C/1/19 \$10 per person.

**Please mail your check payable to SFA 78 no later than 12/3/22 to:**

Santiago Corp, PO Box 11927, Santa Ana, CA 92711, Attn: Liz Rios

### DRESS

Men: SFA Green Blazers, White Shirt with Regimental Tie,

Dark or Gray Slacks, or Sport Coat with Tie

Ladies: Cocktail Attire

**If you haven't sent your check in before the December 3rd**, please email me your name and guest name so I can have an accurate head count. Please make sure your check arrives on or before the 6th

**QUESTIONS???** Feel free to call or text Greg Horton (909) 762-8597 or send an email to [sgtpelon@gmail.com](mailto:sgtpelon@gmail.com)

# Book Review

## Hot Mics and TV Lights

By Marc Philip Yablonka with Rick Fredericks



Jim Morris

By Jim Morris

There's scarcely a single Vietnam vet who cannot remember starting more than a few days listening to Adrian Cronauer or Pat Sajak or a couple of other DJs shout "Gooooooooood Morning, VIETNAM!", leading into the news and Top 40 music. My first dose was shaving in the latrine at Camp Goodman, in Saigon for a meeting at the Embassy at which I learned

that my best Montagnard buddy had just been killed. That's not the point of this review, but I'll never forget it, and I bet more than a few readers will have similar memories.

Marc Yablonka, who has written quite a bit for the *Sentinel*, and Rick Fredericksen, a Marine, and an AFVN broadcaster who went on to a career in broadcast journalism have done a great service to the participants and history of that conflict with this terrific story of AFVN. It is well worth a read by anyone who fought in Vietnam or has an interest in broadcast journalism. It's a crazy story and a lot of it is very funny.

It also has its share of sudden death and bureaucratic frustration.

AFVN started in 1962, and its daddy was Navy CPO Bryant Arbuckle, who was also the entire staff for the first three months of its existence.

But when other people joined it that staff became a most interesting mix of professional broadcasters, like Sajak, who had been drafted and somehow properly assigned. The "Somehow", in Sajak's case involved writing his congressman, who also owned the radio station where Sajak worked prior to being drafted. He was a finance clerk at Long Binh who wanted to work in his actual field and got it. He also extended six months in Saigon to finish out his time in the army doing work he loved and living a relatively cosmopolitan life, as opposed to policing up pine cones Stateside.

There weren't supposed to be any servicewomen in Vietnam, but there was one, Air Force sergeant Laurie Clemons, who volunteered and somehow made it through the culling process. She wasn't supposed to be there, but there she was. She loved it, went to the range with the guys, and proved to be an excellent shot with both rifle and pistol.

There were other women who volunteered for AFVN, Bobbie Keith, the weather girl, who worked for USAID, and donut dollies like Bobbie Lischuk and Barbara Dorr. Dixie Ferguson was another donut dolly, who has a couple of pix in the excellent photo section. I didn't know Dixie in Vietnam, but she was on staff at the Red Cross Rec Center at Fitzsimons General Hospital in Aurora CO when I was a patient there, and a great chick she was.

The best known AFVN DJ was Adrian Cronauer, played by Robin Williams in the movie *Good Morning, Vietnam*. He and Bob Moses wrote the story from which the movie was made.



# HOT MICS AND TV LIGHTS



MARC PHILLIP YABLONKA  
with RICK FREDERICKSEN

*Hot Mics and TV Lights*

By Marc Philip Yablonka with Rick Fredericks  
Double Daggar Books Ltd (September 12, 2023)  
346 pages

The book's chapters are laid out chronologically and told as the staffer's individual stories. Cronauer was almost blown up in 1963 in a terrorist bombing at the My Canh floating restaurant in which more than a hundred people were killed, Dick Ellis worked full shifts as a producer, and volunteered to fly on gunships on week-ends to interview the crews, and bootleg time on the guns.

These are stories well told by people with stories to tell. ❖

# Photos from *Hot Mics and TV Lights*



Chris Noel and AFNV's John Mikesch  
(afnvets.net)



Bobbie Keith with MPs  
(afnvets.net)



Laurie Clemons at the mic—  
AFVN Saigon. (afnvets.net)



John Steinbeck, IV, was with AFVN when he was in Vietnam.  
(afnvets.com)



Rick Fredericksen—in the radio booth  
at AFVN Saigon. (afnvets.com)



Dick Ellis lighting up a smoke before an interview  
with Charlton Heston at AFVN. (afnvets.net)



ABC-TV's *Wheel of Fortune* game show  
host Pat Sajak in Vietnam. (Pat Sajak)

# Killing the Pacifist Myth of Father James Francis Carney



By Greg Walker (ret)  
USA Special Forces

## Introduction

The 1980s wars in Central America saw a number of U.S. citizens endorse, support, and in some cases fight as combatants on the side of the communist FMLN (El Salvador) and FSLN (Nicaragua). The international press and liberal leftist American media were quick to defend these Americans when they were either killed or arrested / captured with U.S. politicians sometimes coming to their aid, as well. In this two-part series we'll look at the cases of Father James Carney, a Jesuit priest who chose to pick up a gun and join a rebel Honduran column as it infiltrated from Nicaragua into Honduras, and in Part II the highly publicized case of Jennifer Casulo who joined the ERP in El Salvador and was arrested for her actions during the 1989 final offensive in San Salvador.

Our readers will recall similar instances such as the case of Marine deserter Bobby Garwood (Vietnam) and in Afghanistan the case of Army deserter, Beau Bergdahl. Our wars in Latin America likewise attracted the treasonous acts of American combatants against both U.S. policy and our troops sent to enforce it. We must never forget.

## The Myth

“Fr. Jim never forgot his beloved Honduran poor; when he had the opportunity to accompany a group of Honduran “freedom fighters” who were crossing from Nicaragua to Honduras in July 1983, he welcomed the chance to return with them as their chaplain. Fr. Jim did not carry arms.”

University of Detroit Mercy web page dedicated to Fr. Jim Carney:  
<https://www.udmercy.edu/academics/special/clasa/carney.php>

Father James F. Carney, captured during Operation Patuca River in late August of 1983, was by his own account a guerrilla fighter with the Armed Forces of the People, or FAP, led by convicted Honduran terrorist Dr. Jose Reyes Mata. Carney, 58 years old, had been a Jesuit priest in Honduras for over 18 years. A champion of the poor he became a lightning rod for mobilizing and organizing on behalf of those he provided social and religious leadership to. So much so that in 1979 his Honduran citizenship—obtained in conjunction with his formal renouncing of his U.S. citizenship—was cancelled and the priest deported to the United States.



Padre James Francis Carney in Nicaragua, November 1982. Ten months later he would be captured by Honduran Special Forces troops in Olancho Province and then executed as a terrorist. (Credit: Detroit University Mercy/  
<https://www.udmercy.edu/academics/special/clasa/carney.php>)

What was reason for his arrest and deportation? Per his autobiography “*To Be a Revolutionary*” (Harper and Row, 1985) Carney provides us with the Honduran government’s reasoning for its actions. “The Ministry of Government and Justice, through investigations of the Immigration Office, states as a fact that Mr. James Francis Carney, known as Padre Guadalupe, not only imparts Catholic doctrine, but he also dedicates himself to the propagation of dissociating doctrines and ideas which hurt the organized government of the country.”

Also described by Padre Carney is that the decree was dated March 19, 1979. The good padre was only located and arrested in November of that same year. Why the delay? He’d known the Honduran National Police, or FUSEP, was searching for him and using his friends and other clergy members of the Church to hide him, he’d been “on the lam” for over 8 months.

Carney had been formally met with by then Colonel Gustavo Alvarez Martinez, the military commander of the region. The head of Immigration was also present. Carney was warned about his activities, directed to report to Immigration with his most recent documentation, and “...to stick strictly to the work of the Church”. The padre agreed to the conditions and reported to Immigration in San Pedro Sul the next day where he was warned by Immigration again. According to Carney, after he left Immigration “I returned to continue as before with all of my activities.” This was May of 1979. He was soon on the run.

Upon his arrest and deportation in November of 1979, the priest was flown to Miami and he soon made his way to a Jesuit retreat in Saint Louis, Missouri. For eight days he ruminated the inequity and unfairness of the Honduran government's actions. He also felt betrayed by several Jesuit priests in Honduras that were active in urging him to be expelled from the country, as well as the National Association of Honduran Campesinos (ANACH) which Carney had been exceptionally active in but over time had become so difficult to work with by the association's leadership that they, too, wanted him gone.

Offered by his Jesuit Order in Detroit, Michigan, the opportunity to go to Nicaragua and serve the Church there he gladly accepted. Through an administrative rule that allowed him to obtain a provisional U.S. passport because of his status as a clergyman—despite having renounced his U.S. citizenship and having had his Honduran citizenship revoked—Carney left the United States for Managua, Nicaragua, now under Sandinista rule.

## The Triumph of the Sandinista Revolution

**“I felt myself so identified with them [the Sandinistas/FSLN], their fight for liberation was so thrilling. I had so many Honduran friends helping them, that I can say that July 19th [1979] was the most jubilant day of my life up until then. All my revolutionary friends sang and shouted with me: ‘If Nicaragua won (their liberation), El Salvador will win, then Guatemala, and then Honduras too will win!’”**

In was in Nicaragua where Padre Jim Carney wholly self-converted to his definition of a Christian Marxist and expressed in writing his intent to wage revolution wherever he could. “In the actual process of making the revolution, the Nicaraguan Christians solved the theoretical problems of whether a Christian can be a Marxist and can fight in a civil war,” he wrote.

“If being a Christian demands being a revolutionary and a socialist, and to be a revolutionary and a socialist one has to use the Marxist-Leninist science of analysis and transformation of the world, then a Christian needs to understand Marxism.”

Carney's process of self-enlightenment was well fueled during his two years with the Sandinistas. Jesuit priests Miguel D'Escoto, Ernesto Cardenal, Fernando Cardenal, and Egdar Parralles had armed themselves and fought during the revolution in Nicaragua, becoming senior



Victory (Credit: Counterfire)



Edgard Parralles (left) and Miguel d'Escoto (right) took up arms and fought with the Sandinistas. Both were Jesuit priests who would engender the anger of the Church, not for bearing arms but for holding political office in Managua after the FSLN victory, contrary to Church doctrine. (Credit: NicaNotes)

commanders and then politicians with the FSLN once the insurgency toppled the Somoza government. All four were apostles of Liberation Theology as well as Christian Marxists. There is little doubt Padre Carney spent many hours in discussion with his Sandinista mentors. In turn composing his own Christian Marxist Revolutionary manifesto alone, by candlelight, in his barren, hand-built hermit-like shacks.

Where he isn't quoting Marx or Lenin in his book, published after his disappearance and now confirmed death in Honduras, Carney was expressing his admiration for Che Guevara. In his chapter titled “How Can A People Be Liberated?” the padre offers “...I liked the saying of Che Guevara (another Marxist saint, who gave his life for the poor guided by the Spirit of Jesus without knowing him) that ‘when the Christians in Latin America take seriously the revolutionary teachings of the gospel, the revolution will be invincible.’”

Carney's message once published in the United States would reach a number of others like him who were searching, many out of frustration and anger, for social change on behalf of the poor in Latin America. Good works weren't cutting it. Prayer wasn't cutting it. Letter writing and taking foreign politicians on tour after tour of exceedingly poor villages and neighborhoods were proving fruitless. Padre Carney's new teachings and his permission as a born again Christian Marxist to join and become active in armed revolutionary armies stirred their emotions and rejuvenated their Will. In 1989, one of his readers, Jennifer Jean Casolo, would be arrested during the FMLN's 1989 Final Offensive for her role as an active and important urban guerrilla with the ERP.

On December 23, 1982, Padre Carney slipped into El Salvador and met with guerrillas of the FMLN. He drafted a message which he broadcast over Radio Venceremos in support of the “solidarity that there is between the oppressed Salvadoran and Honduran peoples”. In closing he prayed aloud to his listeners that “...the North Americans leave us in peace!”

A little known fact is that upon his embracing the revolution in Nicaragua and taking up residence there he requested training in guerrilla warfare. A WW2 veteran who fought in Europe as a combat engineer Carney

understood conventional warfare but not its counterpart, unconventional warfare. In June 1981, he was permitted to travel to Cuba and participate in training at the Special Troops School at Rio de Pinar. The same unconventional, or guerrilla, warfare school that would become home beginning in 1982 for the first 96 members of Dr. Jose Reyes Mata's ill-fated incursion to wage war in Honduras in 1983.

Carney would join the FAP as both its chaplain and as an armed combatant. In his book, he shares how the two roles complemented each other. "I will have to give up being a Jesuit for a time, until the triumph, because the present laws of the Society of Jesus do not permit a Jesuit to be a guerrilla fighter "[emphasis mine]. Carney goes on to explain he did not want to take this step, but neither did he want to be expelled by the Society of Jesus. It is important to understand, especially in light of the utter nonsense and deliberate actions of his supporters (some of whom have benefited financially for years since his death), to present Padre Carney as simply a social activist who wanted to provide religious comfort for the Honduran guerrillas of the FAP.

By 1975, Carney in his own words had transformed himself into a revolutionary. "No longer was I anticommunist, no longer did I fear fighting back; rather, as a Christian revolutionary, I wanted to help the guerrilla war for the independence of Honduras."

**"One of the final points of my metamorphosis as a revolutionary was to understand that in Latin America it is the duty of all true Christians to sooner or later enter into and help as they can the armed revolution."**

**"How can a apostle of Christ encourage others to risk their lives in armed battle and stay at home, or go to the battlefield but without arms to help in battle...a Christian sometimes has to fight in order to promote their liberation or to defend them, the priest, who is supposed to be the most exemplary Christian, should give an example of this kind of Christian love also."**

### Christian Communism— Welcome to the Revolution

Father James Carney, or "Padre Guadalupe" as he preferred to be called, was issued an M16 rifle and a pistol before he crossed the Rio Coco as a combatant with the Marxist FAP column into Honduras in mid-July 1983.



Che Guevara after his execution. (Credit: Politicalvelcraft.org)

Contrary to the apologists' pleas that Carney was both too old and too frail to fight as a guerrilla, the 18 previous years of living among the poorest of the poor had hardened him physically as well as mentally. Throughout the campaign and despite weariness, hunger, pain, and near exhaustion the former WW2 combat engineer never quit when others half his age did.

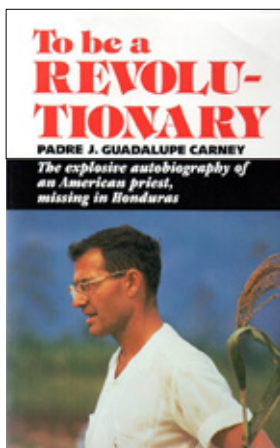
Much has been made that Carney starved to death in the jungle. For a man used to living literally off the land in both Honduras and Nicaragua this myth rings hollow. Honduran campesinos that knew "Lupe" have offered he would only "starve to death if he were confined within four walls."

In truth, James Carney was captured by Honduran Special Forces on or about August 28, 1983, near the town of Nueva Palestina. Moved to El Aguacate Air Base with Dr. Reyes Mata, the FAP's overall commander,

### Carney on Killing for Christ

**"The Church has always taught that one can use violence and can even kill in self-defense, if it is necessary...it still took me a couple more years to clarify my ideas about being a Christian and his or her place in armed revolution."**

**"The Church teaches that a people can take up arms in a general insurrection when the four conditions of traditional moral theology for just war are fulfilled..."**



## Read "A DEFECTOR IN PLACE: The Strange and Terrible Saga of a Green Beret Sandinista—Part Three"

Find it in the December 2022 *Sentinel* — this story gives the "big picture" of how Carney and the others were run to ground in Hondo and their fate.

Visit <https://www.specialforces78.com/a-defector-in-place-the-strange-and-terrible-saga-of-a-green-beret-sandinista-part-three/>



Commander David Baez, one of two Sandinista combat advisers with the column and a former Green Beret, and roughly 33 other guerrillas, he was imprisoned. Carney along with the others was tortured by members of the Honduran military intelligence battalion, MIB 316. Upon the order of General Gustavo Alvarez Martinez, head of the Honduran military, all those captured were executed to include Jim Carney.

Learning from the mistake of the Bolivian Army and government in 1967 after Che Guevara's execution, the Hondurans ensured there would be no Christ-like photographs of Reyes Mata or Padre Guadalupe. In fact, there would be no bodies, as well. All of the now dead guerrillas were loaded into waiting helicopters and flown back over the border where they were dumped into the triple canopy jungle below.

Still, the final words of Father James Carney, written by candlelight, have echoed and encouraged those who believed and felt as he did.

"The socialism that we want is a necessary step toward this Christian communism. In the twentieth century there is no "third way" between being a Christian and being a revolutionary. To be a Christian is to be a revolutionary. If you are not a revolutionary, you are not a Christian!" ❖



**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Greg Walker is an honorably retired "Green Beret". His awards and decorations include the Legion of Merit, the Combat Infantryman Badge (X2), and the Special Forces Tab. A U.S. special operations historian Greg has written extensively on Special Forces in Latin America. Today he lives and writes from his home in Sisters, Oregon, along with his service pup, Tommy.

# Honor MACV-SOG with the Congressional Gold Medal

## *Sign the petition today!*



Join us in supporting this petition to ensure that these unsung heroes receive the recognition they so rightfully deserve. We'd love to be able to present Congress with 10,000 or more signatures sooner than later.

**Sign the petition at Change.org** (<https://chnng.it/t7SWXpxwf6>)

Please share it with others to spread the word.



# OPERATION TAILWIND (PT. 4): As NVA Hordes Close In SOG Pulls An Intel Coup

By John Stryker Meyer

From *SOG Chronicles: Volume One*, Chapter 4, pages 65-76, printed with permission

The morning of Operation Tailwind Day 4 dawned upon B Company Hatchet Force of MACV-SOG (SOG) moving toward an LZ to lift out the more seriously wounded among the remaining 127 men who could still walk. All 16 Green Berets had been wounded at least once, and about 40 Montagnard troops were wounded during the first three days of this secret foray deep into Laos to take pressure off of the CIA's Operation Gauntlet in southern Laos on the Bolovens Plateau further west.

B Company Commanding Officer Capt. Gene McCarley had the point element moving toward an apparent clearing with one thought in mind: Get one Marine Corps heavy-lift CH-53D helicopter in to pick up the wounded and then continue to march, to destroy any NVA fortifications, supplies or troops they encountered. By now the entire 2nd Platoon was being used to help care for and transport the wounded under the tireless leadership of SF Medic Gary Mike Rose,—including three who were carried in impromptu stretchers.

On the previous day, when one CH-53D medevac was shot down by enemy gunners, B Company had strong support from the Marine Corps Cobra gunships of HML-367 (Scarface) in addition to 22 sorties by A-1 Skyraiders, eight sorties by Air Force F-4s from Ubon, Thailand, and



U.S. Marine Corps CH-53Ds from HMH-463 (Dimmers) head west toward Laos during Operation Tailwind in Sept. 1970. (Photo Courtesy of Larry Groah)

Stinger and Spectre gunships working against enemy forces during the night. More than once that night, the transponders failed to provide a commo link to Stinger and Spectre, which meant McCarley had to direct their air strikes from white phosphorous grenade explosions or strobe lights held by B Company men—usually, they'd stick their strobe lights into the barrel of an 40mm M-79 grenade launcher. Instead of inserting a live round into the back of the barrel, the grenadier would crack the barrel open, insert the strobe light into the back side of the barrel, point it skyward toward the circling gunship and turn on the blinking light—which could be easily picked up by the Air Force crew member, who would in turn lock in their computers on that light and then make gun runs based off of that exact location. In 1970, at least two recon teams protected by Spectre at night had rounds brought to within 10 feet of the teams perimeter. That's how accurate Spectre was then.

The men on the ground didn't know about two startling developments: The weather was closing in with a storm front that would prevent TAC AIR from supporting B Company and Operation Tailwind had rocked the NVA brass into rallying hordes of North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao troops that were moving toward the Highway 165 area near the tiny hamlet of Chavane.



An HMH-463 heavy-lift Marine Corps helicopter, YH-20, heads east with Marine crew members and Green Beret medics SSG John "Doc" Padgett and Sgt. John Browne after a CH-53D had a crash-landed due to enemy gunfire and a B-40 rocket hitting it. A Marine Corps Cobra gunship from HML-367 Scarface is escorting the big chopper. (Photo Courtesy of Joe Driscoll)



A fully armed A-1H Douglas Skyraider flying south along the beach in South Vietnam. This single-engine warbird could remain on station for several hours, providing support to troops such as the Green Berets during Operation Tailwind. During day four of the operation, there were several occasions when devastating gun runs and cluster bomb unit sorties by SPADs stopped enemy troops massing to attack the men of B Company. (Photo Courtesy of Joe Driscoll)

“When we started (Day 4) we hadn’t thought about an extraction, except for getting the wounded out,” said McCarley. “We took our mission seriously: relieve the pressure on the CIA’s operation. Thanks to the TAC AIR we had hurt the enemy, no question, and by continuously moving, we had kept the NVA off balance. We were tired but our morale was good...We had been on the move about an hour when we heard dogs. These weren’t dogs that sounded like the tracker dogs the NVA used on us, they sounded like pet dogs. So we moved toward their sound and the 1st Platoon followed them.”

The dogs led B Company to what would become one of the greatest military intelligence coups of the eight-year SOG secret war in Laos.

Before long, enemy troops fired several B-40 rockets at the point element of B Company and then fell back. “It looked like they (the NVA) had gone back to some sort of bunker complex, McCarley said. “After a brief skirmish and brilliantly executed SPAD gun runs, where they used Cluster Bomb Units (CBU) on enemy positions, the 1st Platoon lead the assault on those bunkers with a well-coordinated attack while 2nd Platoon covered our left flank and provided rear security. 3rd Platoon protected our right flank...we caught them napping. We hit the outpost when they were cooking breakfast. There were open fires, fires with cooking pots on them. Hell, they never had anyone mess with them before this deep into Laos.”



An unidentified Montagnard of SOG’s top secret B Company stands next to enemy caches in an enemy base camp deep inside Laos during Operation Tailwind in Sept., 1970. On the right are several of the enemy structures where SOG demolition experts and A-1 Douglas Skyraiders destroyed more than nine tons of rice, an 81mm mortar, and four trucks before escaping with a large amount of NVA documents, money, maps, and codebooks. (Photo Courtesy of Gene McCarley)



The only Green Beret medic on the Operation Tailwind Hatchet Force, Gary Mike Rose walks across an open area that the Special Forces men were clearing for an LZ to land a helicopter on day three of the operation in order to medivac the most seriously wounded men of Company B. (Photo Courtesy of Gene McCarley)

A few NVA hid in a couple of bunkers, whom the Montagnards quickly eliminated with hand grenades. “Those bunkers were nothing but gory blood and guts after the grenade attacks,” McCarley said. Again, A-1 Skyraiders delivered CBUs precisely along two key enemy lines, instantly silencing enemy gunfire, hand grenade and rocket attacks. In those CBU runs A-1 Skyraider pilots dropped CBU-25 bombs that consisted of a dispenser unit that held 665 tennis-ball-sized BLU-26 or BLU-36 fragmentation submunitions or bomblets. Once dropped from the Skyraider, the CBU-25 casing broke open in flight and released the individual bomblets that exploded on impact, or they could be set for air-burst or fixed-period delayed detonation. Within a short period of time, more than 70 NVA were killed as B Company swept through the base camp.

As B Company drove the remaining NVA out of the outpost, they discovered a bunker in the base camp that “appeared to be like a basement in a regular house,” said McCarley. It was at least 10 feet long and 10 feet wide “with maps on the walls and a foot locker loaded with documents. I emptied my rucksack of everything, except for the extra CAR-15 ammo. By that time, I had used the extra (radio) battery and C-4 that I was carrying and I started packing it with enemy documents, papers, code books, transportation logs.”



Captain Gary Michael Rose is credited with treating 60-70 wounded personnel and saving many lives. He was immediately nominated for the Medal of Honor, but due to the classified nature of the mission in Laos the award was downgraded to the Distinguished Service Cross. In 2016 then-Secretary of Defense Ash Carter approved the award upgrade. The requirement that the medal be awarded within five years of action was waived in 2017 and he was presented the award by President Donald J. Trump in a White House ceremony on October 23, 2017. (Photo courtesy of the Department of Defense)

Within 15 minutes the base camp was overrun. The area was searched for intelligence and photographs were taken as medic Mike Rose continued to treat the wounded men of Company.

By now it was clear to B Company intelligence men that they had stumbled into an NVA battalion base camp that was a major logistical command center and probably the headquarters that controlled the nearby Laotian Highway 165. In addition McCarley's haul also found more intelligence documents, papers, code books, transportation logs, records, North Vietnamese currency and photographs—including a photo of Ho Chi Minh—the head communist in N. Vietnam until he died in 1968.

Remaining true to his original operation order, McCarley had all of the intelligence documents packed and ordered B Company and all of its walking wounded to march out of the battalion base camp while demolitions experts wired a 120mm mortar, four enemy trucks and more than nine tons of rice for destruction. As usual, after the Special Forces charges exploded, A-1 Skyraiders followed up with gun, napalm and bombing runs to completely destroy all enemy structures and supplies.

Several weeks after Operation Tailwind, MACV-SOG headquarters informed McCarley that the base camp B Company attacked was a crucial station for the NVA's 559th Transportation Group—the first, major NVA group formed by the Hanoi communist political leadership in May 1959. The 559th's mission was to expand the Ho Chi Minh Trail in anticipation of future efforts to overrun the South Vietnamese and American assistance units. Author Richard H. Shultz, Jr., detailed the 559th's formation in 1959 in his book *The Secret War Against Hanoi*. The 559 Transportation Group oversaw all troop and supply movement along the Ho Chi Minh Trail in addition to maintaining it and expanding the trails that weaved into South Vietnam. Any NVA soldier received a special award and bonus if he captured or killed a SOG operator.

## Weather and NVA hordes close in

Meanwhile, back at Kontum, all of the air assets, the A-1 Skyraiders of the Da Nang-based Operating Location Alpha Alpha, Scarface Cobra pilots and HMH-463 CH-53D pilots were getting a detailed briefing on the weather and a sighting by Covey of hundreds, if not more than 1,000 NVA and Pathet Lao troops moving east toward B Company. "During that final briefing it was very clear, today it was do or die," said Scarface pilot Joe Driscoll. "The big thing was the stark seriousness of the moment. Everyone knew they had suffered heavy casualties and now the weather was closing in on them." A-1 Skyraider Pilot Tom Stump added, "The weather was dog shit when we took off...I wasn't optimistic about getting them out of there."

On the ground in Laos, McCarley pressed forward until he received a "disturbing" radio call from Covey, sometime in the early afternoon of Sept. 14th, Day 4 of Operation Tailwind. "I believe it was Covey Rider Jimmy 'War Daddy' Hart radioed down and told us the NVA were massing and that if we didn't get out of there today, we weren't going to get out period. That got my attention. Frankly, he mentioned the weather issue too, which up to that point in time I wasn't aware of because we were in the jungle."

Realizing they needed an LZ large enough to handle a Marine Corps CH-53D, in light of losing one of the HMH-463's heavy-lift helicopters on a tight LZ the previous day, McCarley moved down a road toward



Air Force Lt. Col. Mel Swanson, right, was the commanding officer of the Da Nang-based 56th Special Operations Wing, Operating Location Alpha Alpha. Swanson flew close ground-support sorties with fellow SPAD pilots throughout the four-day Operation Tailwind in Laos. Here, he's shaking the hand of Jim Wold, the first OLAA commander. (Photo Courtesy of Don Engebretsen)

U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Col. Harry Sexton was the commanding officer of the Marines' Cobra gunships that supported Operation Tailwind deep in Laos in September, 1970. The Cobras were assigned to HML-367, radio call sign Scarface, which flew in support of top secret SOG missions during most of the eight-year secret war. (Photo Courtesy of Joe Driscoll)



a clearing that was large enough for an LZ. However, the open area was seated too deeply in a valley, which had hills on two sides of it where NVA gunners would be able to have clear fields of fire on the Marine rescue helicopters as well as the supporting TAC AIR assets and Marine Corps "Scarface" Cobra gunships.

To facilitate the continued movement of B Company, A-1 SPADs and Scarface Cobras "gave us fire protection to the front and to the rear," McCarley said. "The NVA kept hitting us with automatic fire and B-40s. The air strikes kept them back far enough so they couldn't do any real damage."

At some point, Covey ran dangerously low on fuel and returned to base and connected SPAD Pilot Tom Stump directly with McCarley about future air strikes, shortly before the first CH-53D arrived in the Area of Operations. "I'll never forget it. When I spoke to Gene his voice was as calm as a man at a Sunday church picnic," Stump said. "He had that slow southern draw and calmly said he was getting his ass kicked down there and all the while, I could hear gunfire down there, explosions from hand grenades...He said he needed separation between the company and the NVA. We were on station for two hours doing just that, providing close support...With all of the SF wounded and the large number of casualties they had I couldn't see how we'd get them out."

Providing that sort of support on that day, in that location, with the bad weather closing in while coping with smoke from previous bombing and napalm runs and CBU explosions was extremely challenging. Once Stump and his fellow pilots maneuvered below the low-hanging clouds, they had to be extremely aware of jagged buttes and irregular mountain formations in the area before dropping their ordnance. The CBU ordnance slowed down one faction of NVA that had several hundred men advancing toward B Company.

McCarley and his men were grateful for the close support of Stump, his fellow SPAD pilots, Scarface and TAC AIR, but Stump stood out in his mind. McCarley said, "Tom Stump flew so close to us during some of those gun runs I could tell if he had shaved or not. That's just how close those A-1 Skyraiders flew in support of us. We were extremely grateful for all of the air support, believe me, but seeing Stump was something that stuck with me...I also think it's safe to say that because this was a SOG mission deep into Laos, none of the air assets got the credit they should have received for the remarkable coverage they provided to us over four days, from the fast movers right down to Scarface and the Coveys."

Scarface commanding officer Lt. Col. Harry Sexton and co-pilot Lt. Pat Owen provided the critical link between B Company and the air assets that were once again rallying around the beleaguered SOG Hatchet Force. When Covey returned to the Area of Operations, Sexton and Owen prepared an action plan to bring in the CH-53Ds to the LZ. For the veteran Scarface pilots, it was simply another deadly SOG mission into Laos.

B Company found a heavily traveled dirt road, only wide enough for foot traffic and headed to a second LZ, one that provided better cover and less exposure to enemy ground fire for the helicopters and for the men of B Company. As they moved, Covey Rider Jimmy 'War Daddy' Hart told spotted another "horde of NVA" moving toward B Company.

This time, Hart told B Company to put on their gas masks and directed A-1 sorties flown by Hobo 20 and Firefly 44 based in Thailand to deliver CBU-30 tear gas ordinance on the next "horde of NVA" while B Company found and secured a second LZ for the Marine CH-53Ds to land. This drastic tactic worked. It slowed down another NVA horde, but many of the men in B Company, including McCarley, Rose and others were hit by the gas, which "had a lot of our guys crying and choking on that CS," McCarley said. But, it also bought them some time.

The Scarface Cobras lead the CH-53Ds into the LZ with deadly gun runs as Air Force F-4 Phantom jets pounded two enemy mortar pits that were marching 82mm mortar rounds toward the LZ that was large enough for only one CH-53D to land at a time. "We escorted the Dimmers (CH-53Ds) into the LZ. The first run wasn't as bad as the previous day, when I could see dozens of enemy soldiers out in the open firing at us and the choppers," said Scarface Pilot Joe Driscoll. When McCarley lost radio contact with Covey, Scarface Commanding Officer Lt. Col. Harry Sexton and his co-pilot Pat Owen quickly picked up coordinating the air assets with McCarley.

The first heavy-lift helicopter landed on the LZ, picking up the majority of the wounded B Company men, including the three most seriously wounded who were carried in stretchers since being wounded on Night One of the operation. Second Platoon placed the wounded on the first Marine helicopter before it lifted off successfully and headed back to Kontum.

Scarface again lead the second Marine Corps CH-53D into the LZ, this time taking an increased volume of enemy ground fire, as aviators pointed out to McCarley another large contingent of NVA moving toward the LZ. Now it appeared that the NVA brass realized that B Company had hit the 559 Transportation's base camp and taken all of its maps, reports, records and money and they directed hundreds of enemy troops toward B Company. "They told me they could see hundreds of them coming for us," said McCarley.

The second Marine Corps CH-53D picked up the remaining wounded men and several other members of B Company and lifted off of the LZ successfully, drawing more enemy fire than the first heavy-lift helicopter.

Scarface lead the third CH-53D into the LZ, taking more enemy fire than the previously two choppers had encountered. However, for McCarley, Rose, First Sgt. Morris Adair and the remaining men of B Company the drama wasn't over.

That helicopter had a crash landing in Laos with the remaining team members. All survived the crash and returned to CCC. ❖

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Stryker Meyer entered the Army on December 1, 1966. He completed basic training at Ft. Dix, New Jersey, advanced infantry training at Ft. Gordon, Georgia, jump school at Ft. Benning, Georgia, and graduated from the Special Forces Qualification Course in December 1967.

In May 1968, he arrived at FOB 1 Phu Bai, joining Spike Team Idaho, which transferred to Command & Control North (CCN) in Da Nang in January 1969. He remained on ST Idaho to the end of his tour of duty in late April. Returning to the U.S., he was assigned to E Company in the 10th Special Forces Group at Ft. Devens, Massachusetts, until October 1969, when he rejoined RT Idaho at CCN. That tour of duty ended suddenly in April 1970.

He returned to the States and completed his college education at Trenton State College, where he was editor of The Signal school newspaper for two years. In 2021, Meyer and his wife of 26 years, Anna, moved to Tennessee, where he is working on his fourth book on the secret war and continuing to do SOG podcasts working with battle-hardened combat veteran Navy SEAL and master podcaster [Jocko Willink](#).

Visit John's excellent website [sogchronicles.com](http://sogchronicles.com). His website contains information about all three of his books. You can also find all of his [SOGCast](#) podcasts and [other podcast interviews](#). In addition, the website includes in stories of MACV-SOG Medal of Honor recipients, MIAs and a collection of videos.





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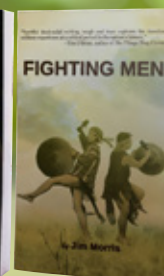
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# Army Special Operations Forces TIMELINE

Modern U.S. Army Special Operations Forces began with the American Expeditionary Forces' Propaganda and Military Government agencies during World War I. Since then, ARSOF has grown and adapted to meet evolving national security concerns. This timeline depicts the significant events that shaped ARSOF over the last century.

View the timeline at [https://arsof-history.org/arsof\\_timeline/index.html](https://arsof-history.org/arsof_timeline/index.html)

# SFA Chapter 78 October 2023 Chapter Meeting

Photos by Rick Carter and Debra Holm



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**1** Chapter President Greg Horton and Chapter Secretary Gary McNamara at the start of the October 2023 SFA Chapter 78 meeting.

**2** Chapter member Mike Lanterman gave a report of his trip to see his son graduate from the SF Q-Course and don his beret for the first time. Mike also represented Chapter 78 at the events.

**3** SGM Chris Wood, C Company recruiter, gave the Chapter an update on the strategies utilized to get qualified SF candidates.

**4** Chapter Treasurer Richard Simonian discussed the difficulties encountered by the Afghan community in setting up the community farm.

**5** Greg Horton led a group discussion.

**6** Richard Simonian, sitting next to Ramon Rodriguez, smiles for the camera.

**7** Robert Casillas, at center. **8** Nick Blau and Erik Berg

**9** Ham Salley **10** Aaron Brandenburg and SGM Chris Wood

**11** Mike Jameson **12** Meeting attendees

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