



# SENTINEL

NEWSLETTER OF THE QUIET PROFESSIONALS

SPECIAL FORCES ASSOCIATION CHAPTER 78

The LTC Frank J. Dallas Chapter

VOLUME 15, ISSUE 3 • MARCH 2024



**COL. ROGER H.C. DONLON**

U.S. Army Special Forces (Retired)

January 30, 1934 – January 25, 2024

*From The Green Berets and Their Victories*

**“II CORPS AND THE BATTLE  
TO SPLIT VIETNAM”**

**REQUIEM for a MARTYR**



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# SENTINEL

VOLUME 15, ISSUE 3 • MARCH 2024

## From the Editor



How Miller  
Sentinel Editor

Normally, I don't mention the "From the President" page, letting it speak for itself. This month, though, our new president and GWOT veteran, Aaron Brandenburg, has written a lengthy column highlighting a broad swath of information on nonprofits, what they have to offer all of us, and how and why we should support them.

Then we start this month with a tribute to the man on the cover, retired Green Beret and Medal of Honor recipient Roger Donlon. His passing on 25 January, 2024, evoked an outpouring of tributes from many whose lives he affected. Ken Bowra (CDR USASOC) has shared his tribute to Roger, and more will be said in the future.

Chapter member Tom Turney is a long-time supporter of our Vietnam allies, the Montagnards, and charities that support them. He shares that Viet Dreams is a new organization that is working directly with Montagnards in the highlands of Vietnam, and Doc Padgett's Refugee Relief International is now involved. These are really worthy organizations you can support.

Next is my review of an excellent book from a *Sentinel* reader, called *The Green Berets and Their Victories*, by former Green Beret Joseph Patrick Meissner. His multifaceted reporting of interviews and experiences during his time in Vietnam is food for thought for any past, present, or future Green Beret. That, along with his retelling of significant battles SF was involved in during his 1968 to 1969 tour, is not only good reading but also worthy of study.

For example, Joseph shares the story of the battle for Duc Lap A-camp, starting on page 6, in "II Corps and the Battle to Split Vietnam." Don't miss it.

Often, our articles have to do with SF history, and sometimes they reflect current events. Chapter member and frequent *Sentinel* contributor Greg Walker is involved with two of our current event stories. Greg lost his good friend Roger Donlon and also lost another good friend called Pesh, who was killed in a recent Irani missile attack in Irbil, Iraq. Greg reveals a lot of background on Peshraw Dirayee, founder of the Falcon Group, and how they both had worked on behalf of the Kurds. Besides being a tribute to "Pesh," it is a real eye-opener. There is also a sidebar on Greg's successor at Falcon Group, Guy "Bear" Barattieri.

Please enjoy Rick Carter's photos of the January Chapter 78 meeting.

We welcome submissions of tales of your service with SF downrange. A lot of the stories we share with you come from our readers. ❖

How Miller  
Sentinel Editor

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FRONT COVER: Col. (ret.) Roger Donlon, MOH, delivering the keynote address at the Special Operations Association Reunion in October 2017. (Photo by Lonny Holmes)

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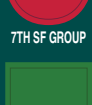
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# From the President | March 2024



Aaron Brandenburg  
President SFA Ch. 78

## The Vital Role of Nonprofits in Supporting Veterans: A Call to Donate

### Introduction:

In the vast landscape of charity, few causes are as pressing and morally imperative as supporting veterans. These men and women, who have dedicated their lives to serving their countries, often face unique challenges upon returning to civilian life. Nonprofit organizations play a crucial role in addressing these challenges, providing vital support, and creating a bridge to a better future for our veterans.

Transitioning from military service to civilian life can be an overwhelming experience for veterans. Many face physical and mental health issues, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injuries (TBI), and other combat-related conditions. Additionally, veterans may encounter difficulties in finding stable employment, suitable housing, and reintegrating into their communities.

Nonprofit organizations specializing in veteran support contribute significantly to easing these challenges. By focusing on various aspects of veterans' well-being, these organizations help pave the way for a smoother transition and a brighter future.

The success of nonprofit organizations in supporting veterans relies heavily on the generosity of donors. Donations enable these organizations to expand their programs, reach more veterans in need, and provide increasingly comprehensive services. By contributing to veteran-focused nonprofits, individuals and businesses alike can directly impact the lives of those who have sacrificed for the greater good.



I'd like to highlight Green Beret Racing (<https://www.greenberetracing.org>) for their unwavering support for our Special Operations Veterans while bringing awareness to the losses that we experience from suicide. The suicide rate among special operations forces (SOF) is a complex and concerning issue that has garnered increased attention in recent years. Special operations commands have recognized the importance of prioritizing mental health and resilience training. Initiatives such as increased access to mental health resources, counseling services, and the implementation of programs to reduce the stigma associated with seeking help have been introduced to support special operations forces.

It is essential to recognize that the issues contributing to the higher suicide rates among special operations forces are complex and multifaceted. A holistic approach that includes preventive measures, early intervention, and ongoing support is crucial to improving the mental health outcomes for these elite military personnel. Organizations like Green Beret Racing, founded by an active-duty SF operator, have taken it upon themselves to create an environment that invests in current and former members of the U.S. Army's Special Forces Regiment and their desire to pursue competition in meaningful, exciting, and rewarding ways. The program directly fights the suicide epidemic by removing monetary barriers while placing Green Berets into groups of like-minded people with similar interests, that pushes them to grow and heal. (<https://www.greenberetracing.org/product/donation-to-green-beret-racing/25?cp=true&sa=true&sbp=false&q=false>)

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## SFA Chapter 78 Monthly Meetings

Chapter 78 meets on the third Saturday of the month\*

**March 16, 2023**

**Time:** Breakfast – 0800 • Meeting – 0830

**Courtyard by Marriott**

5865 Katella Ave, Cypress, CA 90630

Room A

*\*The annual Christmas Party may deviate from this standard.*

## 2024 Meeting Schedule

April 20 | May 18 | June 15 | July 20 | August 17 | September 21 | October 19 | November 16  
December (to be announced)



# COLONEL ROGER H.C. DONLON

United States Army Special Forces (Retired)

January 30, 1934 – January 25, 2024

By Kenneth Bowra

Roger Hugh Charles Donlon, beloved husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, brother, uncle, friend, and Medal of Honor recipient, lost his 12-year battle with Agent Orange Parkinson's Disease and died on January 23, 2024.

Roger was the eighth of 10 children born to Paul A. and Marion (Howard) Donlon of Saugerties, New York. Both his parents preceded him in death. In addition to his parents, his sisters, Marion, Mary Bernadette, Adrienne, and Barbara (Huff), along with brothers Joseph, Michael, and Gerard, also preceded him in death. Two other brothers, Paul A. Jr. of Saugerties, NY, and Jack in Panama City, FL, survive.

Graduating from Saugerties High School in 1952, Roger enlisted in the US Air Force in 1953. He attended the US Military Academy at West Point for 2 years before leaving to achieve his dream of serving as an Infantry Officer through Officer Candidate School. He earned his BA from the University of Nebraska at Omaha, his MS from Campbell University in North Carolina, an Honorary Master of Military Arts and Sciences from the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, KS, and an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Benedictine College in Atchison, KS. Roger served for a total of 33 years in his specialties as an Infantry, Special Forces, and Foreign Area Officer before retiring in 1988 in Leavenworth, KS.

On July 6, 1964, then Captain Donlon and his Special Forces Team A-726, along with 60 Chinese Nungs, defended Camp Nam Dong, Vietnam, when they were attacked by a force of 900 enemy troops. It was the first battle of the Vietnam War where the Regular North Vietnamese Army joined forces with the Viet Cong from the south to try to overrun an American outpost. For his actions at Nam Dong, Roger became the first American soldier to be awarded the Medal of Honor in Vietnam.



Gen. Westmoreland and Roger Donlon at a surprise birthday party SF community threw for the general aboard the Queen Mary. (Photo by Marc Yablonka)



Major Roger H.C. Donlon in a U.S. Army color portrait. Donlon would retire from the Army in 1985 at the rank of colonel. (U.S. Army)



Roger Donlon and Bald Eagle Magissuwa at the 2022 SFA National Convention. (Photo courtesy Mic Clinger)



Left, Roger Donlon poses next to his life-size bronze bust, draped with a special Medal of Honor presented to the Special Forces officer in 1964. The bust was part of the formal dedication and naming of the 7th Special Forces Grp. (Abn) Headquarters on Eglin Air Force Base, FL, in 2019, on the 54th anniversary of the day President Johnson awarded him the first MOH to a Green Beret during the Vietnam War. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Sean Hall). At right, Donlon and his wife, Norma, at the Special Operations Association Reunion in 2017. (Photo by Lonny Holmes)

In November of 1965, while on a flight to Fort Benning, Georgia, Roger sat next to a young widow whose husband had been KIA in Vietnam. Neither was aware that this was the beginning of a love affair that would last to infinity and beyond. Three years later, Roger married Norma Shinno Irving on November 9, 1968.

His surviving family members are Linda Danninger (Paul) (daughter with his first wife, who preceded him in death), his wife of 55 years, Norma, and his three sons, Damian, Jason (Lori), and Derek. His youngest son, Justin, also preceded him in death. In addition, there are 6 grandchildren, Alicia Robbins, Justine (and Adam Donlon-Jeschke) Griffin Danninger, Elise, Jordan, and Aurelia Donlon, and one very special great-granddaughter, Willow Faye Donlon-Campbell, 17 nieces and nephews, 21 grand-nieces and nephews, and 5 great-grand nieces and nephews.

Roger achieved many awards, honors, and accolades during his lifetime, but he considered his two reconciliation projects in Vietnam as his contribution to “Heal the wounds of war.” Both he and his wife,



Norma, believed that “those who have invested the most of themselves in war should be the first to reach out in peace.”

Roger Donlon will be remembered as a devoted family man, faithful to God and his church, a patriot to the core, and always a friend and mentor to those with whom he came into contact.

Visitation was held on Monday, January 29, 2024, at Leintz Funeral Home in Leavenworth, KS.

A Mass of Christian Burial was held at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Leavenworth, KS, on January 30, 2024.

A Celebration of Life will be held on April 10, 2024, beginning at 1300 hours at the Frontier Conference Center, 350 Biddle Avenue, Fort Leavenworth, KS. Burial service to follow at Fort Leavenworth National Cemetery.

In lieu of cards or flowers, please consider a memorial donation to the Gary Sinise Foundation. ❖



Roger Donlon presented the winning trophy at SFA Chapter 78's inaugural Shooter's Cup in 2011. (Photo courtesy Lonny Holmes)



At the Special Operations Forces Ball held by SFA Chapter 29 on May 6, 2023. From left: John Hughes, standing to Donlon's right, CSM (R) Ross Worley, behind Donlon, John S. Meyer, and SFA Chapter 29 Treasurer Roy Williams, to John Meyer's left. (Photo courtesy Geoff Helm)



# THE FORGOTTEN WARRIORS



John and Vicki Padgett of RRil pose with students in Kontum.



Tom Turney

## 2024 Update on Helping the Montagnards in Vietnam

By Thomas W. Turney

Many US Army Special Forces (“SF”) veterans who served in Vietnam worked with the local indigenous peoples, largely Montagnards, to create an effective fighting force to counter Viet Cong and NVA forces operating in South Vietnam. Whether deployed at an A Camp where an SF team would recruit, train and

operate with their indig troops; to Mobile Strike Force (Mike Force) units that acted as a quick reaction force (QRF); to MACV SOG or to other Greek alphabet units, the importance of working with these indigenous soldiers cannot be understated.

Close bonds between these troops and their SF counterparts were formed as a result of working together. When the US withdrew from Vietnam, many of these “Forgotten Warriors” were captured and put into re-education camps or killed. Their families were uprooted and their ancestral lands were confiscated. All who had worked with these soldiers felt we had abandoned them, and many worked tirelessly to try to help them emigrate to the US. While a small contingent of them were able to successfully relocate to the US, most were left behind.



RRil volunteer, Vicki Padgett, holds an abused and malnourished Sedang child. The child appears only months old, but is 2 years of age.



Viet Dreams typical water system installation.

Many Special Forces veterans and others who worked with the Montagnards during the Vietnam era have worked tirelessly over the years to help them. Organizations such as Save The Montagnard People (<https://montagnards.org/>) have helped those who were able to escape to the US, and various other organizations have been working to help those who remain in Vietnam.

One Special Forces veteran who served in Vietnam who has been trying to return to help the Montagnards remaining in Vietnam is John Padgett, MAJ (Ret) who was an SF medic in Vietnam. John has been involved with a charity organization called Refugee Relief International Inc. (<https://refugeerelief.org/>) that has worked in many areas of the world helping those in need. I had the pleasure of working with John trying to help him get into the Central Highlands prior to COVID with the help of Jane Coyle, the founder of The Vietnam Fund. Unfortunately, the Vietnamese government at the time would not allow outsiders into the area and their efforts were thwarted.

In 2023, those efforts were rekindled, and with the help of an organization that has been working in the Highlands called Viet Dreams (<https://vietdreams.org/>). Their work has been primarily helping to install fresh water systems and provide educational and medical assistance to schools and orphanages. John and his wife Vicki, MAJ USAF (Ret), were able to return to visit Kontum and the Quang Nam area where they visited various schools and orphanages.

According to John, the key takeaway from his trip is that the teachers and staff at the schools/orphanages that they visited, who were comprised largely of Catholic nuns, had little education or experience in caring for sick or injured children. As a result, Refugee Relief International Inc. is currently planning another trip to the Highlands in 2024, subject to Vietnamese government approval, to provide basic pediatric health training as well as providing first aid materials that are not available in the Highlands.

Anyone wishing to support the Montagnards remaining in Vietnam should make a donation to either Viet Dreams or Refugee Relief International Inc. which can be accomplished at their respective websites shown above. ❖

# Book Review

## *The Green Berets and Their Victories* by Joseph Patrick Meissner

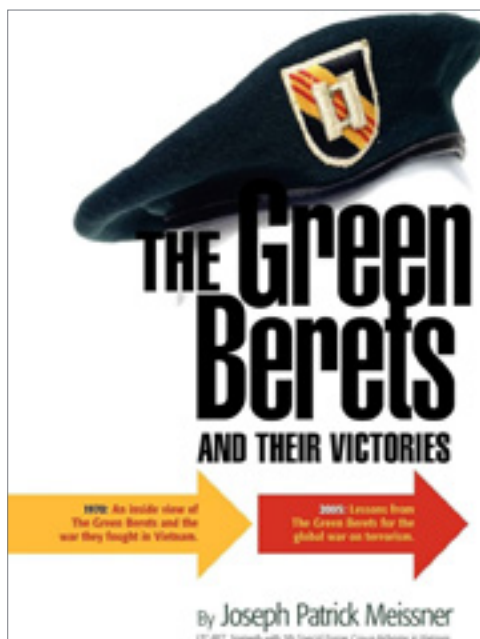
By How Miller

Originally written in 1970 and finally published in 2005, *The Green Berets and Their Victories*, by Joseph Patrick Meissner, formerly a Green Beret and a retired LTC, is an impressive work. Not only does it have riveting battlefield action, but it also looks at the situation in Vietnam and how the Green Berets handled it, especially during his time with the 5th Group from 1968 to 1969. His hope in pushing ahead and getting it published in 2005 was that the current generation of warriors in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as those in future conflicts, would be able to learn from our past successes and failures. It is also written clearly enough for civilians to enjoy and get a deeper understanding of the Vietnam War and the Green Berets.

Building on the composition and history of SF, he tells of the 1962 Buon Enao experiment, where Green Berets taught the tenacious and resourceful Montagnards to effectively fight the Viet Cong and the NVA, so they were able to create a stable and relatively safe area where their families could once again grow and thrive. This proved to themselves and others that success was possible. They also showed that with proper training, leadership, and supplies, anyone, even the marginalized people who were looked down upon by the majority of Vietnamese, could succeed.

Joseph helps us look at the many differing viewpoints and agendas that were part of the struggle. Using his own experience working out of 5th Group Headquarters in his S-5 (Civil Affairs) position, where he traveled around most of the country and participated in many different types of activities, including missions in the delta, constantly learning from all the people he interviewed, military and civilian, about what was important to them. A significant part of his job was to interview Green Berets who were out-processing to go back home. This gave him a well-rounded picture of the situations faced by the group in their quest to have the citizens of South Vietnam build a society loyal to the central government, be able to defend their freedoms, and pursue their dreams.

He tells of significant battles and issues of all four military Corps, starting from the north in I Corps, closest to the enemy's home base in Communist North Vietnam, ending in IV Corps, the Mekong Delta, and the battle of Nui Coto Mountain. He provides several maps to help the readers visualize the geography so they can understand the strategies of both sides.



*The Green Berets and Their Victories*

By Joseph Patrick Meissner

Authorhouse

(November 21, 2005)

536 pages

He discusses how some areas made sufficient progress to turn over camps to the Vietnamese Special Forces, and some of them had no U.S. personnel in the camps. There were also large issues of corruption and lackadaisical pursuit of defeating the enemy, to the point where some cooperated with the enemy, keeping either side from even engaging in combat by avoiding contact.

It made sense that there would be varying degrees of cooperation in a country that had seen decades of near-constant war, and merely staying alive was far more important than politics. There was an accelerating pace of camps being turned over to the ARVN and the CIDG becoming Border Rangers, part of Nixon's plan of Vietnamization.

A camps were not the only topic. They were backed up by a Mike Force in each corps, and there were specialized recon and interdiction units. He (appropriately in 1970) mentions SOG only briefly as the "C&C outfits with secret missions" and units like B52's Project Delta.

He boldly explains happenings near the "Flagpole," which was what the 5th Group's headquarters was called. He talks about what is referred to in the field as REMF's, Rear Echelon \*\*s, who were there to avoid danger and have a cushy life and never went to the field. He contrasts them with the professionals who were there because that was the best place to get their job done in the center of communications and activity.

He spends a whole chapter on the various types and consequences of corruption, citing many examples from experience and interviews. It was a national, or societal, problem for Vietnam, their military, and even our troops, who had a hand in some of the action.

Then he spends another chapter on the issue of sex and how war seems to inevitably bring with it a necessity for all that energy to find fulfillment. He takes a hard look at what it usually does to a society and again gives examples.

What is impressive about this book is how he doesn't seem to pull punches and puts the good, the bad, and the ugly all out there. There are many lessons to be gleaned from this book, some pointed out by the author, and many more to be found in one's own examination of the wide range of facts and ideas presented. It is also evident that Special Forces is needed now, as much as ever.

Now, be sure to see part of the book about the intense Battle of Duc Lap, next on page seven. ♦



## CHAPTER THREE, Section A

# II CORPS AND THE BATTLE TO SPLIT VIETNAM

By Joseph Patrick Meissner

From *The Green Berets and Their Victories*, Chapter Three, published by Authorhouse, November 21, 2005, pages 80-98, reprinted with permission.

Covering almost half of South Vietnam, II Corps is the largest tactical area of responsibility in the country. Its eastern boundary extends 320 miles along the South China sea. At its widest point the zone stretches 136 miles climbing from the rice-rich coastal plains through the rugged Annamite Mountains which form the spine of Vietnam to the plateau and western highlands along the Laotian and Cambodian border. This western border shares a 65 mile long stretch with Laos and 175 miles with Cambodia. In fact, much of this strip which Rand-McNally maps show as Laos and Cambodia, politically, economically, and militarily is controlled and administered by Hanoi.

II Corps itself, although the largest of all four corps, contains only three million people, less than one-fifth of the country's population. Most of this is concentrated in the fertile coastal plains around the cities of Qui Nhon, Tuy Hoa, Ninh Hoa, Nha Trang—home of 5th Special Forces, Cam Ranh—supposedly the safest place in country, Phan Rang, and Phan Thiet. The only major population center in the Annamites is the very beautiful autonomous city of Dalat whose military training schools are the "West Point" of the nation. West of the sparsely settled mountains, the only major urban areas are Kontum, Pleiku, and Ban Me Thuot. Five key roads connect the coastal cities with the interior while two highways run north–south, one along the coast and the second in the highlands.

Remember that II Corps was the original home of Special Forces and that it was the Montagnard village of Buon Enao near Ban Me Thuot where the first experiment was conducted on recruiting, training, and advising an indigenous force who could then protect themselves and their families against the Viet Cong. Here also near Pleiku were fought such battles as Duc Co and Plei Mei in 1965 when regular

American units were committed for the first time on a large scale to battle with North Vietnamese units. In those days, U.S. commanders thought their troops would quickly rout the enemy much like John Wayne charging at the climax of a war movie or the cavalry arriving in the nick of time to save the fort.

The Vietnamese war was a conflict constantly in search of a reason. Nowhere was this more true than in discussions about the battles in the Highlands. One theory, which was a special hang-up of General Westmoreland, held that the Communists were trying to drive a wedge through the highlands to the coast which would divide Vietnam in two. Many pooh-poohed this view since pieces of terrain meant little in the war and because Allied supply efforts were based on air rather than road transportation. Another hypothesis stated, almost as an axiom, "Whoever controls the Highlands controls South Vietnam." Geographically this might be true since half of Vietnam is the Highlands, but either Saigon or the fruitful paddies of the Delta were much more significant to the country. A third thesis—and the one I lean towards—considered the Highlands important because here resided almost a million Montagnards who because of their oppressive conditions constituted an explosive element within the country similar in many respects to the Negroes in American society. Already some material has been presented on these tribes and more is contained in the last section of this Chapter.

This Chapter opens with two crucial episodes that occurred during the battle for Camp Duc Lap, the most significant Special Forces battle of 1968. Next, in Section B, are the experiences and conflicts between the Berets and regular American units in II Corps, reminiscent of the SF-Marine rivalry in I Corps. The third section presents four different views of the Green Beret success in training the Vietnamese Special Forces. Then follows one experienced Sergeant's views on the war. Fifth, in Section E, are accounts of the Battle of Ben Het, the most important action of the war in the first half of 1969. Last, as already mentioned, is Section F on the Montagnards.



## A. Cowboy Who Wore a Sneer on His Face.

For one hundred days II Corps had been unusually quiet. The tide of the Tet Offensive in February 1968 had receded. The May Cities Campaign, though destructive, had not been half as critical as Tet. But neither of these huge Red efforts had really affected the Green Beret "A"-camps located away from the heavily populated areas that had been the targets of enemy attacks. Then in late August the Communists launched their third major offensive of 1968, only this was aimed at American military installations, particularly the Special Forces "A"-Camps.

On a misty rainy night at 0330 hours of 18 August an NVA regiment hurled itself against both the east and west walls of Camp Dak Seang, north of Kontum city. For an hour and a half the defenders fought off wave after wave of fresh well-equipped enemy troops. Once the Communists even pierced the main perimeter. Inside the besieged bunkers indigenous wives carried ammunition to their husbands in scenes recalling the American colonial frontier. Because of the fog and strong winds Allied air power was virtually useless although a lone AC-47 circled high above the camp and dropped flares which dimly lit up the inky blackness. Just before dawn the NVA withdrew, dragging away their dead and wounded.

Dak Seang was the prelude for the battle five days later when three NVA regiments would assault Special Forces Camp Duc Lap and the local Government Headquarters in what would be the most significant battle the Green Berets waged the entire year. Camp Duc Lap, only ten miles from the Cambodian border (see Map 5), sits on two hills overlooking a plateau floor that stretches at least fifteen hundred meters in all directions. Four miles to the northwest is the local Government Headquarters astride the junction of two highways. (See Map 6 for Duc Lap area.)

Agriculturally the region is self-sufficient. The rich soil will yield virtually any crop that is planted, including rice, coffee, bananas, oranges, and sweet potatoes. Livestock and fowl are plentiful. The people enjoy a high standard of living compared to other areas of the country and during lulls in the war they transport much produce along Highway 14 for sale in the Ban Me Thuot markets. Most of the population are Vietnamese who fled Ho Chi Minh's northern paradise and were resettled in the Highlands in 1956 as part of President Diem's plans for incorporating the refugees within his newly born republic. Also dwelling in the Duc Lap area are Montagnards. The 1966 National Census showed 6,233 ethnic Vietnamese and 976 Montagnards. Almost half these people are Catholics while one-fourth are Buddhists and the remainder hold various animist beliefs.

Duc Lap District sits in what the Viet Cong call the "F6 Corridor." This infiltration route starts in Cambodia in the Nam Lyr Mountains where the NVA have huge supply and troop bases, crosses the border, divides to fork around Camp Duc Lap, and then remarries to flow into "VC Valley" a long-time enemy base within Vietnam. A northern off-shoot of corridor extends to a Communist safe area near Ban Me Thuot. In the bureaucracy Duc Lap District falls under the control of VC Province whose home seat is VC Valley. North Vietnamese troops come down by truck along the Ho Chi Minh trail and stop in the Nam Lyr Mountain base. Then proceeding across the border through the F6 corridor they to rest in VC Valley before infiltrating deeper into the eastern provinces of II Corps or turning south into III Corps.

## Map 5 II Corps and the Highlands

The Western half of this Corps is referred to as Highlands. Here is the home of the Montagnard tribes in South Vietnam. Some tribes do inhabit the western parts of I Corps. Note also that some of the "A"-camps marked on the map have been turned over either to VNSF or RF/PF.



During July and early August of 1968 Green Beret intelligence sources had indicated an upcoming attack. Enemy troops had been spotted moving into the region in small units, their rucksacks heavily loaded down. This suggested rocket and mortar ammunition was being stockpiled for a battle. Just the week before, the "B"-team at Ban Me Thuot had raced Duc Lap Camp "Number One" on the list of camps that should expect to be hit. This week the camp had dropped to the "Number Three" spot. The enemy was a week late.

Sergeant Mike Dooley had radio watch chat night in the team house of the Camp. In his spare moments he was a cartoonist. With a few strokes of his pen he could make others laugh at the absurdities of this war. Three days later his body would lie slumped across the inner wall of sandbags. Buried deep in his brain would be a sniper's bullet. Boody, the top sergeant, sat near Dooley. Boody was good looking with a ready ability to talk easily and smoothly. From the wreckage of the camp after the battle his weary unshaven face and husky voice would be broadcast across ten thousand miles of space to flash on the TV screens of America and tell folks back home what war was like. Boody was busy writing a letter to his wife before turning in. Other team members lounged around, some reading, others just finishing a card game. A few were sleeping in their well-fortified bunkers. The remainder of the team was advising two companies of indigenous troops on extended operations some twenty miles northwest of the camp.

Meanwhile two hundred feet from the camp's northern wire, a lamp's light flickered in the small command bunker. The NVA officer smiled to himself as he examined the map of the camp so carefully drawn in ink. Outside in the moonless night the rocket and mortar teams had already taken their positions around the camp. Nobody had been discovered. The attack would be a complete surprise.

For days before, enemy agents had surveyed the camp's outposts and noted the CIDG guards lolling in the shade. Neither Americans nor VNSF ever seemed to accompany local security patrols. Moreover, the enemy had noted a set pattern of where these patrols went and where they did not. Slipping through the holes of friendly defenses, the NVA soldiers had built dozens of two and three man bunkers roofed over with heavy timbers within meters of the camp perimeter. How amazingly similar were such tactics to those used in the 1965 attack on Camp Plei Meil Or further back, Dien Bien Phu in 1954!

The NVA officer pointed to the smaller northern hill of the camp on his map. "Here," he said to his companion, "we will breach the wire at this point. You will lead the first assault tomorrow after dark."

Where did they get the map? Lieutenant Harp, the "A"-team commander at Duc Lap, never liked all the civilians who walked about the camp, entering and leaving as they pleased. Time and again he had warned his counterpart, Captain Bao, who was Camp Commander, about the danger. But the camp was too near the surrounding villages and everybody had friends and relatives they wanted to visit. So Captain Bao was reluctant to do anything which would antagonize the people, and Lieutenant Harp (of course!) could not act because he only advised.

The enemy officer folded the map and stuck it into his pocket. He glanced at his watch. "One-fifteen, time to begin," he said, "it will be a glorious victory." Five days later an American sergeant leading a

sweep after the battle would discover the officer's corpse and find the map in his pocket. In one corner written in Vietnamese the dead man had composed a two line poem!

*"Brothers, North and South, bravely battle the Americans,  
The voices of victory spread like flowers in bloom."*

Suddenly a familiar dull rumble awakened Lieutenant Harp as he lay resting in his room. Mortar rounds were exploding somewhere in the distance. Boody heard them too. Opening the heavy wood door of the team house, he stood there, watching the flashes of light in the west popping around the Government Headquarters.

"Everybody up! Get out of bed!" Harp yelled through the night.

Childs, Hall, Alward, Shepherd, and the other Green Berets dressed and raced for the team house. Harp was already there. A message was coming in from the beleaguered Government Headquarters. Mortar shells were crashing all around them and they needed help. Boody called the "B"-team at Ban Me Thuot to inform them and ask for Spooky, the huge lumbering AC-47 gunship whose mini-guns had smothered so many past Communist attacks on Allied outposts. Harp told the rest of the team to get their troops organized and man their alert positions.

"We thought we were really sitting eight then," Boody observed later, "we thought nobody would fool with us."

But the NVA did not agree. Fifteen minutes after the opening fires struck Government Headquarters, rockets and mortars slammed into a tiny Camp outpost which protected the runway. Quickly, the enemy attack reduced the OP co a pile of rubble. Now it was the camp's turn. Small arms and automatic fire rattled through the night, building to a crescendo of mortar rounds and B-40 rockets which smashed and splattered against friendly fortifications. All night the attack continued, slackening only at dawn. But when a Camp Strike Force patrol attempted to leave camp, enemy fire cut through its ranks and sent the soldiers scurrying back within their defenses of barbed wire and sandbags. Like mushrooms enemy rounds burst and sprouted from all sides. The fire came from all sides.

What at first seemed like an enemy probe, much like a fighter jabbing his opponent, had now blossomed into the beginning of a siege. One thought kept repeating itself in Harp's mind that early Friday morning of 23 August: "These guys are really here to stay."



5th Group "Mike Force" line up in formation.



From Ban Me Thuot, Lieutenant-Colonel Ramon Reed, the “B” team commander, ordered two Companies of the Pleiku Mike Force to reinforce Duc Lap. These units landed a thousand meters north of the camp and tried to clear the enemy out of their rear support bases hidden in the jungles. (See Map 7.) Beaten back, the two companies withdrew to the heights northwest of the camp. From here they had perfect seats to watch the show as NVA units after dark slashed and clawed their way through the northern wire of the camp and seized the smaller hill. For three hours some fifty CIDG soldiers and their wives and children held out against the assaulting force of some five hundred enemy.

Fifty soldiers was all Bao and Harp could spare for the smaller hill. For the larger main hill they had less than two hundred troops. But the real difficulty stemmed from the fact that the far slope which the enemy assaulted could not be seen from anywhere on the main hill. Thus the fire from camp mortars and howitzers could not be adjusted to throw a curtain of steel death upon the attackers. Either Green Berets or VNSF could have been stationed before the battle on the small hill to perform as forward observers. Unfortunately this had not been done.

The real hero that night would be an indigenous radio man named Y-Sanh. As the enemy groped from bunker to bunker up the back slope of the northern hill, Y-Sanh and four other CIDG hid in a bunker atop the hill. Throughout the night he broadcasted back to the main hill, informing them of enemy movements and where they were emplacing weapons. All the time he requested fire right on his own position.

“He called, told us use mortars, use jets,” Captain Bao later remembered, “bomb the small hill. Even if he should die, no sweat.”

All night and into the next morning Y-Sanh’s reports flowed in, begging for air strikes, artillery, and mortars. The last message told of enemy soldiers moving into nearby bunkers, tossing in grenades and firing their AK-47’s. Then silence. Y-Sanh and his four companions were never seen or heard from again.

Saturday, like Friday, was again a beautiful day of sunshine and drifting white clouds. A perfect day for the jets! Hurling down from the heaven’s vault, they swooped in a long arc, released their bombs, and pulled upward in a twisting turn to fool the enemy gunners on the ground. The bombs, flaming napalm, or cluster bombs (a “mother unit” which spewed out dozens of baby bomblets), or simply an old-fashioned 750 pounds of explosives, the bombs—whatever kind—were not enough to blast the enemy off the northern hill. The camp, now split into a northern enemy-held half and a southern friendly portion, did not have enough strength to cast out the invaders.

After surveying the battle scene, LTC Reed ordered another company of Mike Force to join the two northwest of camp. Now a battalion strong this force marched to the camp and attempted to enter through the gate on the west. One company advised by Australians attached to 5th Special Forces managed to slip through the gate and reinforced the defenders on the main hill. But enemy fire both from the smaller hill and the surrounding fields beat back the other two Mike Force units who had to withdraw to their prior night’s position. Saturday night the NVA continued to inch forward along the trenches into the saddle between the two hills. Their goal was to pinch off the friendly hill with one arm of their force taking the left flank while the other arm took the right.

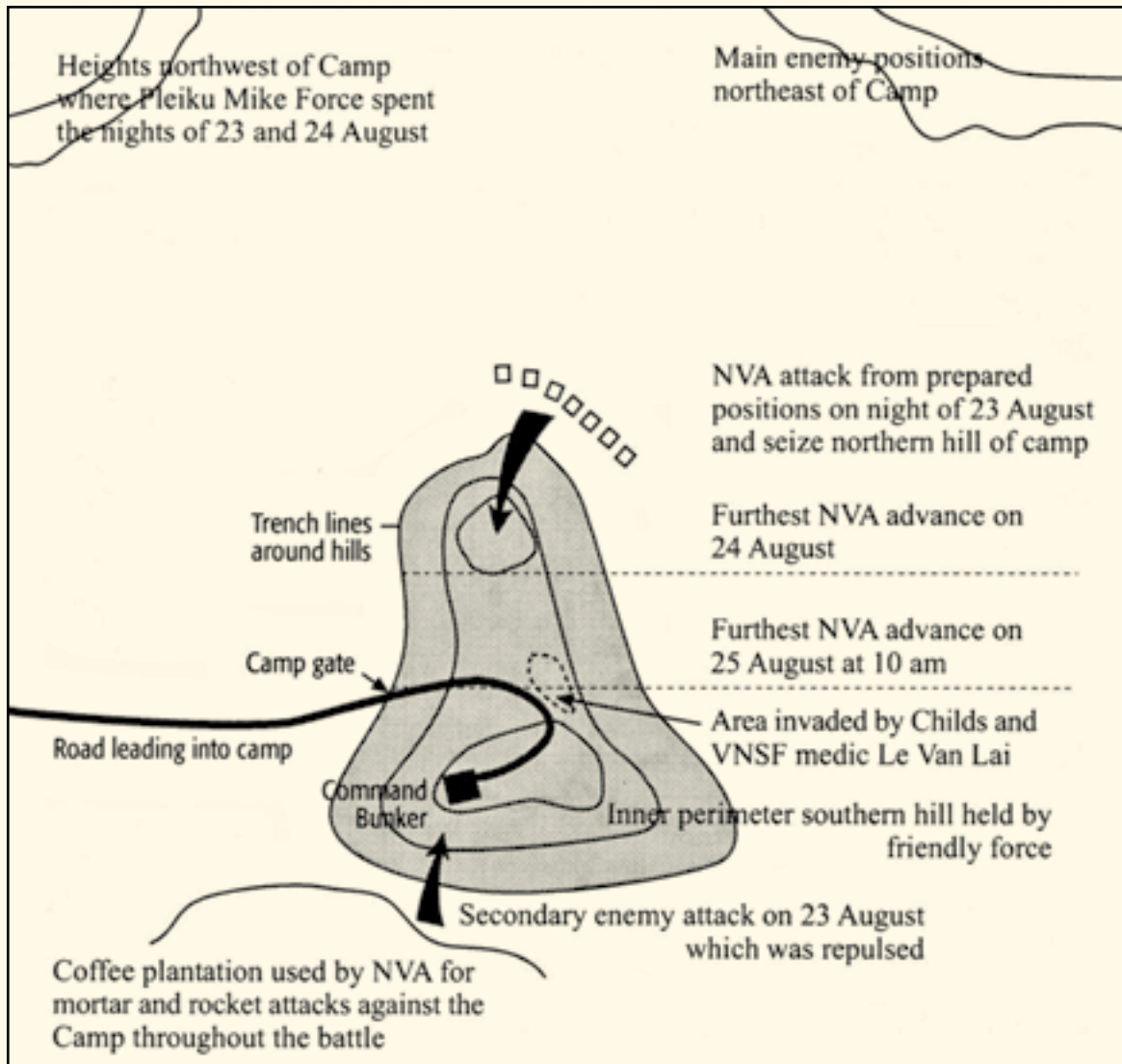
## Map 6. Duc Lap Region



1. Special Forces CIDG Camp Duc Lap which was attacked by NVN regular units from 23 through 26 August, 1968.
2. Enemy bunkers, hospital, staging areas and rocket launching sites hidden in hills covered by heavy jungle.
3. Hill area occupied by 2nd Mike Force from Pleiku on nights of 23 and 24 August.
4. Duc Lap Subsector Government Headquarters held by ARVN soldiers despite constant enemy attacks from 23 through 28 August.
5. Approach route of 5th Mike Force from Nha Trang on Sunday, 25 August, when they retook the northern hill which had been captured by the NVA.
6. Approach route of 2nd Mike Force on Sunday when they helped the Nha Trang force recover the smaller northern hill.

## Map 7

### Immediate Area Around Camp Duc Lap



Sunday morning, the sun was rising and the sky promised another golden day. For a minute a silence filled the valley and cloaked the two dirt-red hills scarred by the battle. The world itself waited. Then a thump, a thunder, a rumbling roar as if the earth were cracking open. Again and again the ground shook. High above, so high that no sound was born, no warning, the silver B-52's opened their bomb doors, dropped their load, and then closed their doors. Eight more times the giant planes would solemnly drop their deafening fury upon the land around Duc Lap.

The "Arclights" or B-52 strikes were not an unmixed blessing, however. While the big bombers flew high overhead, all other air operations had to be called off. "TAC air" was on station," one Beret pointed out later, "but it couldn't get in because of the B-52's." ("TAC Air" or "tactical air" refers to the planes which provide close-in support for the ground troops when they are engaged with the enemy.) The problem was acute because the B-52 planes could not bomb within 1500 meters of the camp. The margin of error for the "ARC lights" demanded at least this 1500 meter ring in order to safeguard friendly

troops. Yet this was precisely where many of the enemy were located and these were the ones who were directly assaulting the main hill. At this very time the defenders needed all the TAC air they could get.

The time was 0800. For over two hours the enemy had been pushing hard. The camp CIDG were tiring from the strain. Some of them cracked under the pressure.

"About half the Yards got up from their positions," recalled Childs, a Green Beret defender who was in the camp's third 81 millimeter mortar pit. "They ran back to the other side of the camp. I saw them running. So I went up to them and told these people to fucking move. I had one VNSF and one interpreter and I told them to tell these people to get their fucking asses back to the other side of the hill."

After the Arc lights, Harp had requested TAC air strikes on the southeast side of the camp where the enemy had tried to break through earlier in the morning. Unfortunately, the napalm was dropped in the wrong place, almost on top of the defenders. Frightened, some of the indig fell back up the hill.



Alward, another American in the camp, was in the second mortar pit. He watched as three CIDG came running up the hill with no weapons.

“What the hell’s going on?” he shouted. He told the interpreter to find out. The latter asked the three terrified men.

“Beaucoup VC come,” he translated. “They quit. Drop weapons. Run.”

Alward relayed this to Harp and Boody in the camp tactical operations center (TOC).

“Get those people back into position,” Boody said.

But these three men were like the break in the dam. All the CIDG seemed to be leaving their positions in the lower perimeter and flowing toward the top of the hill. They all wanted to be where the Americans were.

“Yards from the other side to the south down by the motor pool and plantation were flooding up the hill.” (See Map 7) Childs went on. “They broke through our barbed wire. I fired several rounds over their heads but they just weren’t going to stop. They wanted in our compound. I could do nothing about it. They flooded up, dependents and all. So I took these people and had them situated around the area. I started pushing a large majority of the Yards back towards the northeast section of the camp where the main ground attack had occurred and where the next one would probably come.”

“This was really scary,” Boody said afterward. “This was the one point where we thought possibly Charlie was on the hill and that we had had it.

“It meant our asses if we didn’t get these people back in positions,” Alward remembered later. “We threatened and pushed them.” Everybody—Americans, Australians, and VNSF—were yelling and shoving the Montagnards to go back.

“I grabbed this one guy,” Alward continued, “he had been in the second 81 pit. He could get along in broken English. I said, ‘You get those damn people back into those trenches or we’re dead!’ I pushed him toward them. Then I walked toward clusters of CIDG, threw out my arms, and said, ‘Get back, get back into those positions.’ It seemed we were being overrun by the CIDG. They brought all their families with them. There’s nothing you can do when a Montagnard is with his family. That’s his one concern. So we said let them get their families into the bunkers



Commander of a Nha Trang “Mike Force” Company and his USASF Advisor

and pits. Then we hustled their asses out. All of us Americans were out there, physically pushing them, grabbing them, shaking our rifles in their noses, making them go back to their positions. They finally did, not as well as before, but at least we had a real tight perimeter at the top of the hill. At that time this was the only ground the friendlies held. We just sat tight then. That’s all we could do. We went back to the mortar pits and constantly watched that these people didn’t break again.”

Shepherd, the “A”-team medic, tried out a different technique on the scared CIDG. “I watched the little kids clinging to their parents. The older ones were carrying ammo cans filled with water or clutching sacks of clothing. They all look frightened, so I began laughing at them. I tried to make little jokes to stop their panic. Some would smile at me, but others must have thought I was crazy.”

Wast, an American with the Mike Force company which had entered the camp on Saturday, was yelling and pushing the CIDG back. All the time he was wondering how would the newspapers back home write this up.

“The civilians had started coming up first,” Smith, an Australian with the Mike Force, described his experience that morning, “droves on the run, crying and screaming, the troops following them. We got them back here they belonged; but for half an hour things looked pretty grim. I just patted them on their behinds, pointed the way back, and shot some M-16 ammunition off. They just realized there was nothing else to do.”

Some of the Mike Force company, despite their elite training, had also left their positions and followed the Camp Strikers up the hill. Their company commander, named Toget, who Saturday afternoon had kicked and shoved his men through the gate into camp, now ran toward his soldiers, yelling and swearing at them. He grabbed a couple and punched them, then thrust them back toward the trenches.

“The company commander did a good job,” Smith declared. “He wasn’t as polite as we were, but he got them back where they should be.”

“I was scared myself during this time,” declared Hall, a member of the “A” team at Duc Lap. “My shit was really weak. I was saying my prayers because I thought it was all over. We had to make a tight perimeter and hold it. This seemed like the last stand. Reinforcements were supposed to be on their way, but they seemed too distant to help.”

Childs made sure that the perimeter was re-established on the northern slope.

“They were rather slow moving back,” Childs said. “Half of them had run from this area before and they weren’t too swift about getting back. Nobody wanted to get out of the trenches at the top of the hill and move. We were under fire, though somewhat sporadic. It was urgent to get these people spread out because we didn’t know when the attack was coming. I had the interpreter and a VNSF soldier helping me. Finally we got them spaced out, one Yard every five or six feet.

“After making sure everybody had ammunition, I walked back toward the TOC and had all the dependents get into two or three bunkers with orders to stay there. Many didn’t want to leave their husbands, but I forced them to. Returning to the perimeter, I told everyone through the interpreter and the VNSF that if they ran I was going to



Very impressive VNSF commander whose Vietnamese team successfully assumed complete operation of an A-Camp in I Corps. The Green Beret mission was to turn over all their camps to the VNSF.

kill them. If they deserted, the whole place would fall. So everything depended on them. If they didn't want to be killed by me, they'd stay where they were.

"I was determined I would shoot these people if they ran because I knew Charlie would have to come through this way. I was also wishing for more grenades. I felt that the Yards would not hold this position through the following night even though it meant their own lives. If the enemy attacked, they would overrun the main hill in short order. All this time I half expected a bullet in my back from someone. We had information there were Charlies who had infiltrated our Camp Strike Force. I even thought a friendly might shoot me because I know I wouldn't like someone shouting at me and threatening, 'I'm going to shoot you.' I can remember one goofy thought in my mind that if Charlie got through it would be over my dead body."

Although the perimeter was intact, the camp continued to receive a lot of B-40 rockets and mortars. Most of this seemed to be coming from a "friendly" village. This continuous fire menaced the shaken morale of the CIDG. About 0900 hours the camp requested an air strike.

"The strike sure got results fast," related Smith. "The first two runs dropped cluster bomb units. About twenty-five NVA began to run from the village. An F-100 swooped down and unloaded napalm right in the middle of them. Really a good sight. The Yards were very pleased to

see that, smiling and jabbering. Things looked bright again. The napalm would hit a hut where the enemy was hiding and the hut would just disappear into a beautiful yellow-orange mushroom of flame and smoke."

Thus ended one crucial episode in the battle for Duc Lap. Unlike Camp Ashau in 1966 when the pull back of the indigenous soldiers turned into a rout and Americans actually had to shoot friendly troops who had gone berserk, at Duc Lap on that Sunday morning the Green Berets, Aussies, and their Vietnamese counterparts had rallied their soldiers to hold and fight back.

The second crucial episode I wish to relate—another crisis that threatened Camp Duc Lap—began immediately after the first.

After a new perimeter had been established, the camp leaders discussed the situation back at the TOC. They all agreed that if reinforcements did not arrive soon, the camp could not hold out. Boody, the team sergeant, was on the radio all morning telling this to Lieutenant-Colonel Reed at Ban Me Thuot. Two companies of Pleiku Mike Force were still camped less than 1500 meters from camp on the heights to the northwest.

Reed also had two companies of Nha Trang Mike Force waiting on the airstrip at Ban Me Thuoc. These could be lifted into the Duc Lap area by helicopters. Reed ordered the Pleiku units to advance. At the same time, he directed the Nha Trang companies to move to Duc Lap by helicopter.

These reinforcements, however, seemed very distant to the defenders on the southern hill of Camp Duc Lap. Most of the "A"-team had gathered in the TOC to discuss what to do. The NVA had completely encircled the camp and were pulling the noose tight.

"The enemy was up within hand grenade range of the perimeter," Harp said later. "They were real close. We had to bring napalm air strikes within eighty meters of our lines. In fact, that's what had started the flight up the hill when one bomb hit short among the soldiers. We were screaming to higher headquarters to get us some help."

Boody discussed plans for leaving camp with his team members. The route of escape would be down the southwest corner of the hill by the motor pool, then out through the coffee plantation. The enemy was thought to be weakest at this point. Moreover, the rescuing Mike Force companies were approaching the camp from this direction. Thus the camp survivors would be able to link up with a friendly force. Shepherd, the medic, got some thermite grenades from the team house and these were passed around, two to an American, so that the mortars and other camp weapons would not be left intact for the enemy to use. (In early May 1954 at Dien Bien Phu, the defenders had made similar plans for a break-out through the Viet Minh encirclement.)

The hardest part of the plan concerned the two Americans who had been wounded in the prior days of fighting. Neither could walk, both were in constant pain. Little hope existed that either could be carried out the camp if it was overrun. One, Major Roland Greenwood, was given a pistol and an M-16. Propped up in one corner he kept his weapon pointed at the door. The other, Sergeant First Class Harry Umeda, had his .45 out and held it across his chest. Neither man was going to be taken alive. (I know it sounds corny, but the story of the Alamo and Colonel Jim Bowie comes to mind.)



None of these plans were conveyed to either the VNSF or the Montagnards. “I don’t know how we would have gotten the troops and their dependents out,” Shepherd confessed after the battle. Perhaps that was justification enough for not informing them. Such a discussion would only have thrown them into a state of panic and would have lessened their chances for survival.

Childs had returned to the TOC about 1000 hours and reported to Boody and Harp that the perimeter was secure. Impatient with all the talk about leaving the camp, he picked up a radio and headed back to the northern slope of the main hill. Below the inner wire were a number of bunkers nestled against the side of the hill. Childs figured that during the earlier confusion, the enemy had probably seized these bunkers and was still there.

“I had a plan,” Childs related later, “to retake these bunkers and put some Yards down there, so when Charlie came up the hill that night we’d have an early warning system. We could stop him before he got within the inner perimeter. After this I was going to go back by the VNSF building near the gate. A sandbag wall was there and one bunker. I was going to take the bunker apart, rebuild the wall, and put a .30 caliber there as a strongpoint to cover this whole area of the hill.”

The VNSF medic, Sergeant Le Van Lai, called “bac-si” or “doctor” in Vietnamese, came over to talk to Childs about the bunkers below the hill.

“He was something of a cowboy with a permanent sneer on his face,” Childs said later. “He wore his hair long beneath his ears. One of the indig had told me this guy was a damn-good fighter, that he knew karate, and could beat the hell out of anybody. About average size, maybe a little stocky, he looked a little funny when he smiled since a couple of his front teeth were missing.

“I originally didn’t think much of this man. From seeing him around the camp I thought he was like most of the other slopes—just generally sorry. But my opinion really changed. This man was definitely a brave man. He didn’t run when the Yards ran, when the shit got pretty deep. He was exceptionally brave, in fact a hell of a lot braver than I.”

The Vietnamese medic had somehow captured a complete enemy B-40 rocket and launcher. He had fired this into one of the enemy bunkers in the saddle blowing it up.

Childs rounded up ten CIDG. Loading up with grenades and a LAW, he and the bac-si led their tiny force down the road toward the bunkers. The American fired the LAW and blew up the first bunker on the right. Its roof was level with the road, so Childs simply rolled on top and began to make his way to the far side.

“As I crawled over, I came upon an unexploded grenade,” Childs remembered. “I could see the Yards cowering just outside the innermost gate. I yelled at them to come on. But I knew it was mine and bac-si’s show all the way. The Yards weren’t going to do anything. Even the combat interpreter I had wasn’t much help. He barely got past the gate. He had the radio. I gave it to him with orders to call back if I got hit and get somebody down there to rescue my ass. I knew Shepherd would be down, at least I hoped so.

“I crept over to the far side of the bunker roof and came to a shooting port. There was an AK-47 sticking out, waving around. So I pulled

the pin on my grenade, put it behind me, let the hammer fly, waited a couple of seconds, then dropped it in there. Bac-si threw a grenade in the other side. The grenades went off and blew that fucker to pieces.”

Darting sideways to the left of the first bunker which Childs had destroyed with the LAW, both men demolished a couple more bunkers with grenades. Then crawling down the slope into the saddle, they looked for more game.

“All this time we were under sporadic automatic weapons fire and sniper fire from the far slope. Suddenly the firing increased. It was coming not only from the enemy hill but also the gully. I had about ten brown cornstalks, half an inch in diameter, for protection. I lay on my back and side with my feet down the hill, watching what was going on. Bac-si was about ten feet from me doing the same, cooling it.

“Glancing back up the hill, I saw the Yards who were supposed to be with us but who hadn’t gone past the first bunker, making it back up the hill. They had left bac-si and myself down there, with no grenades, just our personal weapons.

“In front of us about fifteen feet was a shell hole. Three Charlies poked their heads up, two with AK-47’s, and started toward us. I switched my M-16 to fully automatic and shot at them. I hit one. His whole head just disintegrated. I assume I killed or wounded the other two because I didn’t see anything more of them.”

“Then bac-si and I started back up the hill. I laid down covering fire and he would move, then he would fire and I would move. It was slow going. On the way we spotted two B-40 rockets and launchers, laying off to the side. But because of the intense fire we couldn’t get them. Besides we were already loaded down with weapons we had picked up from the dead in the bunkers.”

The results of two men’s efforts were two bunkers demolished, three cleaned out, and at least five enemy dead. They had also dragged back three AK-47’s and three rocket launchers. One of the Yards took the AK’s and fired them at the enemy. Childs, however, was still determined to go down the slope again and finish the job he had started. Moreover he wanted to get those two other rockets and launchers left behind so they could not be used against the camp.



Captured Viet Cong film shows enemy soldier in jungle hide-out.



This “gutsy” CIDG company commander has already been awarded an American Bronze Medal for his bravery and fighting skills.

“I asked for ten brave men to come down the hill with me,” Childs went on. “We were going to try all over. Not surprisingly, ten brave men didn’t step forward. So bac-si and I went back down the hill alone to retrieve those two B-40’s. I had just reached the rockets and was ready to pick them up. Bac-si was on the other side of the two launchers behind a pile of rubble. We had been under fire all this time, but now it really became intense. It was fantastic. Bullets were everywhere. I tried to hide in a ditch behind a mound of earth. I couldn’t quite reach the rockets. Bac-si tried but he couldn’t get them either. I decided this just wasn’t worth our lives.”

Childs looked over at the medic. Both knew they had to get out of there.

“Come on,” Childs yelled, “we’ll get them later.”

Then the American jumped up and in a broken field run dashed back up the hill. Bac-si turned over and rose to his knees to follow the scrambling Beret. Suddenly a burst of gunfire hit him in the back and he collapsed in the reddish dirt, his fingers clutching the side of the hill.

“When I got up the slope,” Childs related, “I saw bac-si still laying there. I thought he was getting a slow start or just afraid to come up. I yelled for him a couple of times. I had the interpreter shout down. But he just lay there, rolling around a little. I assumed he was wounded.”

Childs radioed the TOC. Boody answered. A few other team members had come in to take a break and get something to eat. They listened to the conversation.

“This is Childs,” the voice came over the radio. “Where the hell have you been?” Boody asked.

“I’m down here on the forward slope. Look, the Vietnamese bac-si’s been hit.”

“All right,” Boody replied, “just stay where you are. Okay?”

Childs turned toward the interpreter. “You get those Yards to fire away and cover me.” He then ran back down the hill.

“When I got to bac-si, I found he had a hole in his back through the lungs, a sucking chest wound,” Childs described. “I pulled out my morphine and tried to give him an injection, but I wasn’t able to. I

couldn’t get the thing to work right. I think I was worried about myself and I couldn’t get the scuff to come out. I couldn’t get over him to place a piece of plastic on his wound. Every time I moved I received automatic weapons fire. We were both pinned down.”

Childs tried to spot who was shooting at him. About twenty yards away in the gully was a green clad figure with his head and chest sticking up.

“I thought it was a dead body because this guy was really chubby, bloated like a corpse sitting around a while. But I couldn’t figure why he was sticking up like that. All of a sudden his head started to move. He was definitely well-fed. I suppose he was trying to find out what the fuck the story was. I got off a couple of shots at him, but I don’t think I hit him. I saw the bullets pinging around him.”

Childs had to get the wounded man back up the hill. “I tried pulling but he gave me no help whatsoever. He just looked at me and spit blood out his mouth. I dragged him about ten feet. Bullets skipped all about the ridge and slope. I just knew I wasn’t gonna’ be able to make it with him and it didn’t look like any help was coming. So I ran back up the hill.”

Childs pleaded with the Yards to come down and help. But none of them would. Up above he saw some jets circling, waiting to be called on. Childs radioed the TOC.

“This is Childs.”

“Where in the fuck have you been?” Boody yelled again over the radio at the youth. “If I get my hands on you, I’ll choke you. I’m ordering you to stay where you are.” Boody had known Childs before at another “A”-camp. They had had a run-in there.

“He’s a big overgrown kid,” Boody said later. “He had been a real problem-child. Any other time and I would have court-martialed him. I could have killed him. I just knew he was going to get himself killed. He only had a few days to go and I didn’t want him to take any chances. Maybe he’s really growing up now, not completely, but about seventy-five percent.”

“Okay, okay,” the youth answered his fatherly top sergeant, “I can’t get bac-si. I can’t get him. He can’t move. The Yards won’t move either. I’ve got to go back.”

“If he’s really hurt and can’t get up, look,” Boody advised, “no sense in losing your own life.”

Lieutenant Harp, the A-Team leader, grabbed the radio. “Look, Childs, get your ass back in the perimeter.”

“Okay, no sweat, only six days to go,” Childs said. “Some TAC Air’s upstairs. Can you get them to come in and make a strike right down the saddle?”

The jets then swooped down in their first pass but the bombs dropped over on the opposite hill.

“Tell the bastards to bring it in closer, closer,” Childs yelled over the radio. He wanted the enemy to keep their heads down while he tried to rescue the little medic again.



A second time the jets roared down and unloaded more ordnance, but still not where Childs wanted.

“Tell them to bring the fucking things in, bring them in, bring ‘em in,” Childs screamed at Boody and Harp.

The jets made four or five passes, but none of them pleased the demanding youth.

“Fuck it,” he finally said as the last jet vanished to the east. Taking off all his gear except for the pistol belt and .45, the youth decided to try again. Everybody back at the TOC knew what Childs was going to do, knew that he was about to get himself killed, and knew there was no way to stop the youth. An order would have been silly.

One thought kept running through his mind, though, “Childs, you stupid shit, if you go down there again, you’re going to get fuck-up killed.” But, too late, his legs were already churning down the hill.

“I got down there and began to drag the groaning man again. Bullets were skipping all around. I pulled him back up to the road by a little ridge. Fire was really intense.”

The bullets danced up and down the road, just beyond the ridge. Childs watched for a few seconds, trying to catch his breath for a last effort. “But I was physically exhausted,” he confided later. “No way in hell could I have dragged bac-si up that road. I looked around for cover. A log lay there that bac-si had originally knocked over and used for protection when we came down the hill before.”

The youth rolled the wounded man behind the log and tried to make him comfortable. Then he dashed back up the hill to get help. First he asked the Montagnards to get some rope. “I thought I could go down and tie the rope around the man and drag him back up.” But no rope was available.

Next idea. “The Yards had some smoke grenades. I went over to the .30 caliber. The guy who was on the thirty, I don’t know if he knew how to shoot it but every time he tried, it would jam. So I grabbed it away from him. Then I told the interpreter to tell two of the Yards in the bunker by the gate to go down and pick up bac-si. I would throw the grenades to shield them, then fire the .30 caliber for cover. At first they didn’t want to go, but I used some pretty strong language and more or less talked them into to doing it.”

Childs threw the smoke grenades down between the enemy and the wounded Vietnamese medic. The smoke drifted back up the hill as perfect concealment.

“I fired while the two Yards ran down and dragged bac-si back up the hill until they were just outside the front gate. I kept firing at the enemy, then turned to look back. The Yards weren’t there anymore and bac-si was just laying in the middle of the road. I asked the interpreter where these two guys were. He said they told him they weren’t going to carry the body anymore. So I fucking dropped the thirty, ran out, grabbed the body, and carried him back inside the perimeter.” Childs then called the TOC.

“I got bac-si! I got bac-si! I’m bringing him up.”

A couple of the Montagnards helped the American carry the Vietnamese up to the team house. Childs, the indomitable, walked down into the



CIDG at Duc Lap SF camp show on the map where they destroyed the invading NVA.

TOC happily waving the B-40 rockets he had just captured.

“Get these fucking things out of here,” Boody yelled at him. Somebody took the weapons outside to disarm them.

Meanwhile the wounded man had been laid on a piece of tin as a stretcher. Shepherd led the way into the medical bunker. He shoved an IV into the man’s arm and gave him a shot of morphine. The bac-si smiled a little and his missing teeth showed. He was all right.

Thirty minutes later this hero died from his wounds.

What had Childs and the bac-si accomplished in this second episode? Some weapons had been captured. Some enemy were dead. Several bunkers had been destroyed or cleared. But the camp defenders were unable to reoccupy these bunkers. This would cost the Pleiku and Nha Trang Mike Force companies dearly that afternoon when they assaulted the northern hill and drove the enemy out of Duc Lap. (This bloody five hour battle by the Mike Forces to recover the northern hill of the camp deserves a book in itself.)

So the question stands: What had Childs and the bac-si accomplished?

“They did a remarkable job,” Boody said after. “They pushed Charlie back and took the pressure off us. Charlie thought we had had it.”

What Boody may really have meant is that the American “A”-team thought they were finished. The plans to leave, the desire not to tell the VNSF or indig about such plans, passing out thermite grenades to destroy the camp’s heavy weapons, a wounded Major propped in a corner with his weapon facing the door, a sergeant holding his .45 caliber pistol across his chest, the desperate pleas for help—all these were signs of defeat. Ashau, Lang Vei, now Duc Lap? Another Special Forces camp overrun? No, not at all, a lanky overgrown American kid and a cowboy Vietnamese medic—Special Forces brothers—had attacked the enemy and restored the spirit of the camp. ♦



After the battle, women of the Duc Lap camp cry for their loved ones..

# REQUIEM for a MARTYR

By Greg Walker (ret)  
USA Special Forces

“Peshraw Dizayee, the Kurdish businessman killed in Iran’s missile strike on Erbil early on January 16, was allegedly involved in exporting oil from Iraqi Kurdistan to Israel, *Nour News*, associated with the Islamic Republic’s Supreme Security Council, reported.

“The news outlet also claimed that Dizayee, the head of the Falcon construction company, had close ties with Israel’s intelligence agency, Mossad, and maintained strong relations with the leadership of Iraqi Kurdistan.

“Citing “reliable sources,” the news agency claimed that the SB Falcon Group, led by Dizayee, possessed a private army employing former US military personnel.”

<https://intellinews.com/who-was-peshraw-dizayee-the-kurdish-businessman-killed-in-the-irgc-strikes-307964>

## “Our only friends are the mountains and America”

In 2004, I became the first security director for Falcon Group in Iraq. This at the invitation of Mr. Peshraw Agha Dizayee, its founder and CEO. We had met in late 2003, in Baghdad, when I’d approached him for permission to install 14’ blast walls in front of the Kurdish owned and operated Sinbad Hotel. The Sinbad shared its entry point from the main street with the al Hyatt, once owned by Saddam Hussein and now the living quarters for the U.S. sponsored financial reconstruction team charged to reboot the Iraqi economy with a new currency.

Falcon, on the other hand, and a contingent of Kurdish Pesh Merga executive protection specialists, were protecting the only Kurdish female representative to the New Iraqi Government. That government body had only been installed during the 2003 Transition of Authority from the U.S. / Coalition Provisional Authority back to a fledgling democratic Iraqi political process.

Both the Sinbad and the al Hyatt were high value targets for the likewise nascent insurgency just getting underway and led by former regime loyalists (FRL).



“Our only friends are the mountains and America.”  
—Peshraw Agha Dizayee (Author collection)



Peshraw Agha Dizayee (Credit: Falcon Group)



Peshraw, upon hearing of my security concerns for both of us and learning I was a Special Forces soldier and U.S. DoD defense contractor, gave his blessing. Over the next three nights our two teams monitored and provided armed protection as the blast walls were put in place. He later agreed to allow my PSD to move over from the al Hyatt to the Sinbad. This once a contract was approved between us to bring fifteen additional Falcon static site security guards down from Erbil to man the floors our Client was on.

Peshraw, a veteran of the 2003 ground war in northern Iraq where he fought alongside the 10th Special Forces Group and CIA, knew and respected the “Green Berets”. Historically, he once told me, “Our only friends are the mountains and America.” He later came to include U.S. Special Forces in this unique relationship.

“In March 1991, in the aftermath of the coalition expulsion of Iraqi forces from Kuwait, the Kurds, together with the Shi’a in the south of Iraq, rebelled against Saddam. Despite early success in gaining control of the key cities in Northern Iraq, by April 1991 forces loyal to Saddam had crushed the rebellion; 1.5 million Kurdish refugees fled to Iran and Turkey.

“In April, the U.S. and coalition partners deployed military forces to Turkey to assist in humanitarian relief operations. The U.S. Army’s 10th Special Forces Group deployed elements to nearly every major refugee camp that had sprung up on both sides of the Iraq-Turkey border. For two months, they lived side by side with the refugees, facilitating life-saving support until the coalition established a no-fly zone over Northern Iraq and cleared Iraqi forces from the area.

“These actions set the conditions for the return of refugees to their homes in Iraq. For the Special Forces soldiers, this would be the beginning of a long association with the Iraqi Kurds. They provided combat search and rescue support to the coalition taskforce that patrolled the no-fly zone in Northern Iraq until 1996, a mission that included a ground presence in the Kurdish Autonomous Zone. The relationships and goodwill developed over these years of association would prove invaluable when the Special Forces soldiers returned to Northern Iraq in 2002 to begin preparation for Operation Iraqi Freedom.”

<https://www.mei.edu/publications/irregular-warfare-case-study-cia-and-us-army-special-forces-operations-northern-iraq#pt7>

In 2004, with Falcon Security now registered in Baghdad to conduct its operations in Iraq, Mr. Dizayee coordinated a growing number of contracts between the CPA and Falcon. These included convoy escort teams, static site perimeter security, and the provision of real-time Intelligence regarding the growing insurgency’s progress and players. The Kurdish Intelligence service in northern Iraq was and remains exceptionally professional and internationally influential. Prior to the ground war in Iraq their agents and informants provided accurate and timely intelligence products to the CIA which had no assets of its own on the ground in Baghdad, much less the rest of Iraq. It was this network that successfully removed Saddam’s much sought after intelligence files from Baghdad during the fight for the city, moving these to Erbil by convoy for further examination and study by, among others, Agency analysts.



Mr. Dizayee gifted the author his personal Falcon plaque when I came onboard as its first Director of Security in Baghdad, Iraq. (Author collection)

“The CIA also had a lengthy association with the Kurds in Northern Iraq. As reported by *The New York Times*, the CIA began to work with Kurdish organizations in 1993 to establish an intelligence agency called Asayish (or “security” in Kurdish). The goals of the organization were counter-terrorism, counter-espionage, intelligence gathering, and analysis, and it had jurisdiction over economic crimes, espionage prosecution, and political corruption.”

<https://www.mei.edu/publications/irregular-warfare-case-study-cia-and-us-army-special-forces-operations-northern-iraq#pt7>

## Rebuilding the Kurdish Empire

“*Forbes*, in a separate account, characterized Dizayee as the owner of the Falcon Group in the autonomous region, overseeing major projects like Empire World, Erbil’s central business district, known for its prominent high-rise apartment complexes.”

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/pauliddon/2024/01/15/iranian-ballistic-missile-strike-kills-prominent-businessman-in-iraqi-kurdistan/?sh=61952cb93214>

But Peshraw’s vision for an independent and vibrant Kurdistan is best expressed by this description of Falcon Group from its Facebook page.

***“Falcon Group from here [Erbil] serves other cities of Kurdistan and Iraq.***

***“Here, in Erbil, the land of humanity, the center of Zhyar and civilization of tens of kingdoms and has a history of thousand years of human life on earth.***

***“From here and in this ancient city, the steps of building, trade, protection, and technology for the present and future of a developed country.”***

This vision had its roots in Peshraw and his family’s own experiences at the hands of Saddam Hussein. As he once described to me it was Saddam’s policies and forces that took everything his family had as the Iraqi dictator sought to wipe the Kurdish People out, or at least force them to flee northern Iraq (Kurdistan). This included destroying their homes and businesses and forcing thousands of displaced



Kurds into a series of massive stone prisons holding upwards of 5000 Kurdish men, women, and children each . On one of our road trips from Baghdad to Erbil he showed me these prisons, seen clearly from the highway, each now abandoned. “Saddam took the villages and towns the people lived in and replaced their populations with Arabs,” he recounted. “That was his plan for all of Kurdistan.”

This genocide included the use of poison gas, or weapons of mass destruction, being used on Kurdish towns. “The attack on Halabja was the most notorious, deadliest poison gas attack against the Kurds. And it is also worth noting that Iraq became the first government to ever attack its own cities with chemical weapons.

“However, the horrific attack on Halabja was just one atrocity within a much wider campaign of extermination directed against the Kurds of northern Iraq. For decades the Iraqi government had enforced a policy of “Arabization” in northern Iraq, and thousands of Kurdish civilians had been forcibly displaced, disappeared and extrajudicially executed.”

<https://www.globalr2p.org/publications/halabja-chemical-weapons-and-the-genocide-against-the-kurds-implications-for-iraq-and-the-world-today/#:~:text=The%20attack%20on%20Halabja%20was,own%20cities%20with%20chemical%20weapons.>

Operation Provide Comfort provided over-arching support for the Kurds in the north and allowed for the cities and towns in Kurdistan to rebuild and then prosper. Mr. Dizayee witnessed all of this and in part the results of Provide Comfort fueled his desire to create an economic / military / paramilitary equation via the Falcon Group platform

that would see Kurdistan at least economically free as well as safe. Safe from not only its enemies in Iraq, but those equally determined opponents in Turkey, Syria, and Iran.

“In March of 1991, after the United States and coalition allies forcibly removed Iraqi forces from Kuwait in Operation Desert Storm, thousands of ethnic Kurds in northern Iraq revolted against dictator Saddam Hussein’s rule. Iraqi forces had brutally suppressed earlier Kurdish revolts and had even used chemical weapons in doing so. When Iraqi forces subdued the 1991 uprising, more than one million Kurdish refugees fled to Iran and Turkey. In addition, hundreds of thousands of additional Kurds remained along the border of Iraq and Turkey, where thousands died due to a lack of food, water, clothing, blankets, shelter, and medical supplies. This humanitarian crisis spurred the United Nations Security Council to authorize relief efforts on April 3, 1991. In response, the United States organized a task force and launched Operation Provide Comfort, under the command of U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. James L. Jamerson. Operating primarily from Incirlik Air Base, Turkey, USAF C-130s began relief airdrops on April 7, delivering as many as 600 pallets of supplies per day, although those airdrops were not as effective as hoped. In addition to the airdrops, USAF C-5s and C-141s flew thousands of tons of cargo from the United States to Turkey. By mid-July 1991, the USAF had transported over 7,000 tons of relief supplies. On April 17, realizing that the refugees simply could not stay where they were, the United States expanded the scope of Provide Comfort and added ground forces to protect them. U.S. Army Lt. Gen. John M. Shalikashvili took

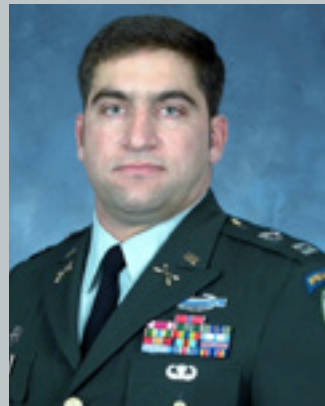
## No Fallen Comrade Left Unavenged

“Major Guy Richard Barattieri, 36, a Special Forces officer assigned to the SODPAC, deployed to Iraq several times, both as a Citizen-Soldier and a private contractor. MAJ Barattieri died on October 4th, after suffering mortal wounds from an improvised explosive device in Baghdad, Iraq. In 2002, then-CPT Barattieri deployed as an SF Detachment Commander to Kuwait in support of Operation Desert Spring. Selected as part of the initial spearhead during the liberation of Iraq on 20 March 2003, MAJ Barattieri’s team led the 101st Infantry Division on its march to Baghdad. For his combat achievements, MAJ Barattieri was awarded the Bronze Star Medal and the Combat Infantryman’s Badge.”

<https://mil.wa.gov/maj-guy-bear-barattieri>

I returned home in late 2004. Another American Special Forces soldier, also from the unit I belonged to, came in behind me as Falcon’s director of security in Baghdad. He brought with him Major Guy “Bear” Barattieri as his 2IC. In 2006, while conducting a site security assessment for Falcon, both Bear and a third American also with Falcon were ambushed and killed.

Peshraw learned the Iraqi police roadblock that re-directed their vehicle was in fact part of the planned ambush. While attending Bear’s funeral in Washington State I learned Peshraw’s intelligence people successfully identified all those insurgent connected police at the roadblock...and retribution was swift and without mercy.



Major Guy “Bear” Barattieri, Company A, 1/19th SFG(A), Washington NG



In 2014, Peshraw and I exchanged emails regarding what was occurring in Erbil as well as elsewhere in Kurdistan.

From: Peshraw Agha <peshraw@falcon>  
Sat, Aug 9, 2014, 4:01 AM  
To: me

Greg,

Thank you for your asking. We are fine and Kurdistan is safe. Just we have same problem but not in safe cities.

Best Regards,  
Peshraw Agha

command of the Provide Comfort combined task force and built temporary refugee camps for the Kurds. Additionally, the task force established a safe zone, using ground and air forces, in northern Iraq to allow the Kurds to return to their homes.”

<https://www.afhistory.af.mil/FAQs/Fact-Sheets/Article/458953/1991-operation-provide-comfort-and-northern-watch/>

## Personal Recollections

Peshraw and I enjoyed many adventures together. I recall, with fondness and respect, three specific events, each offering a priceless insight into his character and genius.

The first took place along the highway leading from Erbil back down to Baghdad. We were traveling at a very high rate of speed, Peshraw driving, when we saw a large herd of sheep being driven by their herder along the side of the road. In front of us was a taxi that, when one of the sheep strayed out onto the pavement, the driver struck and killed.

The taxi kept going and Peshraw immediately overtook it and forced it to pull over. I watched as he angrily berated the driver and then motioned the sheep herder to join them. After a few minutes of a truly animated conversation between all three, the driver pulled out some money which he gave to the herder. Once back in our vehicle Peshraw explained each sheep was irreplaceable and when something like this happened, it was understood a herder or family would be reimbursed for their loss. “He was not from Erbil,” Peshraw told me, regarding the taxi driver.

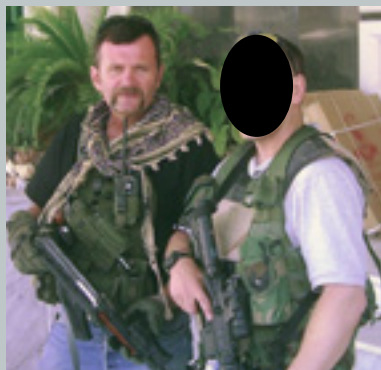
Another time, in Baghdad, Peshraw noticed I wasn’t wearing my glasses which I, at the time, needed to be able to read. Upon him

asking I shared they’d broken and I had no other pair. Later that afternoon I found myself with a Kurdish escort at an Iraqi optical shop where I was tested and fitted for new reading glasses...two pair. Again, an intense interest in people and their welfare permeated Peshraw’s character and this translated into his acute penchant for attention to detail in all other matters.

However, it is the trip to a beautiful outdoor recreation and dining outdoor destination about an hour outside of Erbil, that I remember the most. We were in Erbil on business and for one day we simply escaped to the hinterlands to decompress. We ate, drank, and hiked a bit taking a moment to stop by a fast-flowing mountain stream where I took off my boots and soaked my feet in its cool waters. Kurdistan was safe, or at least much, much safer than Baghdad. On my first trip to Erbil with Peshraw I’d kept my AK-47 with me despite Pesh’s insistence I could leave it in my hotel room. This time around I’d left the rifle back in the room and was carrying, as was Peshraw, only a handgun.

The Kurds had secured their homeland with overwhelming support from the United States. They had rebuilt their villages, towns, and cities. They had spilled blood alongside American Special Forces soldiers during the fight for the north in 2003. Unlike Saddam’s Iraq the Kurdish People had transformed their “autonomous zone” as it is still called into a thriving, kinetic, and secure country – and a country and People who shared our national security concerns, considerations, and needs.

And Peshraw Agha Dizayee was instrumental in all aspects of this still-ongoing enterprise.



Falcon Security director Greg Walker (L) with his successor, Tom Bigley (R) in Baghdad, Iraq, 2004. (Author Collection)

But Erbil had become very unsafe from 2020 onward as Iran began counter-intelligence operations inside Kurdistan as well as missile and drone attacks against selected targets. As early as 2022, efforts to see U.S. Patriot missile batteries placed in Erbil—to protect the U.S. air base co-located with Erbil’s international airport (built by Falcon Group) and the Kurdish government—were stalled.

In Baghdad the Iraqi government was not interested in giving the green light for such batteries if they were meant to protect the Kurdish People to any degree, and the current U.S. administration in Washington, DC, likewise had no interest nor a cogent understanding of the importance the Kurds have in providing a reasonably safe haven for U.S. troops stationed there as well as direct and indirect support of Intelligence operations targeting Islamic forces such as ISIS, AQ, and others.

“But Monday night’s attack was markedly different than these tit-for-tat strikes. The White House confirmed shortly after the attack that “no

U.S. personnel or facilities” had been targeted in either Erbil or Syria. It also called the IRGC strikes “reckless and imprecise.”

“The attack was undoubtedly “reckless,” but it wasn’t necessarily imprecise. Iran has proven time and again over the years the accuracy of its ballistic missiles, beginning with its September 2018 pinpoint strike against the headquarters of an Iranian Kurdish opposition group based in Iraqi Kurdistan.

“It’s not even the first time Iran has targeted the villa of a Kurdish businessman in Erbil.

“On Mar. 13, 2022, the IRGC fired 12 Fateh-110 ballistic missiles at the villa of Baz Karim Barzanji. At that time, the paramilitary also claimed to have targeted “strategic centers” belonging to Israel in the Kurdish capital. In reality, they targeted Barzanji’s villa because they opposed a plan involving Barzanji’s KAR Group company to supply Turkey and Europe with gas, according to a Reuters exclusive.”

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/pauliddon/2024/01/15/iranian-ballistic-missile-strike-kills-prominent-businessman-in-iraqi-kurdistan/?sh=61952cb93214>

Iran may have killed the man but it did not and cannot kill his vision for a free Kurdistan. ❖



## Decapitation Strike

*"My daughter and son were in their rooms. Peshraw and his guest were sitting on the ground floor. Suddenly we were struck by several missiles," Jutiari said.*



Peshraw's wife, Jutiari, lost both her husband and her 11-month old daughter in the targeted attack by Iran on their home. (Credit: Kurdistan 24)

"The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) on Jan. 15 night targeted the private residence of renowned Kurdish businessman Peshraw Dizayee during a family gathering in Erbil, where he was killed along with his daughter and two other guests. Six others were wounded in the attack."

[https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/story/33818-Wife-of-Kurdish-businessman-killed-in-Erbil-missile-attack-recounts-incident?\\_cf\\_chl\\_tk=Q5Dm\\_BY\\_IDxSbx9e4\\_hDoosdQozSj1OKNm\\_Vcs93Ypl-1705935211-0-gaNycGzNDrs](https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/story/33818-Wife-of-Kurdish-businessman-killed-in-Erbil-missile-attack-recounts-incident?_cf_chl_tk=Q5Dm_BY_IDxSbx9e4_hDoosdQozSj1OKNm_Vcs93Ypl-1705935211-0-gaNycGzNDrs)

On January 16, 2024, Iran launched three of its highly nimble and accurate Fatah 110 ballistic missiles, all programed to strike the home of Peshraw Agha Dizayee who had just returned from abroad. A fourth missile struck the home of a senior Kurdish intelligence official and a fifth a major building belonging to the KDP, or Kurdish Democratic Party of which Peshraw was a senior member.



"A good companion shortens the longest road."—Kurdish proverb (Credit: Author collection)

Iran's attack was a decapitation strike focused on the most influential and effective of the Kurdish Intelligence capability. A capability that stretched far into Iran itself, Turkey, and Iraq among other Arab countries in the region. When former president Donald Trump, in 2017, was convinced by his staff to discontinue support and protection for the Kurdish People in Syria it was the American veterans who'd fought with the Pesh Merga in 2003 / 2004 who spoke out against this flawed change of policy. In less than a week Trump reversed his decision and said support continues to this day.

<https://katu.com/news/local/local-veterans-who-fought-alongside-kurds-condemn-trumps-decision-to-withdraw-troops>

## A Martyr's Death

"Traditionally Martyrdom is considered to apply to those who die in battle, holy jihad. This is known as Shahadah Haqeeqiyyah, real martyrdom."

"We pray that Allah may grant mercy to the martyr (Peshraw Majid Agha Dzayi) and the martyrs of this tragedy and admit them to paradise." – Falcon Group

Peshraw died in the ongoing battle to preserve Kurdish culture, its people, and Kurdistan. He was not, as Iran claims, an agent of the Mossad or any other foreign intelligence service. As another American friend of ours shared with me upon our learning of his assassination "The scale and scope of his operations [were such that] there's zero doubt who they were after. Big loss for Kurdistan and Iraq."

As Pesh Merga his passing assures his family of great recognition, honor, and privileges as accorded these Kurdish warriors by their government. ❖



## About the Author

Greg Walker is an honorably retired Special Forces soldier. In late 2003, he returned to Baghdad as a DoD defense contractor supporting the Coalition Provisional Authority. In early 2004, Greg joined Falcon Group as its first director of security working directly for and alongside Mr. Peshraw Agha Dizayee, its founder and CEO. Today Greg lives and writes from his home in Sisters, Oregon, along with his service pup, Tommy.



# From the President — March 2024 Continued

## 1. Health and Wellness:

Nonprofits often provide critical health and wellness services to veterans, addressing both physical and mental health needs. This can include access to medical care, counseling services, and programs specifically designed to support veterans dealing with trauma and PTSD.

In addition to nonprofits, the VA offers many programs that address the well-being of veterans too. There are various health and wellness programs specifically designed to support veterans in maintaining their physical, mental, and emotional well-being. These programs may address issues such as physical fitness, mental health, rehabilitation, and overall quality of life. Keep in mind that program availability may vary by location, so it's a good idea to check with local veterans' organizations or the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

Here are some examples:

- a) VA Whole Health System:** The VA offers a Whole Health approach, focusing on personalized care that considers all aspects of a veteran's life. This includes physical health, emotional well-being, environment, and lifestyle.
- b) VA Caregiver Support Program:** Veterans who require assistance from family caregivers can benefit from the VA's Caregiver Support Program. It provides education, training, and resources to support the caregivers' well-being as they care for their veteran.
- c) Mental Health Services:** The VA provides a range of mental health services, including counseling, support groups, and crisis intervention. Programs like Make the Connection aim to reduce the stigma associated with mental health issues among veterans.
- d) Adaptive Sports Programs:** Various organizations, including the VA, provide adaptive sports programs for veterans with disabilities. These programs promote physical activity and help veterans build confidence and camaraderie.
- e) Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Program:** This VA program helps veterans with service-connected disabilities prepare for, find, and maintain suitable employment. It includes services such as job training, resume development, and counseling.

## 2. Employment Assistance:

Numerous employment assistance programs are available to help veterans transition into civilian employment or pursue new career opportunities. These programs often provide job training, resume assistance, networking opportunities, and support for veterans in their job search. Here are some examples:

- a) Transition Assistance Program (TAP):** TAP is a program offered by the Department of Defense (DoD) in collaboration with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Labor (DOL). It provides information, resources, and training to help service members transition from military service to civilian employment.
- b) Veterans Employment Center (VEC):** The VEC is an online resource provided by the VA, offering tools and resources to connect veterans with employment opportunities. It includes a job search engine, resume builder, and access to career counseling services.

- c) Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Program:** Part of the VA, VR&E helps veterans with service-connected disabilities prepare for, find, and maintain suitable employment. Services may include education and training, job-seeking skills, and support for starting a small business.
- d) Hire Heroes USA:** This nonprofit organization provides free career counseling services to military members, veterans, and military spouses. They assist with resume building, interview preparation, and connecting veterans with job opportunities.
- e) Corporate Fellowship Program:** Many companies and organizations participate in fellowship programs designed to help veterans gain hands-on experience in civilian workplaces. These programs often lead to job opportunities within the participating companies.
- f) Troops to Teachers:** This program helps eligible military personnel transition to a new career as K-12 public school teachers, providing counseling, resources, and assistance with the certification process.
- g) Small Business Administration (SBA) Veterans Business Outreach Centers (VBOCs):** VBOCs provide entrepreneurial development services, including business training, counseling, and resource referrals, to help veterans start and grow their own businesses.

## 3. Housing Support:

Stable housing is a foundational element for a successful transition to civilian life. Nonprofits work to ensure that veterans have access to affordable and secure housing, preventing homelessness and providing a sense of stability.

## 4. Educational Opportunities:

Many veterans aspire to further their education after their military service. Nonprofits often offer scholarship programs, vocational training, and educational resources to help veterans pursue their academic goals.

## 5. Community Integration:

Nonprofits play a crucial role in fostering community support and integration for veterans. Through various initiatives, these organizations help veterans reconnect with their communities, reducing feelings of isolation and alienation.

## Conclusion:

The importance of nonprofits in supporting veterans cannot be overstated. These organizations serve as a lifeline for those who have served their countries, offering assistance in health, employment, housing, education, and community integration. As advocates for a brighter future for veterans, it is our collective responsibility to recognize the vital role that nonprofits play in this process and to contribute generously to ensure the continued success of these invaluable programs. Through our donations, we can express our gratitude and commitment to the well-being of those who have selflessly defended our freedoms. ❖

Aaron Brandenburg  
President  
Special Forces Association Chapter 78

## SFA Chapter 78 January 2024 Chapter Meeting

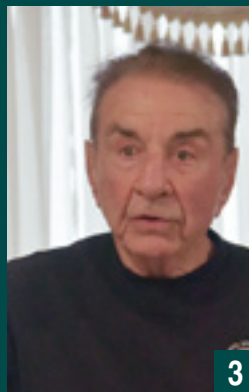
Photos by Rick Carter



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- 1** Chapter President Aaron Brandenburg **2** Past President Greg Horton presents Vice President James McLanahan with the 2023 Member of the Year award. **3** Chapter Treasurer Richard Simonian
- 4** James McLanahan's friend Todd, spoke about the U.S. Coast Guard Deployable Specialized Forces (DSF). We are unable to publish his photo due to security risks.
- 5 6** James McLanahan displays the SFA Chapter 78 Glock. Customized by The Heavy Machine located in Lake Forest. He announced that they will give a 10% discount on custom work for SFA-78 members and will donate 5% of the sale to the chapter.
- 7** Lani Dolick and Kathleen Brandenburg **8** Art Dolick, unofficial chapter historian, displays a banner from a long ago Chapter Octoberfest celebration signed by original chapter members. **9** Gary Macnamara

- 10** Mike Talleda of Wounded Heroes of America announced the annual WHOA Golf Tournament on May 6th. Visit their website woundedheroesofamerica.org for more information.
- 11** Left to right, videographer Albert Soto, Ramon Rodriguez, How Miller, and Rick Carter. Albert was present to film an interview with Ramon, the first in a series of videos planned to document the stories of SFA Chapter 78 members.

Visit [SpecialForces78.com](https://SpecialForces78.com) to read the *Sentinel* online and learn more about SFA Chapter 78.



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