TRAINING ON A SHOESTRING

Cheap, Practical SF Training in the post-Vietnam Turmoil

by Charles H. Briscoe

Just after daybreak in late spring 1974, a brown and white U-10A *Super Courier* floatplane approached Mott Lake on Fort Bragg, NC. The Department of Army Civilian (DAC) instructor pilot, Mr. Jay S. Sparks, Sr. flying the U-10A, established radio contact with the 3rd Battalion, 5th Special Forces Group (SFG) soldiers aboard their 10-man inflatable rubber assault boats (RB-10s) awaiting training. The pilot needed four key pieces of information before landing: observed helicopter activity in the area; assurance that the water landing zone (LZ) was free of underwater obstructions (down to 30 inches); verification that the lake surface was clear of floating logs, debris, or moored craft; and the wind direction and velocity. After comparing wind data with the direction and height of water ripples, Mr. Sparks deftly landed the light short takeoff/landing (STOL) airplane inside the 500 foot 'safe touchdown area,' reversed direction, and taxied to the Mott Lake 'beach.'[1] Now, the SF soldiers had to actualize tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) not addressed in Field Manual (FM) 31-20: *SF Operational Techniques*.[2]

The purpose of this article is to show how innovative, realistic training was accomplished despite severely constrained resources after the Vietnam War. The situation will be explained at the macro level before descending to the tactical or micro level. First came the SFG deactivations and then came the Army reductions-in-force (RIFs).

At the MACRO Level

The 1st, 3rd, and 6th SFGs had been deactivated. Several Army RIFs decimated ranks of reserve lieutenants, captains, and majors who dominated the SF officer corps, reduced Operational Detachment Alpha (ODA) manning, and cut company and battalion staffs to 'bare bones.' The RIFs destroyed SF operational readiness as effectively as volleys of grapeshot. Pentagon service staffs declared common Vietnam acronyms, COIN (counterinsurgency) and UW (unconventional warfare), to be 'bad words.'[3] SF companies (ODCs or C Teams) led by lieutenant colonels (LTCs) had been changed to battalions to merit O5 (pay grade) command credit. ODBs became companies led by majors who focused on rebuilding SF credibility and ODA proficiency by training to standard on individual and collective tasks.[4] Fortunately, Air Force and Army aircrews had to maintain proficiency with ground forces.

The active, Reserve, and National Guard had annual support requirements. The appeal of SF exercises was that they were interesting, challenging, and encompassed a wide variety of missions. 'Becoming smart' on the needs and standing operating procedures (SOPs) of each service's aviation fostered the coordination of 'win-win' training activities. By taking advantage of the Army aviation units at Fort Bragg and Air Force Joint Airborne and Air Transport (JAAT) training airlift enabled 3/5th SFG to conduct quality training in the worst of times.[5] It is hard to appreciate 'value added' without a short summary of events that contributed to this constrained resource environment, as shown in the sidebar "A Most Tumultuous Time In Modern U.S. History, 1960-1975."

Since young soldiers reflect American society and culture, the events cited in the adjacent sidebar impacted heavily on the Army of the 1970s. Presidential decrees expanded U.S. military fighting role in South Vietnam, not a Congressional declaration of war. Stemming the spread of Communism worldwide was bipartisan national policy. By the early 1970s, 'Middle America' was tired of the heavy human cost of fighting the nation's longest war to date (more than 10 years). With Vietnam as the top priority, U.S. Army, Europe (USAREUR) became a 'caretaker command.' Drug and racial issues that 'plagued' the military in Vietnam in the late 1960s led to serious disciplinary problems by the time U.S. withdrawals had begun. In Europe, Army unit leaders adopted 'peaceful coexistence' attitudes to maintain some semblance of order. When Army Military Personnel Center (MILPERCEN) began flooding Europe in 1972 with Regular Army officers and career non-commissioned officers (NCOs) to rebuild operational readiness and restore order and discipline, drug and alcohol problems and racial tensions exploded.[7]

This happened as the Army was drawing down to 16 active divisions and transitioning to an all-volunteer enlisted force (VOLAR). The draft (two years mandatory military service for males) that pre-dated WWII had ended in 1972. Simultaneously, force structure, personnel, and money were reduced. The airborne on Fort Bragg was combatting drugs, racial tensions, and discipline—albeit there were fewer problems in SF with its 'triple volunteers.' Special Forces had been 'value added' to conventional Army commanders in South Vietnam until 1971 when abuses of human rights, drug trafficking, and other criminal activities came to light in 5th SFG. Reliefs of commanders and sergeants major, prison detentions pending courts martial, and the 'general lack of trust' by the senior Army commander, General (GEN) Creighton A. Abrams, caused the early return of 5th SFG and soured Army leaders for years to come. This is enough macro information to show how tumultuous conditions were in the continental United States (CONUS) by the time American armed forces were withdrawn from Southeast Asia.

At the MICRO Level

At the micro level, major changes awaited the return of 5th SFG to Fort Bragg. As the SF group moved into the Old Division area [vacated by the Vietnam-era U.S. Army Training Center (USATC)], new mission area responsibilities were assigned. The reduced 10th SFG in Germany relinquished the Middle East and Iran to focus on Russia and the Eastern Bloc countries. Since 3rd and 6th SFGs had already been deactivated, the 5th SFG assumed responsibility for Africa. It would share the Special Atomic Demolition Munition (SADM) mission with 7th SFG. Since deactivated 8th SFG assets were the core of 3rd Battalion, 7th SFG in Panama, 5th SFG with its three battalions was 'tagged' to support XVIII Airborne Corps strategic contingencies.[8]

A Most Tumultuous Time in Modern U.S. History

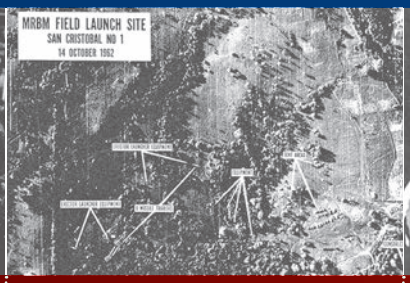
1960–1975

1960

After taking over Cuba the previous year, Fidel Castro formally aligns with the Soviet Union.

1961

April (Cuban Bay of Pigs fiasco) & August (Berlin Wall goes up).



1962

Cold War 'nuclear brinksmanship' – Cuban Missile Crisis.

1963

Martin Luther King's 'I Have A Dream' speech in D.C.; civil rights movement; and the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

1964

President Lyndon B. Johnson's Gulf of Tonkin Resolution leads to the introduction of Army and Marine combat divisions and separate brigades with naval and air power to fight Communism in South Vietnam.

1965

U.S.-instigated Organization of American States (OAS) intervention in the Dominican Republic to remove Communists from power.

1966–68

Black Power; race riots in Detroit, Washington, DC, and Los Angeles; the assassinations of Rev. Martin Luther King and Robert F. Kennedy; Peoples' Army of North Vietnam (PAVN) and Viet Cong (VC) launch major offensive all over South Vietnam (Tet 1968).

1969–72

U.S. astronaut walks on Moon, drugs, 'free love,' and 'hippie' counter-cultures; radical anarchist and environmental groups; student 'sit-ins,' draft card & U.S. flag burnings protest Vietnam War and established government; feminism, women's and gay rights; Red Power; Watergate break-in.

1973–75

Lotteries precede abolition of draft (universal military service) for men, 'Peace with Honor' = Vietnam exit strategy; the *Pentagon Papers*; resignation of Vice President Spiro T. Agnew; resignation of President Richard F. Nixon in his second term; and fall of Saigon = Communist Vietnam.[6]

The post-Vietnam SFGs initially consisted of four battalions: three SF battalions; and a support battalion. MILPERCEN command-selected officers for SF battalions.[9] The CONUS special warfare units, originally assigned to U.S. Army Continental Army Command (CONARC) in 1955, transferred to U.S. Army Forces Command (FORSCOM) in 1973, while U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) assumed control of the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Center for Military Assistance (CENMA). A joint U.S. Readiness Command (REDCOM), formed in 1972, was to evaluate the operational readiness of all military services with large joint exercises.[10] The Army had been looking to the future long before U.S. forces began withdrawing from Vietnam.[11] To preserve the strength of the Army units phasing out of Southeast Asia, assigned officers were not factored in RIFs. That changed dramatically after the units returned to CONUS. At the macro level, the SF battalions and companies in 5th SFG suffered mightily.

Shortly after 'being piled high' with operational missions from the newly established commands in the States, the 'RIF gun' was fired point blank at the 5th SFG. The few Regular Army officers assigned to the 5th were astonished by the impact. "One day I was the executive officer on an ODA and the next day I was the detachment commander," recalled the former 1st Infantry Division commander, retired Brigadier General (BG) David L. Grange. "When Captain (CPT) 'Ted' (Theodore C.) Mataxis and I came back from a pre-mission trip to Iran, we learned that he was a company commander and I had my own ODA."[12] "It was crazy. Some of the best officers with whom I had ever served were 'out on the street.' Most of the guys who had come up from the ranks via OCS (Officer Candidate School) or gotten direct commissions lacked sufficient 'officer' time (10 years) to revert back to NCOs to retire at twenty years with the pay of their highest rank achieved. Few had college degrees. We lost talent, but more importantly, combat experience. 5th SFG was left reeling," said retired LTC 'Ted' Mataxis Jr., who was ordered stateside after three years in Vietnam.[13]

"It was crazy... We lost talent, but more importantly, combat experience. 5th SFG was left reeling."

— LTC 'Ted' Mataxis Jr (Ret)

However, the Army is good at 'shoring up' its assets, refocusing, and continuing the mission; 5th SFG proved no exception. 'Contingencies for contingences' were commonly planned. The 7th SFG provided personnel 'fillers' to 3rd Battalion, 5th SFG to meet the 100% 'standing alert' requirements tied to XVIII Airborne Corps strategic contingency missions.[14] "Verifying the availability of the 7th SFG augmentees, name by name, was a weekly drill. They had missions in Latin America to perform," recalled retired Colonel (COL) 'Rod' (Jim Roddy) Paschall, the 3/5th SFG commander. "I had lieutenants commanding most SF ODAs. The more experienced captains became SF company commanders (ODBs). MILPERCEN filled officer shortages with 'draftees.' Most of the non-volunteers were second lieutenants (2LTs) straight from their basic branch courses who did airborne training enroute to Fort Bragg. Lieutenant (LT) ODA Executive Officers (XOs) were a luxury."[15]

Retired Colonel 'Mark' (Francis Mark Douglas) Boyatt, a former 3rd SFG commander, stated: "I was a newly promoted captain in the Infantry Officers Advanced Course (IOAC) at Fort Benning when I was told by my MILPERCEN assignment officer that I was going to Special Forces at Fort Bragg. My first assignment as a lieutenant had been 'high adventure.' I was a mechanized infantry platoon leader and company XO in Germany. Every day we faced drug problems, dealt with alcohol in the barracks, and racial threats. With loaded .45 cal pistols in hand and bunk (bed) adapters (see description in endnote 16), we 'patrolled' the barracks at night with our platoon sergeants, alternating the lead going into rooms. In 'Three-Five' (3rd Bn, 5th SFG) the non-SF qualified wore 'candy stripes' instead of flashes on our berets until they finished the 'Q' Course. The ODAs were about 70 percent filled 'on paper.'"[16] After the RIFs Vietnam officer veterans were welcomed to SF.

The CENMA (also called the Center) Flight Detachment at Fort Bragg was filled with Vietnam veterans—warrant and commissioned officer aviators from various branches had all kinds of experience. They were flying a variety of aircraft. The original inventory of the 22nd Special Warfare Aviation Detachment (SWAD) from the early 1960s had been significantly reduced. Gone were the U-1A *Otter*, U-6A *Beaver*, and twin engine CV-2 *Caribou* STOL airplanes as well as the OH-23 *Raven* helicopters. Four U-10A *Super Courier* STOL aircraft, a WWII-era C-47 *Skytrain*, a 1939 twin-engine C-45 *Expeditor,* and eight UH-1D *Iroquois* (*Huey*) helicopters that belonged to the flight detachments of the 5th and 7th SFGs remained at the time. A new addition was several T-42 Beechcraft *Baron* twin-engine airplanes.[17] It was August 1972 when CPT Jerold L. Jensen reported to the Center Flight Detachment following his second tour in Vietnam (see Thumbnail Biography in Sidebar).[18]

Demands on the Center Flight Detachment officers and warrant officers proved to be light. Senior pilots in both groups chose to maintain minimums with administrative

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— LTC Jerold L. Jensen (Ret)

flying missions in their ‘preferred’ aircraft. They were accumulating flight hours that would improve their resumes for post-retirement flying jobs. Though most of the commissioned aviators had served two tours in Vietnam, the younger pilots took advantage of the situation to get rated in other aircraft while building hours and expanding their experience flying operational missions.[19]

However, as much as they loved flying, they were still junior commissioned officers. All of them understood that further promotion and career progression required branch qualification (company command) and higher education—military and civilian. As the detachment XO, CPT Jensen got rated in the twin-engine C-45 and the STOL U-10A, accumulated hours, and gained considerable operational experience in those aircraft during his eighteen month assignment. After discovering that he ‘was not in the running’ to command the detachment after being selected for Major (MAJ), he chose to return to his ‘first love,’ Special Forces. “I saw how hard the RIF hit the young Warrant Officers in the flight detachment and knew that SF officers at Fort Bragg had been hammered,” said retired LTC Jensen. “I called and made an appointment to see LTC Clarence R. Stearns, Deputy Commanding Officer (DCO), 5th SFG in December 1973.”[20]

The promotable captain had more than a ‘Q’ Course diploma. The former Quartermaster Corps officer had been the 19th SFG Parachute Rigger Officer, the Headquarters & Headquarters Detachment (HHD) Commander, and Battalion S-3, 1st Battalion, 19th SFG before applying for active duty as an Infantry officer in early 1968. CPT Jensen wanted ‘to get into the war.’ After three months as S-4, Company C, 5th SFG in Vietnam (RVN), CPT Jensen replaced the ODA 105 commander at Nong Song, just inland from the Laotian border (I Corps Tactical Zone). He spent nine months advising and directing three Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) ‘striker’ companies engaged in fighting Communist Viet Cong (VC) and Peoples’ Army of Vietnam [PAVN = North Vietnamese Army (NVA)] elements infiltrating the South via the Ho Chi

LTC Jerold L. Jensen
(QM, IN, AVN, SF)

- **DOB:** 23 July 1939
- **POB:** Salina, UT
- **HS:** 1957, Olympus HS, Salt Lake City, UT
- **Feb 57**: BPED, UT ANG 115th Engr Gp
- **Jul 57:** BCT, Ft Ord, CA
- **Jun 61:** Engr AIT, Ft Leonard Wood, MO, OCS, Ft Benning, GA
- **Sep 61:** Reserve Commission QMC, Abn Tng, Ft Benning, GA
- **1961**: QM Officers Basic & Parachute Maint & Air Delivery Course, Ft Lee, VA
- **1961–68**: 1/19th SFG UT ANG, Rigger Officer, HHC Cdr, Bn S3, BA, Utah State Univ **(1965)**, applied for Active Duty as Infantry officer
- **Mar–Aug 1968**: BCT Bn S-3, Ft Benning, GA
- **Aug 68–Nov 68**: C Co, 5th SFG, CPT, Danang, RVN, S-4 & PBO
- **Nov 68–Aug 69**: ODA 105 Cdr, Nong Song, RA CPT
- **1970**: IOAC 4-70, Ft Benning, GA
- **Jan–Jul 71**: Fixed Wing Flt School, Ft Rucker, AL & Ft Stewart, GA
- **Aug 71–Aug 72**: USARV Cmd Avn Co (U-21), Long Than North, RVN, Ops Officer, AC, Plt Ldr, CPT
- **Aug 72–Jan 74**: USAJFKCENMA Flt Det, Ft Bragg, NC, XO (C-45, T-42, U-10A), CPT/MAJ
- **Jan 74–Jun 77**: A Co Cdr & Bn S-3, 3/5th SFG, Ft Bragg, NC
- **Jul 77–Jun 78**: USACGSC, Ft Leavenworth, KS
- **Jun 78–Jun 81**: UT ANG Avn Advisor (R/W transition, UH-1D & UH-1C *Huey*, AG-1C *Cobra*, Ft Rucker, AL), LTC
- **Jun 81–Jun 83**: Chief, CS Coord Tm, CUWTF, ROK
- **Jun 83–Jun 88**: DA, DCSOPS, DAMO-ODSO SF Branch Chief, LTC
- **Jun 88–Jan 89**: Sr Army Advisor, UT ANG
- **Jan 89–May 90:** Deputy Post Commander, Ft Douglas, UT
- **May 90–Dec 91:** Commander, Ft Douglas, UT
- **Jan 92**: LTC, retired

Minh Trail network. LTC Stearns accepted the 'walk on' field grade officer volunteer and sent Jensen to 3rd Battalion for company command. MAJ Jensen took command of Company A in January 1974.[21]

MAJ Jensen planned to take advantage of his Army aviation skills and Center Flight Detachment connections and use Air Force Joint Army Air Tactical (JAAT) training airplanes. He wanted to improve individual and ODA collective skills and proficiency in air operations—tactical parachute insertions, resupply bundle drops, and long distance air movement by training cheaply with Army and Air National Guard elements, first in Utah, and then Puerto Rico. But, coordinating JAAT airlift and Guard support took time. Fort Bragg had plenty of Army airplanes and training areas with lakes. Using these assets, in particular, the U-10A *Super Courier*, for SF water operations proved to be relatively simple.[22]

While assigned to the Center Flight Detachment MAJ Jensen enjoyed and became quite proficient flying the single-engine, float-mounted U-10A *Super Courier* from Smith Lake adjacent to Simmons Army Airfield. It was not difficult landing the STOL airplane in the tight confines of the calm lake, but take-off required a special technique—creating waves to break the viscosity of the water that supported the half-submerged hollow floats. Air spaces in the troughs between waves plus applying maximum engine power while perpendicular to the ridges would break the viscosity effects by allowing air to fill the gap to gain lift. The lake water vibrations sometimes caused heads wearing face masks to pop to the surface; revealing that an SF SCUBA team was underwater without a marker buoy.[24] The *Super Courier* was ideal to introduce 3/5th SFG teams to floatplane insertions, emergency resupply, and personnel extractions from a water LZ. The specifications required for the U-10A were covered in FM 31-20: *SF Operational Techniques*.[25]

While training was initially set up for A Company, LTC 'Rod' Paschall expanded the scope to 'all available' to man enough ten-man rubber boats (RB-10s) to mark the water LZ. Outboard motors were not part of the equipment for rubber inflatables in 1974. Men would paddle to maneuver the boats. MAJ Jensen planned to give the U-10A water operations orientation class after Mr. Sparks flew the U-10A onto Mott Lake. He had to first brief the Recovery Committee Leader (RCL) and his boat crew on their duties and responsibilities. They needed a compass, anemometer,

LEFT Infantry CPT Harvey S. Browne, IV stands on the Smith Lake dock beside the U-10A on floats. He is wearing a Type B-4 'Mae West' inflatable life preserver.

BELOW Company A mustered for the 3/5th SFG Annual General Inspection (AGI) conducted by the U.S. Army Special Warfare Center. It was a far cry from the Vietnam ODB strength three years prior.

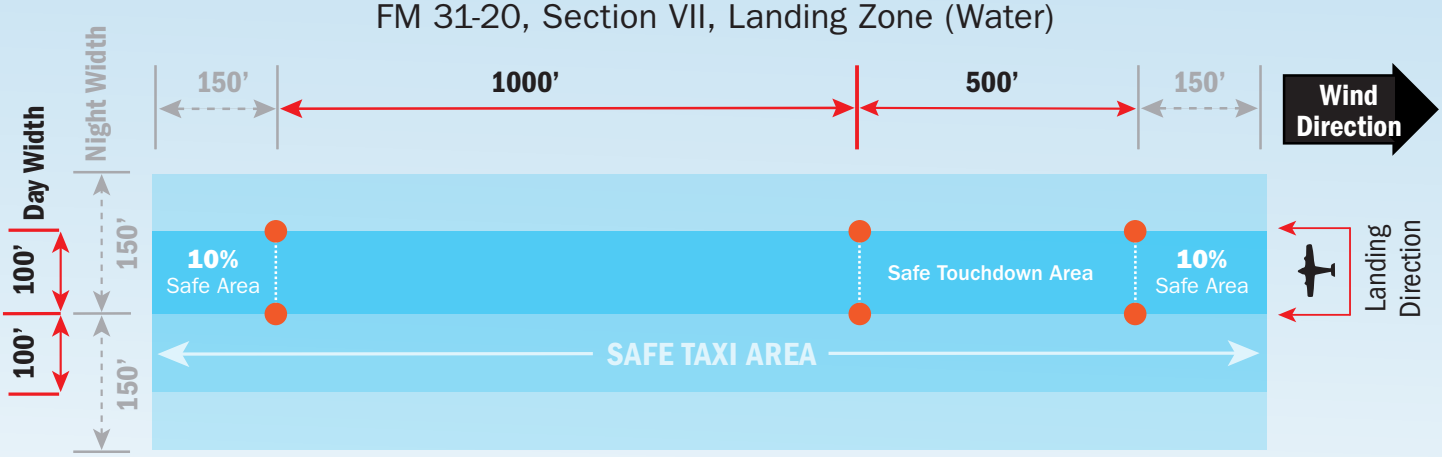
U-10A *Super Courier*

"The U-10A was the most highly sophisticated STOL airplane made. The Super Courier was way ahead of its time." — LTC Jerold 'Jerry' L. Jensen (Ret)

The U-10A *Super Courier*, a light STOL utility aircraft, was manufactured in Pittsburg, Kansas, by the Helio Aircraft Company. Powered by a Lycoming GO-480-G1D6 cylinder, 295 horsepower engine, it could carry 1,320 pounds at a maximum speed of 170 miles per hour (148 knots), travel 1,380 miles with 120 gallons of fuel (large tank), and fly at a ceiling of 20,500 feet. The all-aluminum-clad airframe supported cantilever wings with leading edge slats that deployed automatically between 55-60 mph. The slats, the high-lift slotted flaps comprising 78% of the wings' trailing edges, and interrupter blades atop the wings contributed to its outstanding STOL capability and permitted stall/spin-proof controllable flight. With its minimum-control speed of 28 mph, the U-10A was perfectly suited for confined, unimproved field operations. From 1962 to the late 1970s it was used by the CIA, Air Force, and Army for liaison, light cargo and aerial supply drops, psychological warfare, forward air control, insertion and extraction—land and water with floats—and reconnaissance. The Air Force Air Commandos flew B and D models in Vietnam while Army U-10As were assigned to Panama (8th SFG), Germany (10th SFG), Fort Bragg, NC (5th and 7th SFGs), and the 19th and 20th SFGs (ARNG).[23]

Water Landing Zone Markings Light/Special Light Aircraft

FM 31-20, Section VII, Landing Zone (Water)



Developing TTPs to set up, operate, and dismantle a water LZ without being detected by the enemy or sympathizers required considerable practice in daytime and probably three times as much to do so successfully at night.

TOP MAJ 'Jerry' Jensen, sans flight suit, presented the float plane orientation to 3/5th SFG personnel. The DAC instructor pilot, Mr. Jay S. Sparks, Sr. is wearing the flight suit.

MIDDLE 3/5th SFG personnel with RB-10 rubber boats beached watch the landing of the U-10A *Super Courier* float plane.

BOTTOM On shore the height of the float struts reveals the difficulty in boarding the airplane from a bobbing RB-10.

and PRC-77 radio to communicate data to the pilot. Jensen provided the radio frequency and call signs. The weather forecast was good for the daytime training.[26]

After landing, Mr. Sparks taxied the *Super Courier* to the Mott Lake 'beach' area and shut off the engine. When the tri-bladed propeller stopped spinning, the RCL sent a handful of men into the water to beach the aircraft. Before his orientation class MAJ Jensen encouraged everyone to look into the cockpit and to practice climbing aboard the floats and then into the crew area via the cargo door on the right side of the fuselage. The SF soldiers soon discovered that the U-10A was considerably higher on floats and strength and agility were key to getting into the aircraft. It was not easy. MAJ Jensen explained that the task would be harder from the water. Clambering onto the aircraft float from the bobbing, drifting RB-10 would also make the airplane rock. Clambering inside would make the moving airplane rock more. Actually doing it on Mott Lake turned the SF soldiers into believers. The diagrams in the manual made it appear simple.[27]

The U-10A floatplane training confirmed that only TTPs can turn conceptual doctrine into operational capability. It revealed the impracticality and ineffectiveness of some WWII OSS precepts. The training on Mott Lake provided a good 'change of pace'; it was interesting and somewhat fun. But, none of the leaders requested better water ops equipment, nor submitted changes to manuals.[28] JAAT training arranged with the Air Force and National Guard proved more relevant and best supported operational training.

JAAT airlift helped both services meet training proficiency standards and enabled the 3/5th SFG to do winter and mountain exercises in the mountains of Utah and Idaho, desert training in Texas and New Mexico, jungle training in the *El Junque* rain forest of Puerto Rico, and UW exercises in Georgia and Mississippi. 19th SFG friends were amenable and their support (vehicles and equipment) was invaluable. Adventurous aviators in the Center Flight Detachment coordinated the transport of a 5th SFG Flight Platoon UH-1D *Iroquois* (*Huey*) to Puerto Rico via JAAT. A little helicopter support to the Guard paid big dividends. MAJ Jensen's experience as 19th SFG Rigger and Air Transportability Officer was invaluable. He was comfortable working with Air Force loadmasters and flight engineers and tailored JAAT missions to fulfill aircrew proficiency requirements, i.e., two separate airdrop missions vice one with multiple passes. C-ration meals could be legally supplemented. There were few bounds to creativity.[29]

SUMMARY

In summation, while the post-Vietnam Army was fraught with racial, drug, and alcohol problems at the macro level, SF had fewer. The continued existence of Special Forces was in serious jeopardy after its self-inflicted Vietnam War travesties. Fortunately, the contributions made in the early years were remembered by enough senior Army leaders to

save a reduced capability. 'Like a Phoenix rising from the ashes,' Operations JUST CAUSE and PROMOTE LIBERTY in Panama (1989-1990) and the COIN success in El Salvador (1981-1992) restored confidence among Army leaders. SF ably supported conventional forces in Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM (1990-1991) and was given the lead in OEF, and continues to support operations in Afghanistan, the Philippines, Iraq, and Syria today.

At the micro level, Special Forces capitalized on the 'lean' times between Vietnam and Panama to rebuild individual and unit readiness, get 'in synch' with the conventional Army and joint operations, and validate its preparedness for combat.[30] Beginning is always tough, and the 3/5th SFG endured its unpopularity, adjusted, and persevered in a limited resources environment. Getting 'back to the basics' the battalion and company commanders were reminded that Army Field Manuals (FMs) contain doctrine, tactics, and proselytize theoretical capabilities. The SF officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) of 3/5th SFG relearned that TTPs can only be developed by hardworking soldier-leaders in practical field exercises in daytime and at night. Just because a capability 'looks sexy' in a manual or a motion picture does not mean that it is practical, viable, or worth sustaining today, even though it was advocated during WWII.

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Charles H. Briscoe has been the USASOC Command Historian since 2000. A graduate of The Citadel, this retired Army special operations officer earned his PhD from the University of South Carolina. Current research interests include Army special operations in Latin America, the Congo, and the Lodge Act.

Endnotes

1 Retired LTC Jerold L. Jensen, interviews 5 January and 19 June 2017 by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter cited by name and date; U.S. Army. Field Manual (FM) 31-20: *Special Forces Operational Techniques* (Washington, DC: Department of Army, February 1971), 6-34-41, hereafter cited as FM 31-20.

2 FM 31-20, 6-34-41.

3 Retired MG James A. Guest, 7 June 2017, interview by Briscoe, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter cited by name and date.

4 Retired COL Jim Roddy 'Rod' Paschall, 31 January and 7 February 2017, interviews by Briscoe, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter cited by name and date.

5 Jensen interview, 5 January 2017.

6 Richard W. Stewart, editor, *American Military History*, Vol. II: *The United States Army in a Global Era, 1917-2003* (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center for Military History, 2009), 251-254, 256, 259, 263, 264, 266, 277 and Chapters 10-12.

7 Retired COL Francis Gary Mark 'Mark' Boyatt, 30 December 2018, interview by Briscoe, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter cited by name and date.

8 Jensen interview, 29 December 2016; Paschall interviews, 31 January and 7 February 2017; Retired BG David L. Grange, 18 October 2016, interview by Briscoe, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter after cited by name and date; retired LTC Theodore C. Mataxis Jr., 13 and 27 January 2014, interviews by Briscoe, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter cited by name and date. "The SADM mission effectively 'killed' one ODA. Though I required everyone in the company to maintain nuclear surety standards to balance the load, it was still a 'Go-No Go' mission. Failing a Technical Proficiency Inspection (TPI) would result in multiple reliefs—the group, battalion, company, and ODA commanders," stated retired LTC 'Jerry' Jensen. Jensen interview, 17 July 2017.

9 Guest interviews, 27 June 2017 and 12 July 2017; "The SFG commander chose the Support Battalion commander. It was incentive for those lieutenant colonels not

Fixed-Wing Water LZ Training
TAKE AWAY

What did the SF soldiers and leaders of 3/5th SFG take away from their fixed-wing water LZ training in the spring of 1974?

1. **They were not trained or prepared to conduct fixed-wing water LZ operations. It took all day to do an orientation and practice a few basic skills.**
2. **It was no simple task to climb aboard a *Super Courier* and get into the crew compartment on the water. The U-10A rarely carried a crewman to assist.**
3. **The SF soldiers in shorts, t-shirts, and tennis shoes had to paddle like crazy to keep the RB-10 alongside the idling airplane whose spinning propeller pulled it forward at 6-7 mph. And, weapons, radios, and rucksacks were not in the rubber boats.**
4. **This relatively unpracticed WWII concept was not worth the time and resources necessary to develop and sustain as a capability. It was an impractical 'novelty' insertion/recovery system rarely used by the OSS. Its fancifulness was hyped by the motion picture industry.**
5. **SF boat operation capabilities in 1974 were no better than those of WWII. Yet, British WWII Commando kayak training would be promulgated by SWCS through the 1980s.**
6. **It would require a tremendous amount of time, dedicated manpower, and air coordination to conduct practical work with amphibians or seaplanes to develop viable TTPs to set up, operate, and dismantle a fixed-wing water LZ in daylight let alone at night.**
7. **SF Leaders must question the viability and practicality of SF doctrine, missions, and concepts promulgated in FMs. Updates tend to be 'cut and paste' with little analysis or common sense applied. SF capabilities must be constantly and objectively validated to maintain relevancy. Ask the question: Is it outdated or irrelevant?**
8. **While motorized inflatable boats would speed the clearing of water LZs, facilitate staying up with an 'idling' aircraft, and keep LZ marker boats in position, the engine noise would reduce stealth and attract enemy agents and/or forces.**
9. **Sophisticated air defenses—air and mobile ground—and rotary-wing aircraft relegated single and twin-engine fixed-wing airplane tactical and operational missions to history. Transport and resupply were not categorized as operational in Vietnam, let alone today.**

selected for SF battalion command and improved one's chances the second time around," commented retired LTC 'Ted' Mataxis. Mataxis interview, 17 July 2017.

10 Henry G. Gole, *General William E. DePuy: Preparuing the Army for Modern War* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 2008), 228.

11 Gole, *General William E. Dupuy*, 218.

12 Grange interview; 18 October 2016; Mataxis interviews, 13 and 27 January 2014.

13 Mataxis interview, 27 January 2014..

14 Jensen interview, 29 December 2016; Paschall interview, 7 February 2017.

15 Paschall interview, 7 February 2017..

16 Bunk adapters were two-foot-long iron pipe connectors used to convert single beds into bunk beds in the barracks. Boyatt interview, 30 December 2016.

17 Jensen interview, 29 December 2016; retired LTC Allen D. 'Skip' Butler, 12 April 2016, interview by Briscoe, USASOC History Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter cited by name and date.

18 Jensen interview, 15 December 2016.

19 Jensen interview, 15 December 2016.

20 Jensen interviews, 15 and 29 December 2016.

21 Jensen interview, 15 December 2016.

22 Jensen interviews, 15 and 29 December 2016; LTC Harvey S. Browne IV interviews, 23 June, 29 August, 8 and 13 December 2016, hereafter cited by name and date.

23 Jensen interview; 19 June 2017; Browne interviews, 23 June, 29 August, 8 and 13 December 2016 interviews; "Helio Courier H-250" at https://www.revolvy.com/main/index.php?s=Helio%20Courier%20H-250&item_type=topic (accessed 1/23/2017); "U-10 Helio Courier Was Unsung Hero in Vietnam" at http://www.defensemedianetwork.com/stories/u-10-helio-courier-was-unsung-hero-in-vietnam (accessed 7/14/2016); "Helio Courier H-295/395/391, 1955-78," *Plane & Pilot* (16 April 2010) at http://www.planeandpilotmag.com/article/helio-courier-h-295-395-391 (accessed 1/23/2017); "Helio Aircraft" at http://www.helioaircraft.com/aboutus_history.htm (accessed 1/23/2017); "FlyHelio" http://flyhelio.com/smf/index.php?topic=307.0 (accessed 1/23/2017); "U-10A Courier" at http://www.hurlburt.af.mil/DesktopModules/ArticleCS/Print.aspx?PortalId=84&Moduleld (accessed 7/14/2017).

24 Jensen interviews, 15 and 29 December 2016.

25 Jensen interviews, 15 and 29 December 2016; FM 31-20, 6-34-41.

26 Jensen interviews, 15 and 29 December 2016; FM 31-20, 6-34-41.

27 Jensen interviews, 15 and 29 December 2016; FM 31-20, 6-34-41.

28 Jensen interview, 19 June 2017; Butler interview, 12 April 2016.

29 Jensen interviews, 15 and 29 December 2016.

30 Guest interviews, 27 June 2017 and 12 July 2017.

Feasibility should not override survivability, viability and common sense. Exceptional use in WWII does not justify dedicating resources to sustain a capability today or tomorrow.