



SINE PARI

‘Without Equal’

by Troy J. Sacquety

Army heraldic items and mottos are rich in symbolism, shape organizational identity, and bolster morale and unit esprit de corps. However, their origins are often unknown to those who showcase them. Enlisted soldiers assigned to Headquarters (HQ), U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC), wear on their berets a Distinctive Unit Insignia (DUI) bearing the words SINE PARI (Latin for “Without Equal”). But when and how did the motto SINE PARI come about? The story begins in the early 1980s.

The immediate organizational predecessor to USASOC was the 1st Special Operations Command (1st SOCOM). Provisionally activated on 1 October 1982, 1st SOCOM served as the higher HQ for the 5th, 7th, and 10th Special Forces Groups (SFGs); 4th Psychological Operations (PSYOP) Group; 96th Civil Affairs (CA) Battalion; and the 1st and 2nd Ranger Battalions. On 14 December 1982, 1st SOCOM announced a contest for people to propose suggestions for such items as its Shoulder Sleeve Insignia (SSI) and motto. The winning motto, SINE PARI, was submitted by George Farris, an Army reservist from Washington, DC.

Along with USASOC’s creed, its motto adorns the entrance to the headquarters building.



Former USASOC DUI



Current USASOC DUI

Seven years later, on 1 December 1989, USASOC was activated as the higher HQ for all active and reserve SF, PSYOP, CA, Ranger, and special operations aviation and sustainment elements. For a brief time, 1st SOCOM was subordinate to USASOC, but it transitioned to become the U.S. Army Special Forces Command (USASFC) on 27 November 1990 (which in turn became the 1st Special Forces Command in 2014). Because USASFC adopted the SF motto, DE OPPRESSO LIBER (Latin for “To Free the Oppressed”), SINE PARI was available as a motto for USASOC. However, others were considered before a final decision was made.

The English translation of SINE PARI, “Without Equal,” was already claimed by the 184th Ordnance Battalion. Since two organizations cannot have the same motto in the same language, that option was quickly eliminated. Other proposals included AUDE MUSE (Latin for “We Dare”), “To Dare,” TRODESSE (“We Serve”), and HAEC PRAESTAT MILITA (“This Warfare Excels”). In the end, USASOC elected to retain 1st SOCOM’s motto, SINE PARI.

The original USASOC DUI bearing the inscription SINE PARI was approved on 21 February 1990. Some 20 years later, on 5 October 2011, the Army approved a new USASOC DUI, which had been redesigned to depict ARSOF’s global ground combat domain and its connection to the World War II-era First Special Service Force, Ranger Battalions, and Office of Strategic Services. Representing merit and honor, the gold scroll at the bottom bears the inscribed motto carried over from 1st SOCOM and the original USASOC DUI: SINE PARI. 

Bearing the motto SINE PARI, the command DUI adorns the beret of all enlisted soldiers assigned to HQ, USASOC, as shown here on Medal of Honor recipient Sergeant Major Thomas P. Payne

