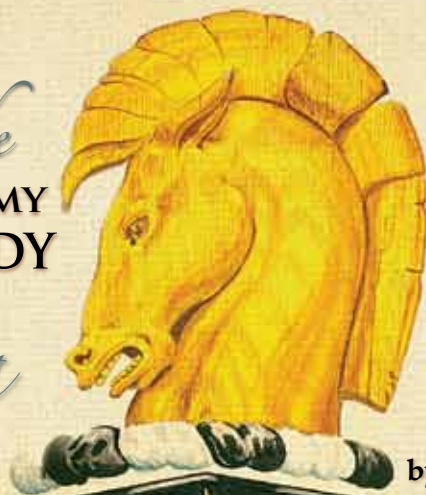


*A History of the*  
UNITED STATES ARMY  
JOHN F. KENNEDY  
SPECIAL WARFARE  
SCHOOL  
*Insignia*



by Troy J. Sacquety



DEVICE OF THE  
PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE SCHOOL  
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY, O.Q.M.G.  
APPROVED FOR THE O.Q.M.G. DEC. 16, 1952

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Although often not considered, military insignia usually reflect unit history and organizational changes over time. This is especially true for the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (USAJFKSWCS). Each time an organization received a new name or was redesignated, the unit insignia had to be “redesignated” by the U.S. Army’s Institute of Heraldry. Often, this was not officially done until years afterwards and sometimes just to keep documentation straight. Typical of Army Special Operations, many insignia were worn before receiving official approval. This article will describe the progression of four USAJFKSWCS insignia; the Distinctive Unit Insignia (DUI); the Shoulder Sleeve Insignia (SSI); the beret flashes; and the parachute badge background trimmings, or “ovals.” Because the records regarding the creation of these insignia are scant, the *Veritas* staff welcomes any further information that readers might be able to provide.

The U.S. Army Psychological Warfare (PSYWAR) Center was formally activated on 29 May 1952 at Fort Bragg, NC. The units initially assigned to the PSYWAR Center were the U.S. Army PSYWAR School, the 6<sup>th</sup> Radio Broadcasting and Leaflet Group, the Psychological Warfare Board, and the 10<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group. The mission of the PSYWAR Center was to “conduct individual training and supervise unit training in Psychological Warfare and Special Forces Operations; to develop and test Psychological Warfare and Special Operations doctrine, procedures, tactics, and techniques; [and] to test and evaluate equipment in Psychological Warfare and Special Forces Operations.”<sup>1</sup> The PSYWAR School’s two instructional divisions, the Psychological Warfare Department and the Special Forces Department, were organized to prepare soldiers to “perform those psychological warfare and special forces duties which they may be called upon to perform in

war.”<sup>2</sup> The School had no insignia when it was activated on 22 October 1952 at Fort Bragg, NC.<sup>3</sup> A brief attempt was made to distinguish PSYWAR from SF during parades; the PSYWAR soldiers wore green ascots and the SF personnel wore red ones during these “Christmas” reviews. However, they still needed their own insignia.<sup>4</sup>

## *The DUI and Device*

The PSYWAR School insignia, approved on 28 November 1952, was originally designed for “stationery, diplomas, and mural decorations.” In a slightly modified form, it was also adopted for wear as a DUI.<sup>5</sup> The white, gray, and black on the shield symbolized the “different phases of psychological warfare activities.” Black also signified Special Operations.<sup>6</sup> The torch in the center stood for “light, learning, liberty, and truth.” The horse, which is “universally recognized as a symbol of subversive activity . . . represents the Knight in chess, the only piece capable of moving indirectly and of striking from and within the enemy territory.” The motto, *Veritas et Libertas*, means “Truth and Freedom.”<sup>7</sup> Then Second Lieutenant Caesar J. Civitella, a WWII Office of Strategic Services veteran and one of the first instructors in the SF Department of the PSYWAR School, thought that the Trojan Horse represented “a cunning way to infiltrate an enemy.”<sup>8</sup> Over the years, the PSYWAR Center was renamed several times; in 1956 as the U.S. Army Special Warfare School and in 1964 as the U.S. Army Special Warfare Center.

On 7 June 1965, the Secretary of the Army approved the DUI for wear, centered on the School’s beret flash.<sup>9</sup> This meant that only those assigned to the Special Warfare School could wear the DUI on their flash. Personnel assigned to Headquarters, U.S. Army John F.



The original PSYWAR center was located at the intersection of Reilly and Gruber Roads on Fort Bragg, NC. The headquarters building is the WWII barracks in the lower right corner.



The USAJFKSWC moved to John F. Kennedy Hall Building #D-3004 in 1965.



Caesar J. Civitella was assigned as one of the first SF instructors at the PSYWAR Center. During WWII, he had learned Unconventional Warfare by serving in Office of Strategic Services (OSS) Operational Groups in France and Italy. Here he is being decorated with the Bronze Star by OSS Chief, Major General William J. Donovan.

Kennedy Center for Special Warfare were not permitted to wear the DUI on their beret flash.<sup>10</sup> (The USASOC History Office does not know which DUI, if any, they did wear. We welcome additional information on the subject. Please contact the author.) However, the DUI was still not enough to set the Schoolhouse soldiers apart.

## The SSI

The second school-specific insignia that is still worn by personnel assigned to USAJFKSWCS is the SSI, approved on 22 October 1962.<sup>11</sup> It replaced the Continental Army Command (CONARC) SSI, worn with an airborne tab.<sup>12</sup> Prior to the CONARC patch, the School personnel wore the Third U.S. Army SSI and an airborne tab. As befitting a school whose original purpose was Psychological Warfare before being expanded to Special Warfare, the SSI has considerable meaning. The lamp represents education while its outline, referring to psychology, is a rendition of the Greek letter "Psi" [Ψ]. The flames emitting from the lamp symbolize "the three prime areas of instruction for which the School is responsible: Psychological Operations, Counterinsurgency, and Unconventional Warfare." The flames also imply "spoken and written words which are major tools of Psychological Warfare." Their placement simulates the heraldic delineation for "embattled," meaning ready for battle. The crossed arrows represent the "silence and stealth with which our early frontiersman fought . . . as well as the ingenuity, courage and survival by the usage of wasplike, yet devastating, attacks through the employment of irregular tactics, techniques and logistical support." Even



A.



B.



C.

A. United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School Device

B. An early (1950s) graphic form of the DUI.

C. United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School DUI

the colors have



D.



E.



F.

D. United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School SSI with Airborne Tab.

E. Third U. S. Army SSI with Unofficial Airborne Tab.

F. Continental Army Command SSI with Unofficial Airborne Tab.

“wisdom and prudence,” white, “perfection and faith,” and yellow, “constancy and inspiration.”<sup>13</sup>

## *The Beret Flashes and Parachute Badge Background Trimmings*

The final insignia worn by personnel assigned to the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School are the beret flashes and associated parachute badge background ovals. Because the 1<sup>st</sup> Special Warfare Training Group (Airborne) (1<sup>st</sup> SWTG (A)) is subordinate to the USAJFKSWCS, modifications of these insignia were difficult to unravel. The first official beret flash to be worn was that of the cadre of the Special Forces Training Group.<sup>14</sup>

Approved on 16 April 1962, white was chosen to represent the Special Forces Training Group because it was “representative of the singleness of purpose and the high standards required of the instructional personnel.”<sup>15</sup> However, LTG William Yarborough said years later that the “SF School flash was to be White because the graduates were innocents who had not faced the realities of UW in real life situations.”<sup>16</sup> Early flashes were often homemade from naugahyde or cut from Clorox bottles because they were easier to keep clean. The all-white flash was replaced on 26 November 1996 with that of the 1<sup>st</sup> SWTG (A).<sup>17</sup> The parachute badge background trimming to accompany the new flash was approved for group wear on 19 November 2002. Prior to that, all 1<sup>st</sup> SWTG (A) training personnel wore the USAJFKSWCS parachute badge background trimming.<sup>18</sup> A U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Center for Special Warfare flash came a few years after that of the Special Forces Training Group.

The beret flash for the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Center for Special Warfare was approved on 2 June 1965.<sup>19</sup> Black, grey, and white were chosen to symbolize the phases of Special Warfare. The parachute badge background trimming to wear with this flash had been approved earlier on 7 January 1965.<sup>20</sup> Both the flash and the parachute badge background trimming remain distinctive to USAJFKSWCS.

The insignia of an organization is a window into a unit’s history. The design, changes, and staffing associated with each symbol are often forgotten. However, like all insignia, the original intent has always been to instill pride in a unit and to set these soldiers apart from others. These Army SOF insignia, while developed for a new military organization, have painstakingly evolved over nearly six decades. And, they are still worn with pride. ♣

*I would like to thank USAJFKSWCS Chief Archivist Alejandro Lujan; JFK Special Warfare Museum Director Roxanne M. Merritt; Mary Dennings, Curator of Collections, Airborne Special Operations Museum; and Roy E. Cornwall of the U.S. Army Institute of Heraldry for their assistance with this article.*



G. The initial flashes for the Special Forces Training Group were made of naugahyde. This example is in the collection of the USAJFKSWC Archives.

H. Later examples were cloth.

meaning: black symbolizes



I. 1<sup>st</sup> Special Warfare Training Group Flash.

J. 1<sup>st</sup> Special Warfare Training Group Parachute Background Trimming.



K. United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School Flash.

L. United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School Parachute Background Trimming.

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## Endnotes

- 1 Alfred H. Paddock, Jr., *U.S. Army Special Warfare: Its Origins* (Lawrence, Kansas, University Press of Kansas, 2002), 140.
- 2 Paddock, *U.S. Army Special Warfare*, 141.
- 3 Paddock, *U.S. Army Special Warfare*, 141.
- 4 Allan H. Smith interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 1 June 2009, notes, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 5 "Device and Distinctive Insignia for the Psychological Warfare School," 28 November 1952, copy in USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 6 Scan of front page of 1953 Psychological Warfare Center yearbook, found in USAJFK Special Warfare Center ARSOF Archives, 2326.1987.001, location: stack 3, section 2, shelf 2, box 3, folder 25.
- 7 "Device and Distinctive Insignia for the Psychological Warfare School," 28 November 1952, copy in USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 8 MAJ (ret) Caesar J. Civitella, telephone interview by Dr. Troy J. Sacquety, 2 June 2009, Fort Bragg, NC, notes, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Ft. Bragg, NC.
- 9 J.C. Chadwick, "Authorization for Wear of Distinctive Flash," 7 June 1965, found in USAJFK Special Warfare Center ARSOF Archives, 2326.1987.001, location: stack 3, section 2, shelf 2, box 3, folder 25. **The DUI was redesignated on 13 March 1962 (retroactive to 18 September 1957) when the Psychological Warfare Center was renamed the U.S. Army Special Warfare School.** LTC G. W. Dundas, "Distinctive Insignia for the US Army Institute for Military Assistance," 23 March 1970, found in USAJFK Special Warfare Center ARSOF Archives, 2326.1987.001, location: stack 3, section 2, shelf 2, box 3, folder 25.
- 10 **The DUI was once again redesignated on 23 March 1970, this time to reflect the name change to the U.S. Army Institute for Military Assistance. Its final redesignation came on 26 August 1981, as the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Center for Military Assistance.** COL Gerald T. Luchino, "Distinctive Unit Insignia for the US Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center," 21 February 1984, found in USAJFK Special Warfare Center ARSOF Archives, 2326.1987.001, location: stack 3, section 2, shelf 2, box 3, folder 25.
- 11 COL Gerald T. Luchino, "Shoulder Sleeve Insignia for the US Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center," 21 February 1984, found in USAJFK Special Warfare Center ARSOF Archives, 2326.1987.001, location: stack 3, section 2, shelf 2, box 3, folder 25. **The SSI was redesignated on 3 August 1964 and 25 July 1969 for the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Center for Special Warfare.**
- 12 Geoffrey T. Barker, "Patches and Flashes of the Special Forces," in *Special Forces: The First Fifty Years* (Tampa, FL: Special Forces Association, 2002), 282.
- 13 COL Gerald T. Luchino, "Shoulder Sleeve Insignia for the US Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center," 21 February 1984, found in USAJFK Special Warfare Center ARSOF Archives, 2326.1987.001, location: stack 3, section 2, shelf 2, box 3, folder 25.
- 14 MG J.C. Lambert, "Wearing of the Beret and Special Forces Patches," 16 April 1962, found in USAJFK Special Warfare Center ARSOF Archives, 2326.1987.001, location: stack 3, section 2, shelf 2, box 3, folder 25. **Not until 28 October 1981 was the flash officially approved by the U.S. Army for the Special Forces School. It was redesignated on 10 March 1992 for wear by personnel assigned to the Special Operations School per <http://www.tioh.hqda.pentagon.mil/FlashTrim/Special%20Operations%20School.htm>, accessed 10 July 2009.**
- 15 LTC Eb W. Smith, "Request for Authorization to Wear White Flash," 31 March 1965, found in USAJFK Special Warfare Center ARSOF Archives, 2326.1987.001, location: stack 3, section 2, shelf 2, box 3, folder 25.
- 16 Mr. Harry Pugh, email to Dr. Troy Sacquety, 13 April 2009, SUBJECT: SF Beret Flash Note, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 17 <http://www.tioh.hqda.pentagon.mil/FlashTrim/1SpecialWarfareTrainingGroupFlashTrim.htm>, accessed 10 July 2009.

## The United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School Name Progression from 1950 to 2009:

The United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center has gone through several name changes from 1950-2009.

**1950:** Psychological Warfare Department established at Fort Riley, KS.

**1952:** Transferred to Fort Bragg, NC; Redesignated as the Psychological Warfare (PSYWAR) Center.

**1956:** Redesignated as the U.S. Army Special Warfare School.

**1964:** Redesignated as the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center.

**1969:** Redesignated as the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Institute for Military Assistance.

**1983:** Redesignated as U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center.

**1985:** Redesignated as the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School.

18 <http://www.tioh.hqda.pentagon.mil/FlashTrim/1SpecialWarfareTrainingGroupFlashTrim.htm>, accessed 13 July 2009.

19 COL Richard H. Allen, "Special Forces Flash for the US Army Institute for Military Assistance," 28 October 1981, found in USAJFK Special Warfare Center ARSOF Archives, 2326.1987.001, location: stack 3, section 2, shelf 2, box 3, folder 25.

20 <http://www.tioh.hqda.pentagon.mil/FlashTrim/US%20Army%20JFK%20Special%20Warfare%20Center.htm>, accessed 13 July 2009.