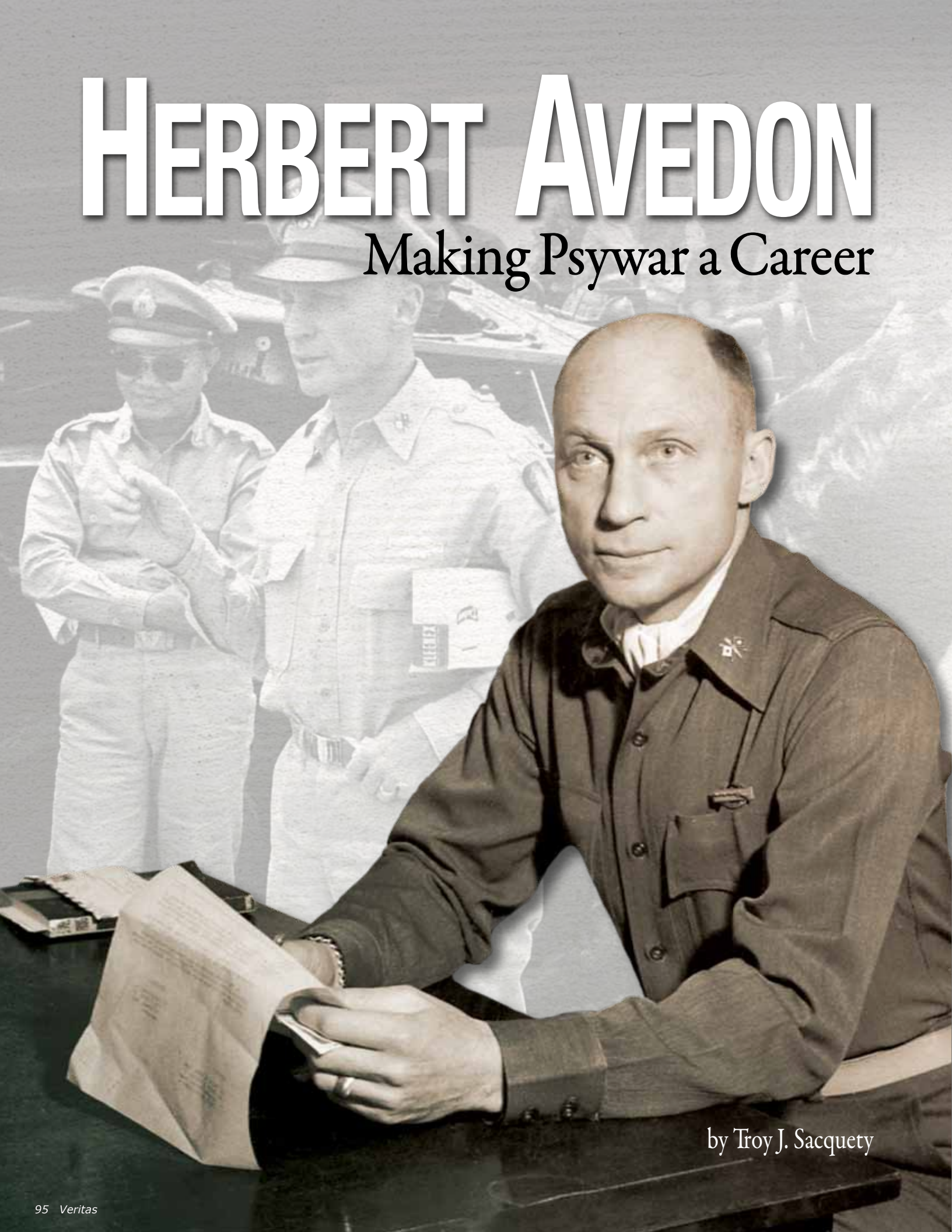


# HERBERT AVEDON

Making Psywar a Career



by Troy J. Sacquety

**O**n 12 April 1952, Captain (CPT) Herbert Avedon assumed command of the 1st Loudspeaker and Leaflet Company (1st L&L), the only tactical Psywar unit in Korea supporting the Eighth U.S. Army (EUSA). At the time, CPT Avedon was one of the more seasoned company-grade Psywar officers in the U.S. Army. The WWII veteran was able to use his knowledge to improve tactical Psywar operations, and through that, the effectiveness of the 1st L&L. In addition, Avedon had a considerable background in other Special Operations units. During WWII he served in both the Rangers and the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). His experience illustrates the type of veteran drawn to Special Operations during its rebirth in the Korean War and who continued to influence its organization afterwards.

Avedon first entered the Army National Guard in May 1933 and served until February 1934.<sup>1</sup> He did not enlist in the regular U.S. Army until 30 September 1940, after which he completed his basic training as an infantryman at Vancouver Barracks, Washington. The nearly bald thirty-four year old earned the nickname "Curly." His first posting was to the Panama Canal Zone to serve with the 33rd Infantry Regiment. He later referred to this assignment as being in a "jungle-bound 8-ball unit."<sup>2</sup> He then served in the 16th Pursuit Group until 2 December 1942 when he returned to the United States.<sup>3</sup> On 23 March 1943 Avedon graduated from Officer Candidate School at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, with a Reserve Army commission in the Signal Corps and a specialty in codes and ciphers. After a brief stint in signals intelligence in the Pentagon, he transferred to the 849th Signal Intelligence Company in North Africa (April to July 1943) supporting Fifth Army. It was there that he joined the 1st Ranger Battalion as its signal officer. Avedon served with the unit in Sicily and Italy during the Salerno and Anzio campaigns.<sup>4</sup> In this, its last campaign, the 1st Ranger Battalion was part of the 6615th Ranger Force (Provisional).

Specifically formed for the Anzio invasion to help the Allies consolidate their beachhead and lead the advance to Rome, the 6615th included the 1st, 3rd, and 4th Ranger Battalions, 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion, the 83rd Chemical Mortar Battalion, and H Company, 36th Combat Engineer Battalion. On the night of 29-30 January 1944, the 1st and 3rd Rangers led the attack towards Cisterna, supported by the 4th Ranger Battalion.<sup>5</sup> The Germans quickly recovered from the surprise of the night attack and counterattacked in force, surrounding the two attacking Ranger battalions, to kill or capture nearly 800 Rangers. The Germans repeatedly beat back the 4th Ranger Battalion attempts to relieve the two encircled battalions.

After Cisterna, the Rangers in Italy were combat ineffective.<sup>6</sup> On 26 March, the 4th Ranger Battalion was disbanded and its soldiers reassigned. Long-term Ranger veterans returned to the United States to reconstitute a new unit while those without sufficient combat time became replacements for the First Special Service Force.<sup>7</sup>

**Previous page:** Captain Herbert Avedon at his desk while commanding the 1st Loudspeaker and Leaflet Company (1st L&L) in Korea, 1952-53.

## Avedon: A Life of Service

1933-1934: Serves in the Army National Guard

1940, September: Enlists in Army as infantryman; serves in Panama

1943, March: Graduates from Signal Corps Officer Candidate School

1943, April: Sent to 849th Signal Intelligence Co. in North Africa; July: Joins 1st Ranger Battalion

1944, January: 1st and 3rd Rangers lead attack towards Cisterna, Italy and are destroyed

1944, May: Assigned to 4th Ranger Battalion at Camp Butner, NC

1944, October: Recruited by the Office of Strategic Services (OSS); head of Morale Operations in Det 101 Arakan Field Unit, Burma

1945, October: OSS disbanded, transferred to post-war successor, Strategic Services Unit (SSU)

1946: Leaves SSU but remains in the Army Reserve (USAR)

1951: Recalled to active duty and assigned as the S-3 of the USAR 306th Radio Broadcasting and Leaflet Group (RB&L)

1951, June: Joins the war in Korea; assigned as a Psywar staff officer in Eighth U.S. Army

1952, April: Assumes command of the 1st Loudspeaker and Leaflet Co. (1st L&L)

1953, May: Becomes the Assistant Projects Branch Chief, Psywar, G-3, Eighth U.S. Army

1953, June: Assigned to the Office of the Chief of Psychological Warfare (OCPW)

1954, June: Assigned as the S-3 of the 6th RB&L Group at Fort Bragg, NC

1955: Assigned as the S-3 of the 14th RB&L Battalion at Fort Shafter, HI

1957, February: Discharged from active duty, rejoins active reserve as faculty of the USAR School in Honolulu, HI; accepts command of 329th Special Forces Detachment

1957: Completes Airborne training and becomes qualified parachutist at age 53

1958: Assigned as the G-3 Special Warfare Officer, U.S. Army Pacific Command

1960, November: Assigned to the G-2, U.S. Army Pacific Command as a Military Intelligence Operations Specialist

1962, November: Assigned to the U.S. Continental Army Command (CONARC) as a Psychological Warfare Specialist

1966, December: Retires as a LTC in the U.S. Army Reserve (USAR)

1967: Becomes the historian for Sixth U.S. Army

1975: Retires from Army civilian service

# The OSS Arakan Field Unit (AFU)



One of the two main elements of the AFU was the Operational Group (OG) component. Here the AFU OG is being inspected at Teknaf, India in late 1944 by Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, the commander of the British-led South East Asia Command.

A distinctive element in the OSS, the Arakan Field Unit (AFU) was a 175-man organization made up of all services representing several OSS branches. As a result, the AFU had numerous capabilities. Employed in southern Burma, the unit conducted reconnaissance missions along the Arakan coast and up its numerous inlets and rivers to assist the XV Indian Corps of the British XIV Army in its drive to take the capital city of Rangoon. Originally created in December 1944, the OSS first placed the AFU under the control of OSS Detachment 404, based out of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). However, on 16 February 1945, in order to deconflict OSS operations in Burma, Detachment 101 took charge. Detachment 101, which had been conducting operations in Burma since early 1943, had a more robust command and control capability in country.

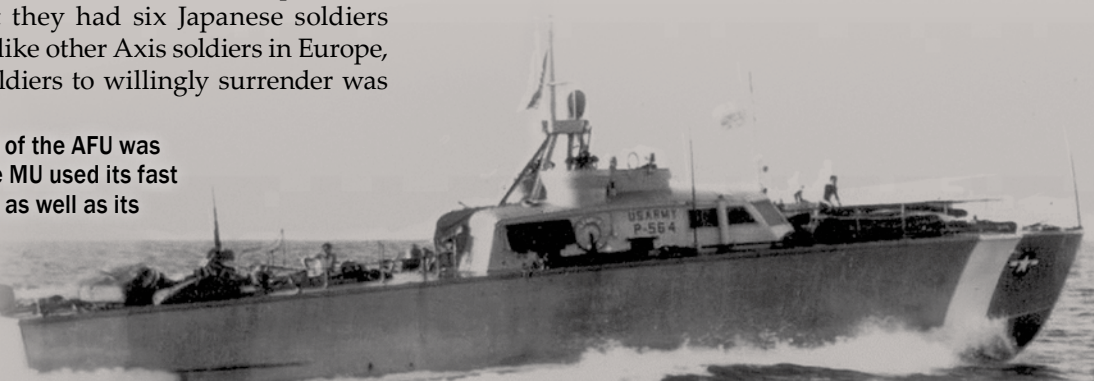
Although its Operational Group (OG) and Maritime Unit (MU) components were the two main OSS branches represented in the AFU, MO played a critical role by developing several programs to induce Japanese troops to surrender. In 'EVERYBODY'S DOIN' IT,' MO created a phony order from the Japanese high command that said soldiers could surrender if they were incapacitated, cut off, or without ammunition. A follow-on project code-named 'THE WATER'S FINE' emphasized good treatment of Japanese prisoners of war.<sup>14</sup> In April 1945, the AFU reported that they had six Japanese soldiers surrender to them.<sup>15</sup> Unlike other Axis soldiers in Europe, getting any Japanese soldiers to willingly surrender was

a tremendous coup. The AFU assisted the British in the invasion and liberation of Rangoon by exploiting what intelligence the Japanese had left behind. After Rangoon was occupied, the AFU no longer had a valid function and the OSS disbanded the unit.



The Detachment 101 Arakan Field Unit utilized numerous OSS capabilities and branches to support the British drive on Rangoon, Burma. Here a member of the AFU publicizes the 'joint' and combined operations nature of the unit.

The other main component of the AFU was the Maritime Unit (MU). The MU used its fast boats to transport the OGs, as well as its swimmers, to conduct reconnaissance on the numerous islands, inlets, and creeks in the region. This boat is the P-564.



# Insignia of CPT Herbert Avedon's Military Career



33rd Infantry Regiment DUI



1st Loudspeaker & Leaflet Company Patch (Unofficial)



1st Ranger Battalion Scroll



4th Ranger Battalion Scroll



Panama Canal Department SSI



South East Asia Command SSI



Fifth Army SSI



China-Burma-India Theater SSI



Sixth U.S. Army SSI



XV Indian Corps (UK) SSI



U.S. Army Pacific Command SSI



Detachment 101 Patch

The Ranger attack on Cisterna, Italy in late January 1944 turned into a debacle. The 1st and 3rd Ranger Battalions were destroyed, while the 4th sustained heavy casualties. When the Allies finally took the town on 25 May 1944, it was little more than rubble.



Returning to the United States on 6 May 1944, First Lieutenant (1LT) Avedon received an assignment to the 4th Ranger Infantry Battalion being formed at Camp Butner, NC. The OSS recruited him there on 6 October 1944 based on his combat experience, maturity, and technical skills.<sup>8</sup>

Born on 23 November 1906 in New York City, NY, Avedon graduated from George Washington High School in 1924. A product of the Great Depression, Avedon held a variety of jobs prior to WWII in advertising, as a writer, a real estate agent, a construction manager, and a wine merchant. He studied psychology and anthropology at Columbia University and New York University. From 1933 to 1934, he was the First Mate on the tramp steamer *SS Birmingham City*.<sup>9</sup> When he was later asked on a security questionnaire why he left the sea, Avedon wrote, "Wanted to see the world; saw it."<sup>10</sup> A varied civilian background, combat skills, and an uncanny ability to capitalize on opportunities enabled Avedon to find his niche.

The OSS astutely sent Avedon to the Morale Operations (MO) Branch. The MO Branch produced and disseminated 'black' propaganda intended to destabilize enemy governments, encourage resistance movements at strategic and tactical levels, and undermine enemy morale. OSS Director Major General William J. Donovan believed that "persuasion, penetration, and intimidation" were modern day counterparts to "sapping and mining in the siege warfare of former days."<sup>11</sup> As part of his training, 1LT Avedon took an OSS course on the Far East.<sup>12</sup> Instructors gave Avedon good feedback during specialized training: "Curly is full of ideas, and he has the initiative, energy and ability to execute them. He was an exceptional student."<sup>13</sup> The OSS sent him to Burma to head the MO section in the Arakan Field Unit (AFU) of Detachment 101. He used this unique assignment as a springboard into a Psywar career in the Army.



CPT Avedon discusses a Psywar leaflet at the 14th Radio Broadcasting and Leaflet Battalion, Fort Shafter, HI, 1955.

After the capture of Rangoon and the subsequent dissolution of the AFU, Avedon was reassigned to north China to perform MO functions. When the OSS was disbanded on 1 October 1945, 1LT Avedon transferred to its post-war successor, the Strategic Services Unit (SSU) to serve for several more months.<sup>16</sup> Avedon returned from WWII well decorated. He had a Bronze Star, Purple Heart (in Italy), Good Conduct Medal, Combat Infantry Badge, and campaign medals for the American, European (two stars and an invasion arrowhead), and Asian and Pacific Theaters (two stars and an invasion arrowhead), Presidential Unit Citation with cluster, and the British Burma Star.

After leaving the SSU in 1946, CPT Avedon chose to remain in the Army Reserve (USAR) while he managed a ranch in La Puente, CA, then worked as newspaper reporter, and shifted to advertising. He really wanted to be a professional writer and worked hard on a novel. The outbreak of war in Korea put Avedon where he belonged . . . in Psywar.



An OSS MO-produced leaflet for the Far East.



CPT Avedon helped set up the Korea Cabana Club for the enlisted men of the 1st L&L.



CPT Avedon sits at his desk in the 1st L&L. Notice the Psywar leaflets posted to the wall behind him, as well as the 1st Ranger Battalion scroll on his shoulder.



**CPT Avedon instructs ROK Army Soldiers in the use of Psywar.**

Recalled to active duty in 1951, Avedon was assigned as the S-3 of the 306th Radio Broadcasting and Leaflet Group (USAR).<sup>17</sup> He completed the Officers Psychological Warfare Course at Fort Riley, Kansas, before going to war for the second time on 15 June 1951.<sup>18</sup> After several months as an EUSA Psywar staff officer, CPT Avedon assumed command of the 1st L&L in April 1952 and instituted immediate changes. These included making the non-school trained men in the L&L attend a seven-day Psywar course, 'dumbing down' the leaflets so that the largely illiterate Chinese soldiers could understand them, and building a club for the enlisted men. Staff Sergeant (SSG) Joseph F. Lissberger recalled that Avedon was "all for the enlisted men."<sup>19</sup> The 1st L&L Korea Cabana Club was his legacy. But, Avedon was also remembered for another event.

SSG Lissberger recalled an incident when an escaped Communist prisoner of war attacked CPT Avedon, knocking him out with a heavy board. Avedon survived with a lump and a cut on his head. The prisoner was recaptured. "As long as he was capable, he was on duty," said SSG Lissberger.<sup>20</sup> CPT Avedon commanded the 1st L&L until May 1953 when he left to become the Assistant Projects Branch Chief, Psywar, G-3, Eighth U.S. Army.<sup>21</sup>

After Korea, he was sent to the Office of the Chief of Psychological Warfare (OCPW), Department of the Army until June 1954 where he wrote critical assessments on the status of Psychological Warfare in Korea. During that assignment he attended courses in psychological warfare and international relations at Georgetown University.<sup>22</sup> His next duty station was Fort Bragg, North Carolina. There he was the S-3 of the 6th Radio Broadcasting and Leaflet Group (RB&L) until 1955. Also assigned to the 6th, Private First Class Leonard M. Rudy said that CPT Avedon was an "inspiration" and "quite a guy, who made a difference to me."<sup>23</sup> Private Nicolas Kariouk said that while some officers took advantage of their rank, Avedon did not. He was well-liked, honest, and "strongly believed in Psywar."<sup>24</sup> These qualities made him an ideal candidate for a newly-formed Psywar unit supporting the U.S. Army Pacific Command (USARPAC).



**CPT Avedon instructs a Thai audience on the utility of psychological warfare.**

As a senior Captain, Avedon became S-3, 14th RB&L Battalion, headquartered at Fort Shafter, Hawaii.<sup>25</sup> Soon promoted to Major, he did not have enough time to reach twenty years of service by age fifty-five. Discharged from active service on 28 February 1957, MAJ Avedon rejoined the active reserve as a faculty member of the USAR School in Honolulu, HI. Accepting command of the 329th Special Forces Detachment at Fort DeRussy (Waikiki Beach), Avedon volunteered for airborne training at the age of fifty-three and became a qualified parachutist.<sup>26</sup>

In 1958, MAJ Avedon returned to active duty as the G-3 Special Warfare Officer, USARPAC. This was followed by a second tour with the G-2. Beginning on 28 November 1960, Avedon served as an advisor for psychological and unconventional warfare "planning, research, operations and policy including training of USARPAC Psywar and UW units," becoming known as 'Mr. Psywar.'<sup>27</sup> These assignments gave him sufficient time to get promoted and retire as a Lieutenant Colonel in the Army Reserve on 1 December 1966. Meanwhile, he had already taken a Department of the Army civilian position at USARPAC.<sup>28</sup>

Avedon worked as a Military Intelligence Operations Specialist until 19 November 1962. He returned Stateside to be a Psychological Warfare Specialist with the United States Continental Army Command (USCONARC) at Fort Monroe, Virginia, consulting on training and research and development.<sup>29</sup> Family health problems forced Avedon to return to the West Coast in August 1967, to be the historian, G-3, Sixth United States Army.<sup>30</sup> He established the museum at the Presidio of San Francisco, an achievement of which he was quite proud.<sup>31</sup> He retired in 1975. LTC Herbert Avedon, 97, passed away on 20 May 2004 and was buried in Arlington National Cemetery with military honors.

Although the WWII veteran got little attention at the time, Avedon believed in the value of Psywar and was a

dedicated soldier that fostered the profession before and after the Korean War. He was also one of the few Psywar careerists at that time. Professionals like Avedon helped ensure that Psychological Operations became a core element of today's U.S. Army Special Operations. ♣

*Thanks to Psywar veterans Joseph F. Lissberger, Leonard M. Rudy, and Nicolas Kariouk for their help in this article and Patricia Fagan, daughter of LTC Avedon.*

*Troy J. Sacquety earned an MA from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and his PhD in Military History from Texas A&M University. Prior to joining the USASOC History Office staff he worked several years for the Central Intelligence Agency. Current research interests include Army and Office of Strategic Services (OSS) special operations during World War II, and U.S. Army Civil Affairs.*

## Endnotes

- Select items from Avedon Personnel File, Copy provided by the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC), St. Louis, MO, copy in USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- "Brief of Record," Military Service Records 1949-1961, Avedon Collection, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- Personnel Record Card Work Sheet, Herbert Avedon Collection, USASOC History Support Center Files, Fort Bragg, NC. **Both the 33rd Infantry and the 16th Pursuit Group have ties to Special Operations. Many personnel that would volunteer for the 2nd Battalion of Merrill's Marauders came from the 33rd Infantry, while the 16th Pursuit Group is the predecessor unit to the United States Air Force 1st Special Operations Wing.**
- "Separation Process Form," Folder (F) Avedon, Herbert, Box (B) 0027, Entry (E) 224, Research Group (RG) 226, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park MD (NARA); "Military Service Records 1949-1961," Avedon Collection, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- By this time, the 509th was no longer part of the 6615th.**
- For more on the Rangers at Anzio, see Kenneth Finlayson and Robert W. Jones, Jr., "Rangers in World War II: Part II, Sicily and Italy," *Veritas: Journal of Army Special Operations History*, Vol 2, no 3 (2007), 49-58.
- Robert W. Black, *Rangers in World War II* (New York, NY: Ivy Books, 1992), 174.
- "Request for Transfer of Officer to Office of Strategic Services," F Avedon, Herbert, B 0027, E 224, RG 226, NARA.
- The SS Birmingham City was sunk off Brazil on 8 January 1943 by the German submarine U-124.**
- "Statement of Personal History," Herbert Avedon Collection, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- Kermit Roosevelt, *War Report of the O.S.S.* (New York: Walker & Company, 1976), 211.
- Presumably this is the two-week course on the economic and political backgrounds of Far-Eastern countries that was held at Georgetown University.** See Kermit Roosevelt, *War Report*, 242.
- OSS training evaluation form, found in F Avedon, Herbert, B 0027, E 224, RG 226, NARA.
- Herbert Avedon to Charles J. Trees, "Proposed Operations," 14 April 1945, F 1117, B 107, E 144, RG 226, NARA; Another copy is located at F 2050, B 151, E 139, RG 226, NARA.
- "Det 101, Arakan Field Unit Report April 26, 1945," [27 April 1945], F 1919, B 181, E 136, RG 226, NARA. More AFU MO records can be found at F 151, B 151, E 139, RG 226, NARA.
- F Avedon, Herbert, B 0027, E 224, RG 226, NARA.
- "Brief of Record," Military Service Records 1949-1961, Herbert Avedon Collection, USASOC History Support Center Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- Charles H. Briscoe, "'Volunteering' for Combat: Loudspeaker Psywar in Korea," *Veritas: Journal of Army Special Operations History* (Vol. 1, No. 2: 2005), 54. Also see Thomas M. Klein, *Psychological Warfare in Korea: Life and Times in the First Radio Broadcasting and Leaflet Group 1951-52* (Greenwich, CT: RHP Books, 2002), 29.
- Joseph F. Lissberger, interview by Dr. Troy J. Sacquety, 20 April 2011, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- Lissberger interview.
- See Briscoe, "'Volunteering' for Combat: Loudspeaker PSYWAR in Korea."
- "Biographical Data for Herbert Avedon," Herbert Avedon Collection, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- Leonard M. Rudy, interview by Dr. Troy J. Sacquety, 20 April 2011, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- Nicolas Kariouk, interview by Dr. Troy J. Sacquety, 12 May 2011, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- "Biographical Data for Herbert Avedon," Herbert Avedon Collection, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- "Application for Federal Employment," 18 May 1961, Herbert Avedon Collection, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- Army Reserve Qualification and Availability Questionnaire, 11 September 1958, Herbert Avedon Collection, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- "Application for Federal Employment," undated but after 19 November 1962, Herbert Avedon Collection, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- USCONARC was split into two commands on 1 July 1973: the United States Army Forces Command (FORSCOM); and the Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC). "Application for Federal Employment," undated but after 19 November 1962, Herbert Avedon Collection, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- Commendation Citation from Department of the Army to Herbert Avedon, 30 September 1968, Herbert Avedon Collection, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- Patricia Fagan (Avedon's daughter) interview by Dr. Troy J. Sacquety, 1 February 2011, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC; Army Historian Accomplishments 5 Sep 67 – 31 Dec 75, Herbert Avedon Collection, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.

**Avedon lectures Thai officers in Psychological Operations techniques. Notice the loudspeaker-equipped M24 Chaffee light tank.**

