



JACK

AIR OPERATIONS

Korea, 1951-1953

by Charles H. Briscoe

Korea provided a 'hot war' operational environment for America's fledgling Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), established on 18 September 1947. Some OSS (Office of Strategic Services) veterans of World War II were recruited. After the North Koreans invaded the South on 25 June 1950, General (GEN) Douglas A. MacArthur, former Southwest Pacific commander in WWII who denied OSS access to his theater, reluctantly permitted the CIA to establish an operational agency in Korea. By then, the United Nations (UN) had selected the Allied Commander of Occupied Japan and the U.S. Far East Command (FECOM) to lead its member nation forces in the restoration of *status antebellum* on the peninsula. With limited sea and airlift to move understrength, poorly trained and equipped divisions of Eighth U.S. Army to Korea, American units were committed piecemeal to stiffen the resolve of retreating Republic of Korea (ROK) forces. The UN commander was desperate. Services with special operations units and capabilities were welcome.

The Joint Advisory Commission, Korea (JACK), covered as the 8206th Army Unit (AU), was a CIA operational element. Its mission was to collect strategic intelligence and to operate an escape and evasion (E&E) network for downed UN airmen. This entailed recruiting and inserting agents far behind enemy lines by airdrop or boat insertions as well as hiring Korean fishing junks 'moonlighting' as smugglers/pirates to rescue downed flyers on both coasts.² The purpose of this article is to show that there were operational needs for the aerial recovery of agents and downed UN pilots behind enemy lines. JACK validated the use of all weather, night flying light bombers for agent parachute insertions and experimented with free fall parachuting. A WWII personnel recovery system was tried because helicopters were slow and limited in range and lift capacity. These were air operations challenges faced by the CIA in Korea in 1951 and for the duration of the war.

In JACK, the Operations chief, OSS veteran Major (MAJ) John K. Singlaub, served as *de facto* Deputy Commander/Chief of Staff. He was responsible for filling the operational positions. Singlaub recruited experienced active duty military personnel and had them detailed to the CIA. Because Air Operations were crucial to getting intelligence agents, resistance organizers, and saboteurs behind the lines and to resupply them, MAJ Singlaub looked for experienced airborne and Ranger officers and sergeants inbound for Korea or serving in the 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team (ARCT), the FECOM strategic reserve in Japan.³

While recruiting in Japan, Singlaub spotted orders on a 'known quantity' from his days with the Ranger Training Command at Fort Benning, GA. Captain (CPT) John F. Sadler was a 11th Airborne Division combat veteran. While the Pathfinder Committee chief in the Airborne Department, CPT Sadler helped train Ranger Infantry Companies (Airborne) in 1950-51. MAJ Singlaub got Sadler diverted from his 187th ARCT assignment. He was ideal for the JACK Air Operations (Air Ops). Sadler was detailed to the CIA for fifteen months.⁵ The WWII paratrooper had his work cut out for him.

The change from the fluid tactical environment of 1950 and early 1951 to static combat line positions complicated

MAJ John K. Singlaub



MAJ John K. Singlaub, Deputy Commander, Chief of Staff, and Operations Officer, JACK, 1951.

- DOB: 10 July 1921.
- POB: Independence, CA.
- HS: Van Nuys HS, CA, 1939 to UCLA.
- Fort Benning, GA, ROTC cadets to OCS.
- Commissioned 14 January 1943, USAR 2LT, Infantry.
- January-August 1943-Ft Benning, GA, Assistant Plt Ldr, Parachute School & Regt Demo Officer, 515th Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR).
- September 1943-Fall 1945, OSS Jedburgh Team JAMES, France & Mercy Mission Team PIGEON, China.
- March 1946-September 1948, SSU & CIA, Chief of Station, Mukden, China.
- December 1948-1949, CIA, China Desk Officer, Washington, DC.
- 1950, Bn XO, 3rd Bn, 505th PIR, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, NC & S-3 Operations Officer, Ranger Training Command, Fort Benning, GA.
- 1951, Deputy Commander, Chief of Staff, and Operations Officer, JACK, Korea.⁴

C-46 Commando



C-47 Skytrain



intelligence collection and resupply of guerrilla groups. Although UN forces enjoyed naval and air superiority around and above the Korean peninsula, the entry of massive numbers of Red Chinese forces in November 1950 enabled North Korean Communists to rebuild stringent social controls within their provinces as UN forces were pushed south. Thus, Allied intelligence agents working behind the lines got little or no local support. Inserted by air, land, and sea, these operatives had to be resupplied and recovered.⁶

The primary aircraft for these missions were the WWII-era cargo 'workhorses,' the slow, unarmed, twin-engine C-46 *Commando* and C-47 *Skytrain* that lacked all-weather, night flying radar. Fifth Air Force assigned a LORAN (Long Range Navigation) operator to the crews to facilitate night flying. The airman carried a 'cast off' Army Air Corps bomber ANP-4, a first generation LORAN system, which was difficult to calibrate in smooth flight.⁷ Just as in WWII, personnel and resupply drops were accomplished during the highest illumination phases of the moon.⁸ Following the moon pattern Communists reinforced areas and concentrated anti-aircraft weapons and searchlights for ten days a month.

WWII European Theater airdrop techniques did not work well in Korea. The approach of a slow cargo plane

at night invariably meant an airdrop of people or supplies or both. Drop zone (DZ) 'signal fires' suddenly appeared all across the terrain below. "As a result aircrews dropped supplies and even personnel without being sure that they were over the right drop-zone and that it was not a trap," explained a CIA history.¹¹ The Air Force pilots determined the 'correct' DZs, not the Army jumpmasters in the rear cargo section. Flying with large-scale aviation maps (1/250,000) that lacked contour elevations reduced precision airdrops. Former Sergeant First Class (SFC) Kenneth A. Jolemore, 8240th AVIARY Section jumpmaster, stated: "I never put a man out with any assurance that he was over the right drop zone."¹² The Air Force supported AVIARY and JACK Air Ops agent insertions and aerial resupply with the same aircrews flying olive drab C-47s and C-46s and black B-26s. Pilot experience, search lights near population centers, and the volume of anti-aircraft (AA) and ground fire further reduced accuracy of airdrops.¹³

Regardless, air resupply missions could not be done regularly without organic parachute riggers and packing facilities. With a constant requirement for personnel and equipment airdrop missions, JACK Air Ops needed a parachute rigger section. The fastest way to man it was to get military personnel temporarily detailed to the CIA. Former 82nd Airborne Sergeant First Class (SFC)

ANP-4 LORAN A

LORAN, the acronym for Long Range Navigation, is "a terrestrial, high power, hyperbolic navigation aid that operates in the 90-110 kHz frequency band."⁹ During WWII, LORAN assisted Allied bomber crews. The first generation ANP-4 LORAN A model had an oscilloscope screen display. Operators had to count pulses on the circular screen and interpret information with special maps to verify aircraft location. Because at least two ground stations were required to remove ambiguities in the position of the receiver, six LORAN stations were built in Japan during the Korean War.

The time difference between the master and the first secondary fixed station identified one curve on the oscilloscope. The time difference between the master and a second secondary fixed station identified the next

curve. The intersection of the two curves positioned the aircraft in Korea in relation to the secondary fixed stations on Japan. The LORAN operator installed his man portable system in the radio/navigator position directly behind the pilot cockpit of the C-46 *Commandos* and C-47 *Skytrains*.

While staring at the opaque nine-inch oscilloscope screen in a dimly red-lighted cubicle, he spun dials to make jiggling waves intersect to pinpoint a drop zone by its coordinates. It was hard to calibrate in a high flying bomber during WWII, but extremely difficult as atmospheric conditions kept changing as the old transports flew low over lightly populated, predominantly mountainous terrain in Korea. Add evasive maneuvers to escape small arms ground and anti-aircraft (AA) fire and the LORAN A became useless.¹⁰



CPT JOHN F. SADLER



John Francis Sadler, Jr., later John Ford Sadler, Jr., born 30 June 1924 in Bush, Illinois, was an only child of a coal miner-railroad man and his wife. Though a good baseball player at Hurst Bush High School, a lack of money for college and limited job opportunities led to six months duty in the Civilian Conservation Corps (Wisconsin and Illinois) before graduation in 1941. Sadler enlisted in the Army in early 1942. During basic training at Camp Grant, Illinois, the new recruit discovered that parachutists received fifty dollars extra a month. He volunteered and at Camp Mackall, NC, Private (PVT) John Sadler received four weeks of airborne training from the 511th Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR), 11th Airborne Division. After completing jumpmaster training the new F Company paratrooper was promoted to Private First Class (PFC). When the 11th Airborne got to Luzon in the Philippines, Corporal (CPL) Sadler was sent off to Alamo Scout training. He returned in time to make the combat jump on Tagaytay Ridge. During heavy fighting in Manila, Sergeant (SGT) Sadler was shot twice in the left leg.

While in the hospital, he received a battlefield commission to Second Lieutenant (2LT), Infantry. After his recovery, instead of going back to F Company, 2LT Sadler went to the Sixth Army's Officer Training Course (OTC) in Australia. As the top graduate in the first OTC class he was retained as the Tactical Officer for the next class. Afterwards, 2LT Sadler went to advise the 66th Infantry Regiment, Philippine Army, a guerrilla unit in northeast Luzon commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Russell W. Volckmann. Following VJ Day (2 September 1945) First Lieutenant (1LT) Sadler rejoined the 511th PIR at Camp Schimmelpfennig in central Japan. There he wrote programs of instruction (POI) and conducted company administration, supply, mess, and maintenance courses for junior officers of the 11th Airborne transitioning to garrison duty as part of the Occupation.

In February 1947, Captain (CPT) Sadler left Japan for Fort Benning, GA, to attend the Infantry Officers Associate Course. While at Fort Benning, he renewed his acquaintance with LTC Volckmann who was writing unconventional warfare manuals. After completing advanced infantry training CPT Sadler reported to the Ground Committee of the Airborne Department. As chief of the Pathfinder Committee in 1950, he supported Major (MAJ) John K. 'Jack' Singlaub, an Office of Strategic Services (OSS) team leader in France and China during WWII, who was the Operations Officer of the Ranger Training Command (RTC). This new element trained and qualified Ranger Infantry Companies (Airborne) for Korea.

Despite orders to the 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team (ARCT) in 1951, MAJ Singlaub diverted Sadler to JACK (Joint Advisory Commission, Korea), the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) paramilitary arm in Korea. He wanted this combat paratrooper, who was also the most up-to-date airborne practitioner, to direct his Air Operations Section. Night C-47 *Skytrain* and C-46 *Commando* resupply missions and B-26 *Invader* light bomber agent airdrops were his first challenges. As JACK Air Ops director, CPT Sadler became a military free fall pioneer in 1952 and the subject matter expert (SME) for Far East Command (FECOM) on aircraft 'snatch' recovery of downed pilots. He was a JACK agent handler as well.¹



11th Airborne
Division SSI



511th Parachute
Regiment DUI



Alamo Scouts
Patch

Oscar Johnson, Jr. was the JACK senior rigger. After supporting the training of a Philippines airborne battalion for the CIA, Johnson volunteered for Korea when he was moved to a weapons storage facility on Okinawa. Between supporting the airborne training of Korean and Chinese agents with parachutes and building resupply bundles the JACK rigger had a lot to do. Mission jumps were made with only main parachutes; agents parachuting at eight hundred feet wore no reserves.¹⁴

“When flying as jumpmaster, I wore sterile fatigues; no dog tags, no ID card, and no personal photos. If it was a long mission I could put on an Air Force heated ‘bunny suit’ that plugged into the electrical system. I carried a zippered ten by twelve inch pouch which had a large scale map of North Korea, compass, blood chits in several languages, six gold rings for bartering, a .25 cal pistol with a dozen bullets, and a cyanide capsule. A personal sidearm or weapon wasn’t allowed. There was no thought of E & E (escape and evasion) or ‘head to the coast’ SOP (standing operating procedure if shot down,” said SFC Johnson.¹⁵ AVIARY took fewer precautions.



Philippines Airborne Battalion SSI



Philippines Legion of Honor Medal



Philippines Airborne Wings

It was difficult in the 8240th.

“We operated in sterile uniforms, but dressed warmly—field jackets with sweaters and knit and pile caps. There was no insignia whatsoever and we carried no ID. I carried a .45 cal automatic pistol tucked into my belt because the agents had hand grenades. That was our only real worry in the aircraft. We did not wear ‘monkey’ (safety tethers straps. The agents simply sat on the floor of the aircraft—no seat belts. Because we had no maps our informal ‘E and E’ (escape and evasion) plan if shot down was to find some ‘friendly,’ albeit unknown, agents to help us get to the coast. Basically, we didn’t have ‘diddly squat’ for survival.” recalled AVIARY SFC Jolemore.¹⁷

Though JACK took more realistic approaches to operations, its administrative activities received little attention.

SFC Kenneth A. Jolemore



Canadian-born SFC Kenneth A. Jolemore was assigned to AVIARY from late February to June 1952.

- DOB: 28 June 1928.
- POB: Halifax, Nova Scotia.
- HS: 1946, Menard Memorial HS.
- April 1948, enlisted in Army as airborne volunteer; May-July 1948, BCT & Leadership Training, 9th Infantry Division (ID), Fort Dix, NJ.
- July-August 1948, Airborne training, Fort Benning, GA.
- August 1948-May 1952, A Company, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR), 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, NC.
- Jumpmaster, 1950.
- Master Parachutist, 1952, Private rifleman to SFC acting platoon sergeant.
- June 1952, 8240th AU, Wolfpack, Yong Piong-do.
- February-May 1953, 8240th AU, AVIARY. Attachment to 45th ID for TLO (tactical line crosser operations), CIB (Combat Infantryman Badge) and qualified for four Air Medals (AM) while flying combat air delivery missions with AVIARY, but received only one AM.¹⁶

SGT Oscar Johnson, Jr.



82nd Airborne Division parachute rigger SGT Oscar Johnson, Jr. helped train a Philippine airborne battalion in 1949-1950 before volunteering to serve in Korea with JACK.

- DOB: 18 July 1929.
- POB: Hiteman, Iowa.
- HS: 1947, East HS, Waterloo, IA.
- Enlisted in Army as airborne volunteer, 1948.
- BCT Ft Knox, KY (3rd Armored Div), Aug-Oct 1948.
- Airborne training, Fort Benning, GA, Nov-Dec 1948.
- Ft Bragg, NC, 82nd Abn Div, Parachute Maintenance Co, Jan-Nov 1949 (Rigger Training after 6 months OJT).
- CIA detail to support training of first airborne battalion in the Philippines, 1949-1950.
- CIA, Okinawa (2 mos) and JACK, Korea, 1951-1953 (45 combat airdrop missions).
- CIA VA & Guatemala (6 mos), 1952-1957.
- Ft Wolters, TX & Ft Rucker, AL, WO R/W aviator training & assignment 1957-1960.
- 26th Trans Co, France 1960-63.
- 3rd Avn Co, Ft Belvoir, 1963-65.
- 1st Cav Div, RVN, 1965-66.
- Vice POTUS Flt Det, Snelling, MN, until retirement as CW3 in 1968.

AF SGT Gene H. Rust



Air Force senior auto mechanic, SGT Gene H. Rust, escaped the JACK motor pool by On-the-Job Training (OJT) to become a parachute rigger.

- DOB: 22 June 1931.
- POB: Crown Point, IN.
- HS: 1950, Lowell HS, Lowell, IN.
- 16 November 1950 enlisted US Air Force.
- Basic Training, Lackland AFB, San Antonio, TX, 1951.
- Cheyenne, WY, Special Vehicle Operators Course, 1951.
- Motor vehicle operator, Patrick AFB, FL, March 1951-April 1952.
- 1007th Air Intelligence Group, Washington, DC, April-September 1952.
- JACK Air, Tongnae, Korea, October 1952-December 1953, awarded Air Medal.
- Discharged USAF, 21 December 1953.¹⁸



Air Force 2LT John W. MacDonald, 21st Troop Carrier Squadron (*Kyushu Gypsies*) evacuating wounded from the Chosin Reservoir, was the JACK air liaison officer and administrative pilot. He was one of the original pilots that flew *The Voice* and *The Speaker*, the C-47 *Skytrains* especially modified for Army Psywar radio broadcasting and leaflet drop missions.



Pocket patch of USAF 21st Troop Carrier Squadron, Detachment 2, *Kyushu Gypsies*.

The Air Force B-26 *Invader* light bomber, sometimes used for Army Psywar radio broadcasting, was fast, well-armed, and better equipped for all weather, low level night airdrop missions.



"Since a rigger had not showed up to replace me when my twelve months in Korea got near, I decided to fix that problem myself," said SFC Johnson.¹⁹ The former 82nd Airborne rigger started training someone to be his replacement. Air Force Sergeant (SGT) Gene H. 'Tiny' Rust, NCOIC (Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge) of the JACK motor pool at Tongnae, desperately wanted to fly and was willing to pack parachutes and build door bundles to fulfill that desire. After several weeks of OJT (on-the-job training), SFC Johnson presented his newly trained 'rigger' protégé to the commander, COL Mosley. Rust was given thirty minutes to pack a parachute. When he finished in twenty-five, Rust recalled that the colonel asked, "Would you jump this chute?" He replied, "Yes, sir." "I got the job and I tell you that I was walking three feet off the ground. Flying was my first love."²⁰ After taking SGT Rust up on one operational flight to 'show him the ropes,' Johnson was allowed to go home.²¹ The Air Force sergeant soon discovered the challenges of combat airdrops.

CPT Sadler sought other alternatives for airdrops. The Air Force liaison officer detailed to JACK, Second Lieutenant (2LT) John W. MacDonald, 21st Troop Carrier Squadron, the 'Kyushu Gypsies,' had piloted the C-47 *Skytrain* airplanes, *The Voice* and *The Speaker*, supporting U.S. Army Psywar leaflet and radio broadcast missions over Korea. As a Presbyterian missionary's teenage son in house arrest in Manila and interned in Los Baños prison in the Philippines until 23 February 1945, MacDonald was well-grounded in Asian culture. He flew a twin-engine C-45 *Expeditor* on resupply runs and an L-19 *Bird Dog* for JACK reconnaissance missions.²² Since the Air Force solution to the loss of *The Speaker* was to substitute a B-26 *Invader* for Psywar broadcasting, the Jack Air liaison officer was able to arrange the use of one for JACK airdrop tests.²³

FEAF used the WWII twin-engine B-26 light bomber as its primary low level night attack aircraft. UN air superiority forced the Chinese and North Koreans to move troops and supplies under cover of darkness. The *Invader* was fast, armed with six to eight .50 caliber machine guns and had all-weather radar. While its bomb load was limited, the bay was large enough to hold parachutists. An equipment bundle could be fit in the aft fuselage. When the JACK Air sergeants had 'their' B-26 to use, they verified measurements and fashioned makeshift seating for jumpers, handholds, and door bundles small enough to fit the aft storage area.²⁴

The innovative NCOs improvised a simple jump platform, mounted canvas strap handholds, and rigged an anchor line cable. Former 82nd Airborne infantryman and 7th Ranger Company cadre, SFC Donald F. Stephens, built a primitive narrow bench using 2" x 4" wooden boards. He attached it to three fuselage hooks on the right side above the bomb bay opening. There was sitting room for two average Americans or four or five Asians facing the left side of the B-26. The parachute static lines were attached to the anchor line cable before takeoff. The jumpers held on with canvas 'subway-like' straps.²⁵

Just before the bomb bay doors were opened, the JACK jumpmaster in the tail section received an intercom alert

from the Air Force pilot. About three minutes from the drop zone (DZ) the clam shell bomb bay doors were opened revealing the ground 800 feet below. Then, one by one, starting with the rearmost jumper, the jumpmaster, in turn, pointed at each parachutist signalling him to push off from the seat in a tight body position (much like a jumper exiting a helicopter) and drop into the night through the bomb bay.²⁶ Like all innovative solutions the system had to be validated before employment ... even in wartime.

CPT Sadler and his NCOs first practiced the exit technique from a parked airplane. The B-26 had tall tricycle landing gear. Mattresses below the bomb bay cushioned parachute landing falls (PLF) as the JACK personnel practiced exits. The parachute static line anchor cable was attached to fuselage bulkheads. The JACK jumpmaster sequentially pointed to each man to exit to prevent static line entanglements in the tight space. CPT Sadler and SGT Stephens were test jumpers; the two Americans filled the cramped space. Viability of the B-26 airdrop technique was confirmed by a couple of practice jumps on the Han River sandbars.²⁷

But, before approving the B-26 for personnel airdrops, the smaller, 150-pound JACK Operations chief insisted on jumping it himself. Because Americans were bigger and heavier than the Koreans and Chinese, MAJ Singlaub was concerned about aircraft drop speed. "Ninety knots was pushing the upper limit for a safe exit," said Singlaub. "With that proviso I gave CPT Sadler a 'go ahead.'"²⁸ This enabled JACK to change the moonlight drop routine that the North Korean military had figured out.²⁹

One of first missions that JACK cooperatively supported for FECOM was recovery of downed UN pilots. Within six months a fleet of contract fishing junks had been assembled on both coasts of Korea. North of the 38th Parallel, the escape and evasion (E&E) system entailed getting to the offshore islands where the junk fleets regularly took harbor. Once on an island the airmen had to survive until rescued by the contracted smugglers/bandits/fishermen. JACK gave substantial rewards for recovered pilots as well as information collected on the enemy. Since the coastal junk fleets were contracted assets, JACK did not furnish radios. Contact with them was as sporadic as their searches of the hundreds of small islands along the coasts. It was pure luck that a pilot was rescued and the few that were had spent weeks just staying alive.³⁰ This recovery system was slow and too unreliable. Back in the States the CIA searched warehouses for OSS recovery systems.

A World War II personnel snatch recovery system was found. A parachute-qualified instructor brought the packaged equipment to Johnson Airbase, Japan, headquarters of 5th Air Force. OSS Special Operations (SO) Branch in the China-Burma-India (CBI) Theater modified the 1942 U.S. Army Air Corps CG-4 *Waco* glider recovery apparatus to snatch a man from the ground. The SO men nicknamed their rig, the 'Jerk for Jesus.'³¹ CPT John Sadler, the Air Ops chief, was sent to Japan in July 1952 to become qualified on this extraction system because JACK had taken responsibility for Allied pilot recovery in Korea. Unbeknownst to him, some experimental high altitude parachute jumping was included in the training.³²



SFC Kenneth A. Jolemore and SGT Palmer, JACK Air NCOs, demonstrate the B-26 bomb bay jump platform.

SFC Donald F. Stephens



7th Ranger Company and 82nd Airborne Division Pathfinder, SFC Donald F. Stephens, was recruited by MAJ John K. Singlaub, the former Ranger Training Command operations officer.

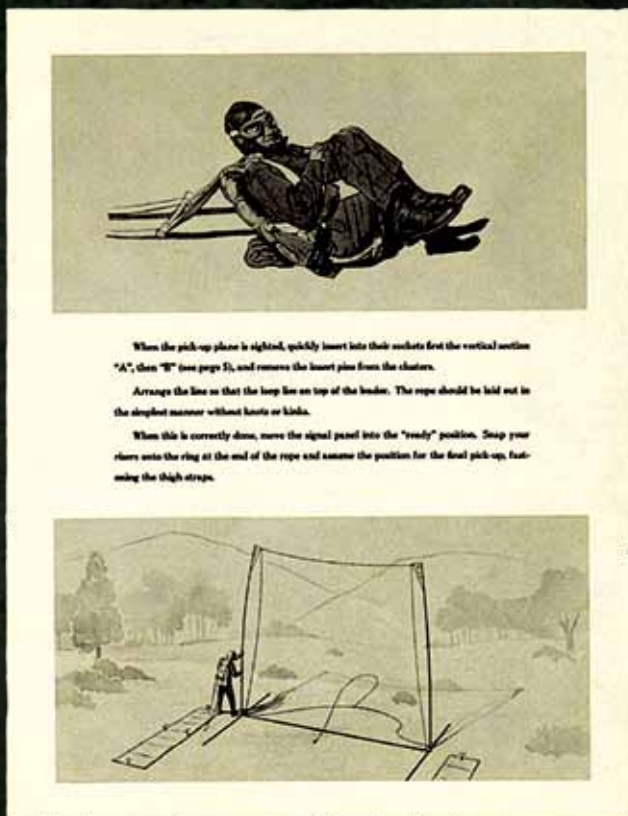
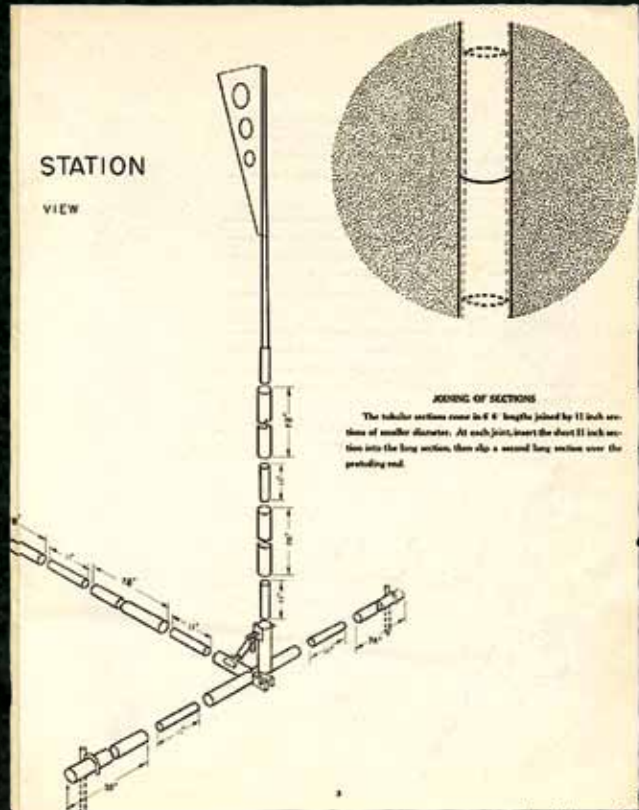
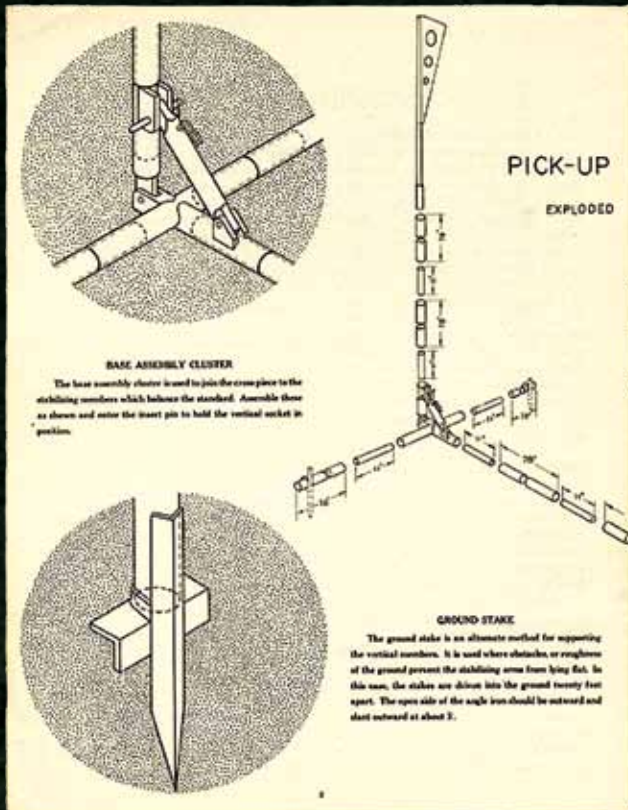
- DOB: 17 May 1930.
- POB: Wayne, Michigan.
- HS: Wayne High School, 1948.
- Fall 1948, Basic Training, Fort Knox, KY.
- 1949, Airborne training & 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, Ft Benning, GA.
- 7th Ranger Infantry Co, Ft Benning, GA, 1950-1951.
- JACK in Korea, 1951-1953.
- CIA VA & Guatemala (6 mos), 1954.
- Distinguished Flying Cross & 4 Air Medals with JACK.

The CIA was always interested in exploring alternative ways of infiltrating intelligence operatives behind enemy lines. High altitude parachute drops of personnel could be done with less chance of detection from the ground at night. However, free fall parachuting as we know it today was a relatively new recreational sport in 1952. The plethora of cheap surplus parachutes and light airplanes allowed daring civilians to probe dangerous frontiers.

'JERK FOR JESUS'

During World War II, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) developed a man recovery system devised from the 1942 U.S. Army Air Corps CG-4 Waco glider recovery apparatus. The OSS Special Operations (SO) Branch in the China-Burma-India Theater had come up with the

modification. This became affectionately nicknamed by the SO men as the 'Jerk for Jesus.' Luckily it been stored in a warehouse until rediscovered by the CIA for use by JACK Air. The snatch recovery system had to be assembled properly based on two schematics sewn on to its canvas



packing bag; there were no written instructions. Instruction and schematics based on this system used by CPT John F. Sadler and JACK Air shown here are from pages of the Man Pickup Manual, prepared by the Miscellaneous Branch and Specifications & Drawings Office Equipment Laboratory Headquarters Air Technical Service Command, Area B—TSEPL-3H3, Wright Field, Dayton, Ohio.



China-Burma-India
SSI



Office of Strategic
Services Pin



Since no directions or photos came with the system, CPT John F. Sadler and the Air Force technician wrote down the assembly instructions, step by step, and had pictures taken.



"I felt like the proverbial guinea pig. I didn't volunteer for this. Oxygen was something only bomber crews used in World War II. Altimeters were mounted in the aircraft instrument panel. My 'instructor' was a young Army captain who might have had a little more airborne experience than I had. He didn't jump with me, only acted as the 'jumpmaster,' if you could call it that," remembered CPT John Sadler, the 11th Airborne Division veteran. "He simply told me when to jump."³³

"I started that first week by making five static line jumps using the standard Army T-7 parachute and reserve. The first was at 1500 feet and we gradually moved up to 2500 feet. The Army captain, wearing a radio headset, received altitude reports from the C-47 *Skytrain* pilot. Because it was summer I wore fatigues, jump boots, and a steel 'pot,' standard for 'Hollywood' jumps. It was only luck that I landed on the DZ (drop zone), which was anywhere on or near the airstrip. After those jumps I was briefed on how the WWII Air Force A-9 parachute with 'sit on' reserve worked. The main was activated by pulling a chest-mounted D-ring. The reserve D-ring was alongside my upper right leg. That's what I wore for the 'free fall' jumps," said Sadler. "My 'instructor' paid more attention to checking my harness, airdrop standards, and the specific jump altitudes. He did not have a recommended body position while I was 'free falling,' so I assumed the normal tight body position used for a static line parachute jump. Before each jump he told me a number to count to before yanking the ripcord."³⁴

The WWII paratrooper added: "I admit that some of my counts were faster than others and I pulled my reserve twice. Dropping feet first in a tight airborne body position I fell like a rock. They didn't know much about terminal velocity, the effect of winds aloft, and impact of parachute opening shock on the jumper. The old T-7 was notorious for 'ringing your bell.' The 'free fall' opening shocks were worse. My body was snapped and jerked like a 'rag doll.' There were some long rides under canopy, but I never landed on the DZ. The captain collected his data and the C-47 aircrew got some oxygen flight time. I was happy to survive the 'training' without injury. Nothing was put in my records. I just recorded the jumps in my personal log."³⁵

CPT Sadler soon learned that snatch recovery training was another 'experiment in progress' and training would be just as informal as the parachute jumping. Fortunately, the Air Force C-47 crew remained the same. The subject matter expert (SME) on the system was from Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio. However, that Air Force technical sergeant had never set up the snatch wire apparatus nor had he been recovered by an aircraft. "I found out that he had no instructions to assemble the apparatus, only a few drawings of it. It was a 'Tinker Toy' set in an OD (olive drab) canvas bag. We figured it out, learning as we went. By the time we got it put together, I noticed that we had company. A crowd of Air Force officers, wives, and children had gathered along the runway to watch the show. As the senior man I was delegated to explain the snatch recovery system and narrate while the SME acted as the first 'wind dummy.' Since neither of us had any practical experience, I helped him into the canvas-strap body harness, snugged down his chest and leg straps, and checked out the rope. The C-47 circling overhead was radioed that we were ready," said Sadler. "It was game time."³⁶



CPT John F. Sadler (inside aircraft doorway) with his C-47 airdrop and snatch recovery crew at Johnson Air Force Base, Japan, summer 1952. CPT Casey, pilot (standing 2nd from left), the 'Free Fall' jumpmaster (standing 4th from the left), and Snatch Recovery expert (squatting, right front).

“CPT Casey, the C-47 pilot, banked his aircraft and dropped down on the deck ... about twenty-five to thirty feet just parallel to the airstrip. A fixed metal recovery pole with a hook on the end hung down from the tail section of the roaring airplane. As the C-47 passed overhead it snagged the top horizontal rope. Casey pulled it up into a steep climb and the carefully laid out extraction rope snaked upwards with a jerk. The airman, seated facing the approaching airplane, was yanked backwards a foot off the ground for fifteen or twenty feet before flying upwards in a diagonal arc behind the rapidly vanishing airplane. In seconds he was dangling spread-eagled on a 100 foot line, twelve hundred feet in the air, speeding along at ninety knots. Twenty minutes later the C-47 landed, dropped off the SME, and took off again. It was my turn,” recounted CPT Sadler.³⁷

“As you can see, [shown in ‘Jerk for Jesus sidebar] I wore no helmet or goggles, just my Corcoran jump boots. The SME almost gleefully relinquished the snatch harness, helped me into it, and laid out the rope. Being an old T-4 paratrooper I cinched my leg straps tight. Casey repeated the flying sequence. Then, I rocketed up into the sky in a whipping motion. Once the C-47 reached the recovery altitude I felt a slight tug when they started the winch. I experienced no flopping even close to the fuselage. A pulley apparatus was mounted near the door to reduce tension. Then, I felt strong arms pulling me inside. After the two crewmen dragged me forward they disconnected me from my tether,” said CPT Sadler. “In retrospect, it was like a wild carnival ride. I did it four times. Like the SME, I had qualified on the recovery system and could speak with authority backed by experience. The next day an Air Force photographer took pictures to illustrate the order of assembly and erection and how to don the harness. That’s why I did the demonstration in khakis and Wellington boots. I’d have lost them in a real snatch.”³⁸

JACK had acquired another method to rescue of UN pilots downed over the Korean landmass. But, the system was retained by 5th Air Force and mounted in a detachable fuel tank under the wing of the commander’s four-engine C-54 *Skymaster* transport. Even with air superiority, rescuing airmen from Communist-controlled areas with slow-flying transports and helicopters was very dangerous. While a C-54 could drop the system, it could not do the snatch and its loitering overhead only served to alert enemy forces to a

downed airman.³⁹ Helicopters were precious commodities in Korea. Primitive was a polite description of the VFR (visual flight rules) navigation capabilities in daylight. They had limited flight range and load capacity. Since the Red Chinese and North Koreans had none, helicopters were desirable targets for technology exploitation.⁴⁰ Despite these problems, aircrew recovery was a high priority military mission that JACK assumed to establish rapport with FEC.

The possible entrapment of UN air rescue elements was a constant that had to be closely weighed before committing non-expendable resources that might compound the situation. On 7 February 1952, the U.S. Navy lost an H-5 helicopter, its pilot, and an 8240th AU (LEOPARD BASE) officer trying to rescue a downed naval aviator. They joined the captured Navy pilot as POWs.⁴¹ Subsequently, the ‘Kyushu Gypsies’ lost a C-46, aircrew, and 8240th AVIARY personnel when a double-agent threw a hand grenade inside as he jumped out. A B-26 *Invader*, a couple of pilots, and two 8240th officers were shot down during a reconnaissance mission. Low flying aircraft were vulnerable to massed ground fire.⁴²

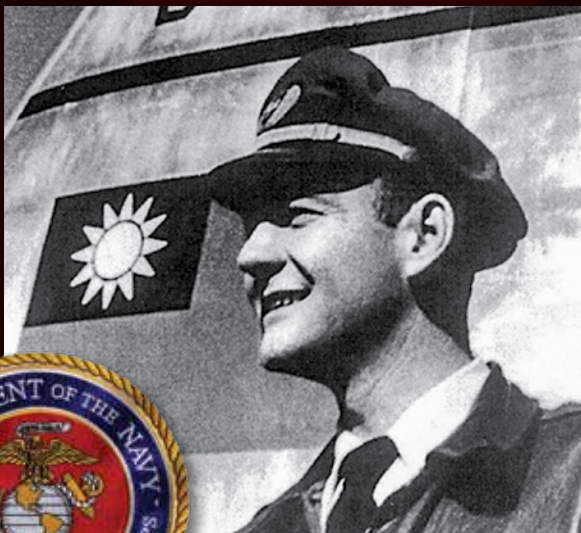
Shortly after returning to Korea, CPT Sadler was tasked to be mission commander for a pilot rescue. SFC Don Stephens volunteered to accompany him aboard the B-26 control aircraft. JACK had a radio report that one of their agent teams had gotten to a downed Navy pilot before the North Koreans and were requesting aircraft pick up. A name was provided and his ship had confirmed that he had been recently shot down. Background information was provided to verify his identity.⁴³

“When we got close to the location, I had the pilot fly a ‘three-sixty’ circle at about three thousand feet while I radioed the ‘agent team’ on the ground. I told them to put the American on the radio. As soon as he came on I began asking personal questions to confirm his identity. I was sure that it was an American talking and his answers were correct. I asked him to come outside of the hut so that I could see him talking on the radio. Then, we dropped down on the deck for a closer look. As we zoomed by in a banked attitude I could see that the speaker was definitely an American in a flight suit, but I was uneasy so I told him we’d make another pass. I switched to Volksdeutsch as we turned on final and asked if it was trap. He replied in country German that it was before being yanked back into the hut. Then, all hell broke loose. As we flew into a hail of ground fire our pilot rocked and twisted that bomber like a fighter plane to escape,” recounted Sadler.⁴⁴ “We

Recovery Gone Awry

On 29 November 1952, a CIA-affiliated *China Air Transport (CAT)* C-47, dispatched on a snatch recovery mission, was flown by two WWII Pacific fighter pilots, CPTs Norman H. Schwartz and Robert C. Snoddy. On board the C-47 transport were two CIA personnel, Richard G. Fecteau and John T. Downey, to operate

retrieval equipment. The mission went horribly awry when the ground team was compromised. This resulted in the deaths of the two pilots, and the capture of the two CIA personnel. The two captives were later released in the early 1970s as part of President Richard M. Nixon's diplomatic *rapprochement* with Communist China.



Marine Aviator Norman H. Schwartz, Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medals.



Navy pilot Robert C. Snoddy, Air Medals, Purple Heart, & 2 kills.



CIA Case officer Richard G. Fecteau, released from Chinese captivity, 1971.



CIA Case officer John T. Downey, released from Chinese captivity, 1973.

*were shot at but got away unhurt. CPT Sadler 'shut off' the inbound helicopter and cancelled the mission. That was a very close call," said SFC Stephens. "It happened so fast that I didn't get a chance to fire the machine guns."*⁴⁵

On 29 November 1952, an intended snatch recovery of a Chinese agent from Manchuria turned into a debacle. An American-crewed CIA-affiliated, *China Air Transport (CAT)* C-47 was sent to airdrop supplies and the snatch system to recover the agent. Unbeknownst to the recovery personnel, their team on the ground had been compromised and turned. The promise of valuable intelligence carried by a courier was an effective lure. Approaching the pick-up trellis at close to stall speed, the C-47 flew into a cross fire from two well-camouflaged .50 cal. machine guns. The two men flying the transport were WWII Pacific fighter pilots. Norman H. Schwartz had been a Marine aviator [Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) & Air Medals (AM)] and Robert C. Snoddy [AMs, Purple Heart (PH) & 2 kills] a Navy pilot. The two managed a controlled crash, but died, trapped in the cockpit, when the C-47 caught fire. Two CIA case officers, aboard to operate the retrieval winch and recover the agent, survived unhurt. John T. Downey and Richard G. Fecteau were captured by Chinese security forces, tried, and imprisoned for twenty and nineteen years respectively.⁴⁶ President Richard M. Nixon's diplomatic *rapprochement* with Communist China was the catalyst that eventually opened the prison doors for these two CIA personnel.⁴⁷

CPT Sadler recalled: "When this mission first came up, I told MAJ Singlaub, my boss, that I'd fly it. He made it very clear to me in no uncertain terms that his Air Ops officer was not going to be a part of that snatch mission. When I later learned that the C-47 had gone missing, presumed shot down, I thanked him. That two case officers had been permitted to go on a risky snatch recovery was unfathomable. Most of the case officers were inexperienced, recent college graduates with just enough training to be dangerous. Losing them was an intelligence officer's worst nightmare."⁴⁸ The shoot down of the C-47 recovery aircraft made it blatantly clear that a successful snatch recovery would be only by chance, making it an unacceptable risk.

What can be taken from JACK air operations during the Korean War? Money, advanced technologies, innovative techniques, and sheer determination, be damned. Simple, yet effective Communist North Korean and Chinese countermeasures overcame UN air superiority. Limited access to 1/25,000 topographical maps by JACK air delivery teams meant the responsibility for accurate parachute drops was relegated to rotating Air Force pilots whose night navigation skills using 1/250,000 air maps and first generation LORAN varied. Neither the C-46 *Commando* nor C-47 *Skytrain* was an all-weather transport aircraft. Using B-26 *Invader* light bombers as agent delivery platforms reduced shoot down possibilities, but the air navigation problems remained. WWII OSS-like "night" airdrops during full moon phases and the OSS snatch recovery system did not take into

account Communist systems of population control, internal security measures, the devastating effect of massed small arms fire, and the simple use of 'sky watchers' to ignite false signal fires to confuse aircrews. Compound the night flights with anti-aircraft artillery and searchlights and navigation went by the wayside. AVIARY Section of 8240th AU had these same problems and accomplished no more than did JACK Air. Compartmented operations precluded any sharing of experiences. Downed pilots and turned agents baited land traps for UN recovery aircraft and crews.

Because operational success cannot be measured by the quantity of airdrops, JACK air operations like AVIARY in 8240th AU did little to affect the outcome of the Korean War. While the number of aircrews, aircraft, and agents lost and quantity of supplies provided to the enemy outweighed benefits, the brave Air Ops men of JACK and AVIARY continued trying to make a difference. Despite the losses, recovery of downed airmen and prisoners of war (POW) has been a top priority mission for America's armed forces since WWII. There is an unspoken moral obligation accepted by American fighting men and women to do everything possible to free comrades in arms captured by the enemy or kidnapped U.S. citizens.

While advanced technology, air and naval superiority, and dedicated resources enabled air delivery of intelligence agents and supplies behind enemy lines in Korea, the purpose of that effort was not achieved. Operatives dropped to conduct sabotage, raids, and organize resistance simply disappeared within days without accomplishing anything except to serve as land bait for air rescue elements. The Allied-supported French resistance of WWII, the Special Forces model for guerrilla warfare was a unique 'cookie cutter' and totally inappropriate. The 'experiment' in Special Ops that JACK and the Army started during the Korea War would last well beyond the Vietnam War. ♣

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Endnotes

- 1 Retired COL John K. Sadler, interviews by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 15 October 2003, 3 March 2011, 18 November 2011, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC. **The typical case officer assigned to JACK was a recent college graduate with no military experience. Candidates spent three months in paramilitary classes before going to Training Camp 1, a hastily created CIA facility at Fort Benning, GA, for weapons and parachute training. Half of the recruits quit the program in training.** Sadler interview, 18 November 2011; retired MG John K. Singlaub, interview by Dr. Briscoe, 20 March 2012, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter cited by name and date; Nicholas Dujmovic, "Drastic Actions Short of War: The Origins and Application of CIA's Covert Paramilitary Function in the Early Cold War," unpublished paper presented at the Society of Military Historians conference at Virginia Military Institute, 22 May 2010.
- 2 Singlaub interviews, 25 May 2011 and 20 March 2012.
- 3 Singlaub interview, 20 March 2012.
- 4 Singlaub interviews, 25 January 2008 and 23 May 2011.
- 5 **While it seemed that MAJ Singlaub 'shanghaied' Sadler, the 187th ARCT had an overage in captains because the West Point Class of 1949 had been**

- promoted *en masse* to Captain based on reduced time in grade criteria common in war. Retired LTG David E. Grange, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, April 2012, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter cited by name and date.
- 6 Sadler interviews, 15 October 2003, 3 March 2011, and 18 November 2011; retired MG Kenneth A. Jolemore, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 11 February 2010, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter cited by name and date; retired CW3 Oscar Johnson, Jr. interview by Dr. Troy J. Sacquety, 26 April 2011, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter cited by name and date; Donald H. Stephens, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 8 July 2005, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter cited by name and date.
 - 7 Paul Diemert, "LORAN (LONG RANGE Navigation)," 6 December 2011 @ [leagueofextraordinarytechnicians.wikispaces.com/LORAN=+Operation](http://leagueofextraordinarytechnicians.wikispaces.com/LORAN%3D%2BOperation), accessed 8/16/2012; "LORAN-A," http://www.jproc.ca/hyperbolic/loran_a.html, accessed 8/16/2012; Johnson interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 16 August 2012, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter cited by name and date.
 - 8 Jolemore interview, 11 February 2010.
 - 9 Stanford University, "LONG RANGE Navigation," <http://www.stanford.edu/research/loran.html>, accessed 8/27/2012.
 - 10 "LORAN-A," http://www.jproc.ca/hyperbolic/loran_a.html; Diemert, "LORAN (Long Range Navigation)," 6 December 2011.
 - 11 Central Intelligence Agency. Infiltration and Resupply of Agents in North Korea, 1952-1953, 33. Abbreviated copy provided by CIA, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
 - 12 Jolemore interview, 15 February 2011.
 - 13 Jolemore interview, 15 February 2011; CPT Daniel Nigro, a WWII Army Air Force R-6A (Nash-Kelvinator) helicopter pilot in the Pacific, flew a black B-26 *Invader* during the Korean War making agent airdrops behind enemy lines. The Air Force Reserve recall for Korea ended his part-time military flying career. Afterwards, Nigro became a career firefighter with the New York City Fire Department (NYCFD). His son, Daniel A. Nigro, was the Chief, NYCFD on 9/11 (11 September 2001). Daniel Nigro, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 12 December 2001, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter cited by name and date. "The C-47 that I used in 1952 never changed its color. Rather, its underbelly was painted black. Further engine exhaust extensions were installed that reduced its visibility to the ground observer." COL Douglas C. Dillard, *OPERATION AVIARY: Airborne Special Operations—Korea 1950-1953 and Tiger Hunters: Special Operations in Korea (Behind the Lines of the Chinese and North Korean Forces, 1950-1953)* (Breinigsville, PA: Xlibris, 2010), 15, 21-22.
 - 14 Johnson interview, 26 April 2011.
 - 15 Johnson interviews, 26 April 2011 and 15 August 2012. A blood chit that Air Force pilot LT William C. Slattery gave to a Korean family on 21 January 1951 to help him escape capture was redeemed sixteen years later. Jimmy W. Kilbourne, *Escape and Evasion: 17 True Stories of Downed Pilots Who Made It Back* (NY: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1973), 83-84.
 - 16 Jolemore interviews, 11 and 15 February 2011.
 - 17 Jolemore, interview, 15 February 2011.
 - 18 Gene H. Rust, interview by Dr. Troy J. Sacquety, 21 September 2012, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter cited by name and date.
 - 19 Johnson interviews, 26 April 2011 and 15 August 2012.
 - 20 Rust, interview, 21 September 2012.
 - 21 Johnson interviews, 26 April 2011 and 15 August 2012.
 - 22 Retired MAJ John W. MacDonald, interview by Dr. Troy J. Sacquety, 26 April 2011 and interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 6 August 2013, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter cited by name and date; MacDonald letter to Briscoe, 3 August 2013.
 - 23 Singlaub interview, 21 March 2012; retired MAJ Ivan G. Worrrell, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 22 March 2012, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter cited by name and date.
 - 24 In April 1952 AVIARY investigated the viability of jumping with a PAE (parachutist adjustable equipment) bag attached to his T-7 parachute harness. "I managed to scoot off the B-26 jump platform clearing the airplane. I fell like a rock until the parachute blossomed open. About a hundred feet above the ground I pulled the quick release knob to lower the bag so that it would land before me. Much to my misfortune it did not release. I barely managed to get my legs wrapped around it when we made a hard three-point contact with the ground—bag, butt, and head. That was a one-jump experiment," recalled SFC Kenneth A. Jolemore. Jolemore interview, 15 February 2011.
 - 25 Sadler interview, 15 October 2003; Stephens interview, 8 July 2005. The initial wooden platform was replaced by one made of aluminum according to former SFC Kenneth A. Jolemore who used it in the AVIARY Section of 8240th AU. Jolemore interview, 15 February 2011; Dillard, *OPERATION AVIARY*, 9; Dillard, *Tiger Hunters*, 19.
 - 26 Sadler interview 18 April 2012; Stephens interviews, 8 July 2005 and 17 May 2011 (Dr. Troy J. Sacquety); Singlaub interview, 21 March 2012; Jolemore interview, 15 February 2011.
 - 27 Sadler interview 18 April 2012; Stephens interviews, 8 July 2005 and 17 May 2011; Singlaub interview, 21 March 2012.
 - 28 Singlaub interview, 21 March 2012.
 - 29 Sadler interview, 18 November 2011; Dujmovic, "Drastic Actions Short of War," 19.
 - 30 Jolemore interview, 15 February 2011; Singlaub interview, 24 May 2011; Kilbourne, *Escape and Evasion*, 74; COL Albert W. Schintz, deputy commander, 51st Fighter Wing, spent thirty-seven days on Taehwa-do off the northwest coast of Korea before being rescued. Dillard, *OPERATION AVIARY*, 58; Dillard, *Tiger Hunters*, 132.
 - 31 "Man Pickup," Miscellaneous Branch and Specifications & Drawings Office, Equipment Laboratory, HQ, Air Technical Service Command, Area B - TSEPL-3H3, Wright Field, Dayton, OH, 1942, recovered by Michael Ravnitzky, thememoryhole.org, accessed 11 April 2012.
 - 32 Sadler interview, 18 November 2011; Singlaub interviews, 21 March 2012 and 24 May 2011.
 - 33 Sadler interviews, 3 March 2011, 18 November 2011 and 18 April 2012.
 - 34 Sadler interviews, 3 March 2011, 18 November 2011 and 18 April 2012.
 - 35 Sadler interviews, 3 March 2011, 18 November 2011 and 18 April 2012. JACK rigger SFC Oscar Johnson, Jr. combined an Army T-7 parachute with an Air Force A-9 crew member parachute so that the airborne personnel could make free fall jumps. These were simply 'hop and pop' free fall jumps from twelve to fifteen hundred feet over the Han River sandbars. It was individual self-deployment of the personnel parachute instead of using an aircraft anchored static line parachute deployment. Making one of these free fall jumps garnered bragging rights. Johnson interview, 15 August 2012.
 - 36 Sadler interviews, 3 March 2011, 18 November 2011 and 18 April 2012.
 - 37 Sadler interviews, 3 March 2011, 18 November 2011 and 18 April 2012.
 - 38 Sadler interviews, 3 March 2011, 18 November 2011 and 18 April 2012.
 - 39 Sadler interview, 3 March 2011.
 - 40 Dillard, *Tiger Hunters*, 104-105, source cited as MG V.A. Zolotarev, V.A. Yaremenko, A.N. Pochtarev, and A.V. Usikov, "Russia (USSR) in Local Wars and Regional Conflicts in The Second Half of the 20th Century," Moscow, 2000, <http://www.korean-war.com/russianregionalconflicts.html> accessed 2/26/2013.
 - 41 Retired BG Joseph Ulatoski, 7 March 2011, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, hereafter cited by name and date; Dillard, *OPERATION AVIARY*, 83; Dillard, *Tiger Hunters*, 101-103.
 - 42 Worrrell interview, 22 March 2012; Dillard, *OPERATION AVIARY*, 39-43; Dillard, *Tiger Hunters*, 87-89, 90-93.
 - 43 Sadler interview, 3 March 2011; Stephens interview, 17 May 2011.
 - 44 Sadler interview, 3 March 2011; Stephens interview, 17 May 2011.
 - 45 Stephens interview, 17 May 2011.
 - 46 Frederick W. Cleaver, George Fitzpatrick, John Ponturo, William Rossiter, and C. Darwin Stolzenbach, *UN Partisan Warfare in Korea, 1951-1954 (U)*, Technical Memorandum ORO-T-64 (AFFE)(Chevy Chase, MD: Operations Research Office, Johns Hopkins University, June 1956), 93; "Remembering CIA's Heroes: Norman Schwartz & Robert Snoddy" at <https://www.cia.gov/news-information/featured-story-archive/2007-featured-story-archive/s>, accessed 8/1/2012; "Two CIA Prisoners in China, 1952-73" at <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/>, accessed 8/1/2012.
 - 47 From a Chinese Prison to a Director's Medal: A Journey that Defines Extraordinary Fidelity; The Story of Richard Fecteau and John Downey, The Center for the Study of Intelligence DVD (Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 2010).
 - 48 Sadler interviews, 3 March 2011 and 18 November 2011.