



# SPECIAL FORCES ASSOCIATION

Rocky Mountain Chapter 4-24 / SFACON 2022  
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October 31, 2022

MEMORANDUM FOR: SEE DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: SFACON 2022's 'De Oppresso Liber Symposium Series' Summary

PURPOSE: To memorialize the symposia with topic descriptions and video links. This information can be used to develop social media posts to promote the U.S. Army Special Forces' legacy, support research and preserve history.

1. The Special Forces Association Convention 2022 (SFACON 2022) celebrated the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Army Special Forces (SF). The distinguished visitor committee (seminar team) selected topics to highlight SF's tactical, operational, and strategic activities. SFACON 2022's symposia took place at the Antlers Hotel in downtown Colorado Springs between September 21-24, 2022.

2. SFACON 2022's De Oppresso Liber Symposium Series included nine seminars: *The Original Mike Force* (Vietnam 1965 / Operational-Tactical vignette), *Task Force Dagger* (Afghanistan 2001 / Operational vignette), *Task Force Viking* (N. Iraq 2003 / Operational vignette), *El Salvador* (1980s / Strategic vignette), *Shok Valley* (Afghanistan 2008 / Tactical vignette), *FOB Ghazni* (Afghanistan 2013 / Tactical vignette), *The Originals Panel* (1952-53 Strategic vignette), *Det-A / SF Berlin* (1956-1990 Strategic vignette), and *1<sup>st</sup> SF Command* (current day).

The 10<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group Public Affairs team (10<sup>th</sup> SFG PAO) recorded and produced the videos. The 10<sup>th</sup> SFG PAO has uploaded the videos on the Department of Defense's Defense Audio Visual Information Distribution Service (DVIDS), Google Drive and YouTube (the title

3. The following provides a synopsis of each seminar with the title and historical period, presentation date, presenter's name, relevance to the topic and photo, and video links (DVIDS, Google Drive, YouTube); a complete compendium is available at YouTube under the *title SFACON 2022 De Oppresso Liber Symposium Series* at <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL-qMqt2nuknyTAWBU4PzXnfyJ7F-QrlvC>. They are in order of presentation:

**a. Topic: *The Original Mike Force*** (ca 1965)

- Date of presentation: September 21, 2022 from 0900-1015 Mountain Time (MT)

- Presenter: BG (Ret) Joseph S. Stringham. In 1965, he was tasked with forming the original Mike Force for the III Corps Tactical Zone (III CTZ) in the Republic of Vietnam.



- Summary: In 1965, BG (Ret) (then CPT) Joe Stringham commanded ODA-301 at its CIDG camp near Ben Cat in South Vietnam. His ODA got the task to activate III Corps' Mobile Strike Force battalion, known as "The Mike Force." BG Stringham describes the Mike Force's origin, its unique guerilla makeup with Chinese Nung

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*The Special Forces Association Serves as the voice for the Special Forces Community; Perpetuates Special Forces Traditions and Brotherhood; Advances the Public Image of Special Forces and Promotes the General Welfare of the Special Forces Community.*



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mercenaries, and its initial employments. He further discusses the Mike Force's evolution into a relevant combat design for the counter-insurgency fight; a design that promulgated to every Corps Tactical Zone in Vietnam.

- Video links:

DVIDS: <https://www.dvidshub.net/video/862111/special-forces-association-convention-2022-original-mike-force>

Google Drive: [SFACON 2022 The Original Mike Force BG \(Ret\) Stingham 21SEP2022.mp4](#)

YouTube: [Special Forces Association Convention 2022 The Original Mike Force with BG \(Ret\) Stingham 21SEP2022 - YouTube](#)

**b. Topic: *Task Force DAGGER / N. Afghanistan*** (October-December 2001)

- Date of presentation: September 21, 2022 from 1030 – 1145 MT

- Presenter: COL (Ret) Mark Rosengard. In the fall of 2001, he was the J-3 for Task Force DAGGER.



- Summary: COL (Ret) Mark Rosengard describes how Task Force DAGGER conducted Unconventional Warfare operations in northern Afghanistan immediately following 9/11, and how this organization reduced the sanctuary then provided to Al Qaeda by the Afghan Taliban. COL Rosengard describes combined and integrated operations alongside the Northern Alliance - from infiltration of the initial SFODA's from 5th SFG, re-establishment of the Embassy in Kabul, and through TF Dagger's role in Operation Anaconda.

- Video Links:

DVIDS: <https://www.dvidshub.net/video/862151/special-forces-association-convention-2022-task-force-dagger-col-ret-rosengard>

Google Drive: [SFACON 2022 TF Dagger COL \(Ret\) Rosengard 21SEP2022.mp4](#)

YouTube: [Special Forces Association Convention 2022 Task Force Dagger with COL \(Ret\) Rosengard 21SEP2022 - YouTube](#)

**c. Topic: *Task Force Viking / N. Iraq*** (ca March-May 2003)

- Date: September 21, 2022 from 1300-1415 MT

- Presenter: LTC (Ret) Mark Grdovic. He was the S-3 for 3/10 SFG (J-3 for Task Force VIKING).



- Summary: LTC (Ret) Mark Grdovic describes Task Force VIKING's plan for unconventional warfare (UW) in northern Iraq as part of operation IRAQI FREEDOM. He describes the task organization of its three SOTFs and a squadron of British SBS, two of which conducted UW with the Kurdish Peshmerga. LTC Grdovic describes the



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planning prior to the invasion, the role of the Pilot Teams and the initial Advance Force teams, the infiltration of the main body and the operations that resulted in the capture of Kirkuk and Mosul.

- Video links:

DVIDS: <https://www.dvidshub.net/video/862289/special-forces-association-convention-2022-task-force-viking-ltc-ret-grdovic>

Google Drive: [SFACON 2022 TF Viking LTC \(Ret\) Grdovic 21SEP2022.mp4](#)

YouTube: [Special Forces Association Convention 2022 Task Force Viking with LTC \(Ret\) Grdovic 21SEP2022 - YouTube](#)

**d. Topic: *El Salvador*** (ca 1980s)

- Date: September 21, 2022 from 1430-1630 MT

- Presenter: BG (Ret) Joseph S. Stringham. From 1983-84, then COL Stringham commanded USMILGRP – El Salvador. He was directly responsible for the US military strategy in support of the Ambassador and for all ‘in-country’ US military assets, to include Army Special Forces.



- Summary: In the 1980s, Special Forces engaged in a low-visibility extension to the Cold War being played out in Central America’s Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador. General Stringham discusses the strategic importance of El Salvador, the context of the insurgency and the importance of US support to the government of El Salvador. He further describes the US strategy and the role of a small 55-man SF contribution, conducting tactical through strategic ‘combat’ operations in a sensitive time when a small band of Green Berets were quietly executing America’s fight against communism near our southern border.

- Video links:

DVIDS: <https://www.dvidshub.net/video/862153/special-forces-association-convention-2022-el-salvador-bg-ret-stringham>

Google Drive: [SFACON 2022 El Salvador BG \(Ret\) Stringham 21SEP2022.mp4](#)

YouTube: [Special Forces Association Convention 2022 El Salvador with BG \(Ret\) Joseph Stringham 21SEP2022 - YouTube](#)

**e. Topic: *Shok Valley, Afghanistan*** (April 6, 2008)

- Date of presentation: September 22, 2022 from 0830-0945 MT

- Presenter: SGM Matthew Williams (MoH). He received his Medal of Honor during this battle.





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- Summary: On 6 April 2008, ODA-3336 and their Afghan commandos entered the Shok Valley in Afghanistan’s Nuristan province to capture Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the leader of the Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin (HIG). The HIG ambushed the lead assault element in steep mountainous terrain shortly after insertion, and ferocious combat ensued at 10,000 feet for seven hours. SGM Williams discusses this battle that resulted in two Medals of Honor, one Air Force Cross and eight Silver Stars.

- Video links:

DVIDS: <https://www.dvidshub.net/video/862216/special-forces-association-convention-2022-battle-shok-valley-sgm-williams>

Google Drive: [SFACON 2022 The Battle of Shok Valley SGM Williams 22SEP2022.mp4](#)

YouTube: [Special Forces Association Convention 2022 The Battle of Shok Valley with SGM Williams 22SEP2022 - YouTube](#)

**f. Topic: FOB Ghazni, Afghanistan** (August 28, 2013)

- Date of presentation: September 22, 2022 from 1000-1115 MT

- Presenter: MSG Earl Plumlee (MoH). He received his Medal of Honor during this battle.



- Summary: On August 28, 2013, the Taliban launched a ferocious attack on Forward Operating Base (FOB) GHAZNI in Afghanistan’s Ghazni province. Members of ODB-1430 were at the FOB when the Taliban suicide bombers, disguised as Afghan soldiers, blew a 60’ hole in the perimeter. MSG Plumlee describes his and his fellow Green Berets’ valorous actions alongside Polish and Afghan Soldiers.

- Video links:

DVIDS: <https://www.dvidshub.net/video/862215/special-forces-association-convention-2022-fob-ghazni-msg-plumlee>

Google Drive: [SFACON 2022 FOB Ghazni MSG Plumlee 22SEP2022.mp4](#)

YouTube: [Special Forces Association Convention 2022 FOB Ghazni with MSG Plumlee 22SEP2022 - YouTube](#)

**g. Topic: The Originals Panel** (ca 1952-53)

- Date of Presentation: September 23, 2022 from 0900-1030 MT

- Presenters: CG USASOC LTG Jon Braga (host) and LTC (Ret) Mitch Utterback (moderator).





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- Summary: CG USASOC LTG Jon Braga provides introductory comments and LTC (Ret) Mitch Utterback moderates a panel discussion with our *Original* members of Special Forces who joined in 1952-53. Panelist include: 1SG (Ret) Henry Bertrand, former SSG Richard Simonian, CH (COL) (Ret) Vahan Sipantzi and MAJ (Ret) Clyde Sincere. They recount how they were recruited, how they trained, and how they formed our very first Special Forces elements that eventually became Special Forces Operational Detachment – Alphas (ODAs).

- Video links:

DVIDS: <https://www.dvidshub.net/video/862097/special-forces-association-convention-2022-originals-panel>

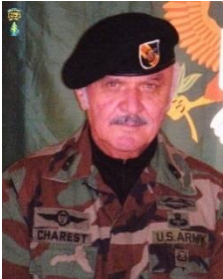
Google Drive: [SFACON 2022 The Originals Panel LTC \(Ret\) Utterback 23SEP2022.mp4](#)

YouTube: [Special Forces Association Convention 2022 The Originals Panel with LTC \(Ret\) Utterback 23SEP2022 - YouTube](#)

**h. Topic: *Det-A / SF Berlin*** (ca 1956-1984 / 1984-1990)

- Date of presentation: September 24, 2022 from 0900-1015 MT via Zoom

- Presenter: MSG (Ret) Robert Charest. He served two tours with Det-A and hosts the Det-A website.



- Summary: In 1990, the Special Forces cased its final unit colors in Berlin, bringing to close 34 years of clandestine Cold War activities. Former Det-A veteran MSG (Ret) Robert Charest reviews the various phases of this one-of-a-kind unit with a truly elegant mission. He describes the Berlin based 39<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Detachment Alpha – Berlin, aka *Det-A*'s 1956-early 1970s Unconventional Warfare design, the addition of its Counterterrorism mission, and the 1984 transition to the 410<sup>th</sup> SF Physical Security Support Element – Berlin, aka *PSSE-B*. LTC (Ret) Mitch Utterback joins the session to describe *PSSE-B*.

- Video links:

DVIDS: <https://www.dvidshub.net/video/862150/special-forces-association-convention-2022-detachment-msg-ret-charest>

Google Drive: [SFACON 2022 Det-A MSG \(Ret\) Charest 24SEP2022.mp4](#)

YouTube: [Special Forces Association Convention 2022 Detachment A with MSG \(Ret\) Charest 24SEP2022 - YouTube](#)

**i. Topic: *1st Special Forces Command*** (present day - 2022)

- Date of presentation: September 24, 2022 from 1030-1200 MT

- Presenter: BG Gil Ferguson. He is the 1<sup>st</sup> SFC's deputy commanding general for operations (DCG-O).





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- Summary: BG Gil Ferguson discussed with convention attendees how the 1st Special Forces Command (1<sup>st</sup> SFC) mans, trains, equips, validates, and deploys Army Special Operations Forces globally. He described the division-sized element with corps-like responsibilities that consists of 11 subordinate brigades and more than 22,000 personnel. He also shared the current state of the Special Forces Regiment and offered insights on its future.

4. SFACON 2022's DOL Symposium Series also invited *Original* Rudolph Gyorgy 'Rudi' Horvath to take part in *The Originals Panel*. Unfortunately, Rudi's health prevented his attendance, and he passed away on October 22,



2022. The Army Heritage Center Foundation's (AHCF) Director of Education and Veteran Outreach Mr. Jeff Hawks interviewed Rudi on March 25, 2022 in support of our effort. In addition, former USASOC SF Historian Bob Seals wrote an article about Rudi for Military History online. We believe it is important to share the legacy of this great "Lodge-Boy" American as we celebrate our *Original* members of the Special Forces regiment.

- Interview info: March 25, 2022, Dumont, New Jersey; interviewer: Jeff Hawks

- Summary: Rudolf Gyorgy 'Rudi' Horvath was a 10th SFG "*Original*" who joined the 10<sup>th</sup> SFG in 1952. Born in Budapest in 1931, Rudi escaped from behind the Iron Curtain in 1950 to begin a new life as a Lodge Act soldier. He lived a remarkable life, becoming a proud American citizen, engineer, private pilot, accomplished skier, and source of inspiration for the Regiment and many USMA cadets (Obituary by Bob Seals).

- Video links:

Google Drive: [Rudi Horvath Short Film.mp4 - Google Drive](#)

Amazon Audible: [SGT Rudi Horvath | The Indigenous Approach | Podcasts on Audible | Audible.com](#)

- Articles: [MilitaryHistoryOnline.com - Behind the Iron Curtain and into the Special Forces: Rudi Horvath](#) (Bob Seals, August 3, 2014); [America's Foreign Legionnaires: The Lodge Act Soldiers, Part I](#) ([arsof-history.org](#))

5. Point of contact is the undersigned, email: [chrissorenson@hotmail.com](mailto:chrissorenson@hotmail.com), cell: 703.673.8604.

// signed NCS //

Nils C. 'Chris' Sorenson

COL, USA (Ret)

Chair, Distinguished Visitor Committee

DISTRIBUTION (Unlimited) / Initial Distribution Includes:

- SFACON 2022 After Action Review (Tab C)
- Special Forces Association (SFA) National Headquarters
- SFA Chapters 4-24 (SFACON 2022 Host), 78 (Sentinel Magazine) and 500 (SFACON 2023 Host)
- Command Historian, U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC), includes JFKSCS & 1<sup>st</sup> SFC
- U.S. Military Academy (West Point)
- Army Heritage Center Foundation (AHCF)
- Association of the U.S. Army (AUSA)
- National Infantry Museum
- U.S. Army Airborne and Special Operations Museum (ASOM)
- Det-A / SF Berlin Website
- Special Operations Association
- Green Beret Foundation
- Special Forces Charitable Trust
- Congressional Medal of Honor Society
- National Medal of Honor Museum Foundation