



Issue 5
Volume 31
Dec 2023

The Canopy

North Central Florida All Airborne Chapter

*Connecting sky
soldiers, past
and present.*



Veterans Day Activity Round-Up

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Best Combat Diver Competition

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Army Base Renaming Cheat Sheet

Ft. Benning ⇒ Ft. Moore	Ft. Bragg ⇒ Ft. Liberty
Ft. Gordon ⇒ Ft. Eisenhower	Ft. A.P. Hill ⇒ Ft. Walker
Ft. Hood ⇒ Ft. Cavazos	Ft. Lee ⇒ Ft. Gregg-Adams
Ft. Pickett ⇒ Ft. Barfoot	Ft. Polk ⇒ Ft. Johnson
Ft. Rucker ⇒ Ft. Novosel	

Directory & Chapter Calendar

Chapter Officers		
Chairman	Tony Alger	(719) 310-8951
Vice Chairman		
Treasurer	Heath Davenport	(571) 641-9057
Secretary	Rich Troop	(610) 823-7505
Sergeant at Arms	Frank Dochniak	(352) 259-2441
Service Officer	Joyce Damon	(352) 208-4963
Recruiting / Villages	Tony Alger	(719) 310-8951
Recruiting / Ocala	Tig Blackman	(352) 591-4752
Exec Committee	Frank Dochniak	(352) 259-2441
Canopy Editor	Ron Dahlgren	(407) 577-1746

Upcoming Events

Saturday, December 9th 1230 Chapter Christmas Party
VFW Post 8083

From The Editor

This is a longer issue than those of the last several months. We have two original pieces for you this time - the conclusion of my long-winded combat diver competition coverage and an interview with the incoming executive director of the 82nd Airborne Division Association. I'm also excited to share the update from the 75th Ranger Regiment. Their Deputy PAO connected with me recently and made sure I was up to speed on things happening with the rangers. I'm in the beginning stage of planning a reporting trip to Ft. Liberty for live fire exercises from my old regiment - the 504th. If you have specific events you'd like me to cover or stories you'd like me to report on, get in touch! Share your ideas with me at <ronald.dahlgren@gmail.com>.



On a more somber note, Fran Dolan passed recently. He was the previous editor of The Canopy and ran it for over a decade. Fran really helped me out with taking things over. He will be missed. Rest in peace, Fran.

Ron Dahlgren

Editor, The Canopy

<https://www.the-canopy.org>

Chairman's Message

Hope everyone ate plenty of turkey. It's a time to really give thanks and reflect on this past year. Remember those that are deployed and won't be with their loved ones during the holidays. As I think about the holidays I can remember going to the Air Force Mess Halls every year when my dad wasn't deployed but home with us. Mom always looked forward to that outing because she didn't have to cook for her husband and five hungry boys.

Our meeting for Dec is our Christmas Party at the VFW Hall this year (Dec 09 at 12:30 p.m.) Invitations have been sent and were also on the website. We'll kick off with Social Hour so please patronize the VFW Bar and get yourselves a cold one and socialize. It should be lots of fun with plenty of things going on. Joyce Damon and Hope Alger will head up the decorating crew. I'm sure they could use a couple more hands to help decorate. If you can, meet at the VFW Dec 9 Saturday at 10 a.m. We couldn't decorate the day before because of the VFW Fish Fry. Also if you can bring a small dessert for 8-10 people we'd be forever grateful. Dan Marrin will provide entertainment and play his piano and sing Christmas Songs and anything you may request. He's always been there for us and never charged us so think about a little tip if a tip jar comes around. Currently there are 36 people who've paid so if you are reading this, you've probably missed the deadline of Nov 30. We should have a few new faces since we've got 5 new members added to the Chapter. Please look for the unfamiliar faces and introduce yourselves and welcome them into our Chapter.



Our Chapter re-elected the current Board for another year however Jerry Brust our Vice Chairman is retiring. I'm looking for a Vice Chairman so please let me know if you are willing to help our Chapter. I'm working on a guest speaker for the January meeting. Should be very interesting. Can't wait to see you all at the Christmas Party and hope to see you on the manifest in January 2024.

On a sad note, we lost a pillar to our Chapter. Fran Dolan passed away Nov 21. I had a nice talk with Peggy and she is with her family in New York where Fran will be buried. Airborne Brother.

Tony Alger, Chairman, North Central Florida All-Airborne Chapter

10 Most Recent Canopy Boosters - Thank you for your support!

Galen Mitchell

Heath Davenport

Nick Harty

Darla & Jay Tatman

Howard Northrup

Jerry & Robby Brust

Frank Dochniak

Regis Rossa

Marianne & George Zablocki

Arthur Tate

Veterans Day Activities



From left: Association Executive Director CSM (Ret.) William Bauer, a World War II veteran, 82nd Airborne Division Command Sergeant Major Delapena, Association President Gary Covey pose by the association wreath at the paratrooper plaque in the World War Two Memorial. Photos by Ron Dahlgren



Fort Liberty Garrison Command Sergeant Major CSM Seymour

Washington, D.C.: The 82nd Airborne Division Association gathered in Washington D.C. on November 9th, 10th, and 11th to lay wreaths at monuments around the capitol and at Arlington National Cemetery. Wreaths were laid at the World War Two Memorial, the Korean War Veterans Memorial, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the World War I Memorial, and the Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial. Veteran paratrooper Walter (Walt) Rauscher hosted the association for two lunches at the Sequoia restaurant. The association had a hospitality room on the 11th floor of the Sheraton Pentagon City hotel.

The turnout from the association was good. Nearly all the officers and directors were accounted for and several new faces attended. I spoke with a military intelligence veteran that very recently left service. We like to see more Global War On Terror veterans showing up for these events. Former 82nd Airborne Division Commanding General, General (Ret.) Rodriguez, was on-hand for the first lunch at the Sequoia.

The weather was rainy on the morning of the 10th, but otherwise cool and pleasant. The leaves were beginning to turn. Being from the southeast, I'm always taken by the beauty of autumn colors further north.

Many other units were represented at the monuments on Veterans Day. The 1st Cavalry Division in particular made a strong showing this year. We hope to coordinate with the park service to take part in the larger ceremony at the World War Two Memorial next year.



82nd Airborne Division color guard approaches the Korean War Veterans Memorial



Korean War Veterans Memorial



Lunch at the Sequoia



82nd wreath at Korean War Veterans Memorial



Association Vietnam War veterans



2024 Best Combat Diver Competition

by Ron Dahlgren



Photo by K. Kassens, USAJWKS WCS

Naval Air Station Key West, FL: The Special Forces Underwater Operations Center (SFUWO) hosted the 2023 Best Combat Diver Competition from September 25th to September 27th. In November's issue of *The Canopy*, I talked with SFUWO cadre and watched the pool events of the competition. The story continues as the pool events have concluded. The competitors have about an hour after the pool events to grab dinner before a dive brief for their nighttime navigation dive. A staff member has told me he will ask the teams if anyone wants to do an interview once the dive briefing completes. About 45 minutes after the briefing was scheduled to start, two divers walked into the media operations center - called by the pseudonyms D and J.

Day Two, Team Interview

These two divers have an interesting route to the competition. J was on the buddy team of the distinguished honor grad of his class, D was a last-minute backup for the distinguished honor grad. Both are recent graduates of the CDQC. To prepare for this competition, they have focused on studying academics and training the hard part - holding their breath and staying under. I ask them about the water jump this morning - describe the moment before hitting the water. J describes it with a familiar "oh shit" feeling that I know all too well. He doesn't care for airborne operations as the risk of injury is harder to control than with diving exercises. D says it was his first water jump and his first chinook jump, so he was really just enjoying how special it was. Both divers say they prefer water over land for the landings. It's a much softer impact. "I'll take water landings every time", J tells me.

I ask about how they explore and learn the limits to their performance underwater without going over that limit. J says he has never blacked out, D says that just today he experienced a shallow water blackout. J tells me about "breath boxing" to intentionally load the blood with oxygen. D says the key for him is to stay calm and keep his heart rate down. He is excited by competition and has to work hard to keep himself calm during the events. A high heart rate will burn through oxygen stores more quickly. I ask about the strategy for recovery breathing during the clump relay.

D tells me he does a long exhale on the way up, takes a quick breath in, a quick exhale to get rid of CO₂, then another quick breath in.

I have been imagining feeling out "the limit" as sort of seeing your vision start to tunnel and knowing when it's getting close. D tells me it's faster than that. He says it's like you start to lean a little and then before you know it you're about to lose it. J says he feels what they call "guppying", the spasms that start when you've been holding your breath a long time. J says a mentor told him that when "guppying" starts, it means you've got about 30% left. He uses that to help estimate the time he has left. J says it's really different for each person. Each person has to learn their own touch points. He compares it to shooting - he has certain touch points that ensure consistent performance. Each diver has to learn himself and his own touch points.

Both divers highlight the mental aspect of their skills in several different contexts. Part of this is to monitor self-talk when pushing yourself. J highlights positive self-talk "Keep going" instead of "Don't stop". "Your mind won't hear the don't, only the stop", he says. I compare this to talking with my toddler. "Exactly, it's primitive", D remarks.

When asked what future competitors should do to prepare for this competition, J says to focus on the basics and the hard stuff. J and D agree that it's easy to ignore the hard stuff once you're past it - specifically breath holds - but it's critical. J again highlights that they studied, D agrees, and they feel confident on their performance on the academic portion of the competition.



Photo by K. Kassens, USAJFWSWCS



Day Three

I meet with my media contacts a little later on Wednesday morning, the third day of the competition. There is light rain again with thick cloud cover. When we arrive at the SFUWO site, I don't see any staff or competitors around. The teams were scheduled to do a second navigational dive in the early morning followed by a contour dive to run event a little later. I head to the media operations center to find only about a third of the usual people are present. That third is busy editing and preparing media, heads down and hands on keyboards.

I decide to head back and rely on the public affairs staff for their coverage of the final events of the competition.

Photos by K. Kassens, USAJFWSWCS

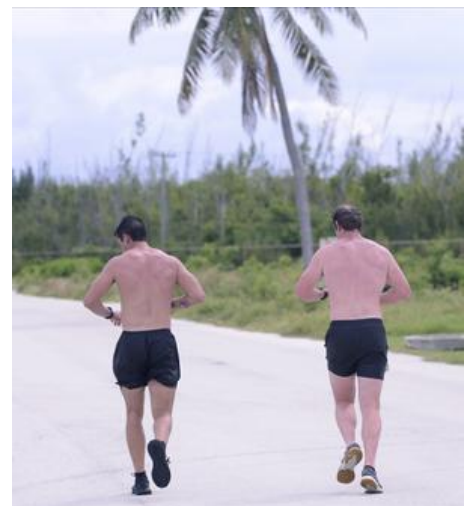




Photo by 3rd POB (A) (D)



Photo by K. Kassens, USAJFKSWCS



Photo by K, Kassens, USAJFKSWCS

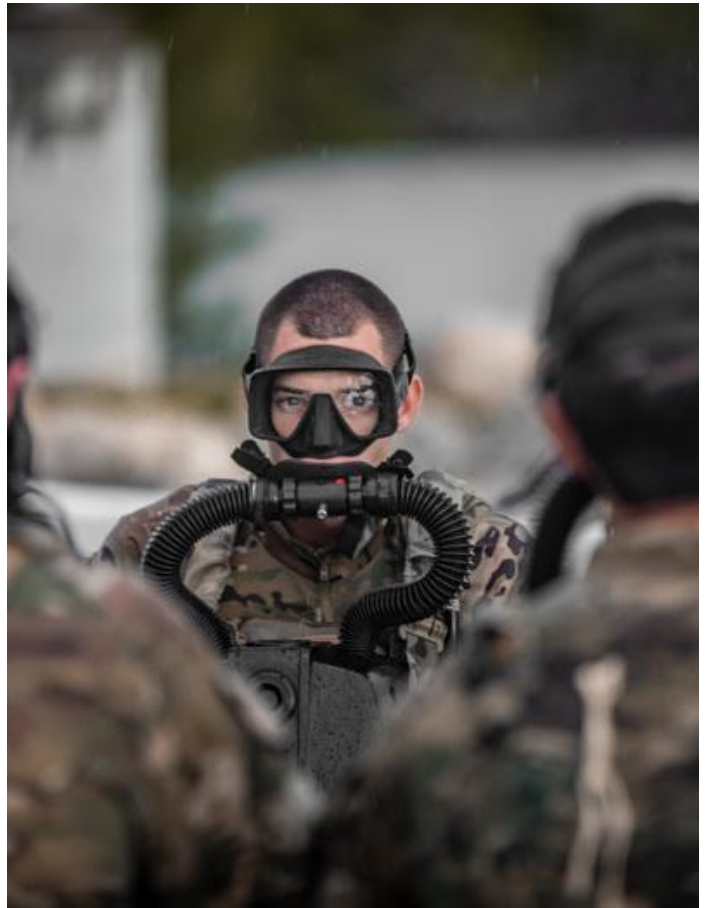


Photo by Sgt Emely Opio-Wright, 1st Special Forces Command

Interview with 1st Sergeant (Retired) James Grimes



James Grimes had a complicated path leading to where he is today, but his reason for joining the military is something many of us can identify with - the attacks of September 11th, 2001.

1st Sergeant Retired James (Jimmy) Grimes started life in the rural parts of south Georgia. He had some ideas about the military - and the Army specifically - from his grandfather. His grandfather retired as a command sergeant major. Over the course of his career he spent some time in the 82nd Airborne Division, but most of his time was as a special forces soldier. His career covered the Vietnam War era and included four tours. He didn't talk much about the details, but Jimmy learned he had done his first Vietnam tour with 1st Cavalry Division, spent some time with 1st Special Forces Group, and spent most of his time with the 20th Special Forces Group. He didn't bring up the Army often, but it was not a foreign concept to Jimmy.

After highschool, he got a union job at the local paper mill and believed that would be his path.

Then September 11th happened.

"I was sad, angry... lots of emotions." Seeing the details on TV and learning about the attack on American soil made him feel that he had to do something. He decided to enlist. At first, he didn't want to make the leap completely out of his life. He had a good job and a stable place in the world. The best option was joining the National Guard. He picked the 13B MOS - a cannon crewmember. After initial entry training he went back to Georgia and drilled with his guard unit. About a year later, the paper mill was sold to a new owner and everyone was laid off. That gave him the freedom to fully commit and become an active dirty soldier.

As the bills would keep coming and the pay wasn't, Jimmy wanted a fast path onto active duty.

Getting the quickest date for enlistment severely limited the choice of jobs he had available. He knew that he wanted to be airborne. He knew about paratroopers and wanted to be one. The recruiter told him you can be a cook or a mechanic. Jimmy chose to be a mechanic. After training at Ft. Jackson to reclass to mechanic, he went on to jump school and then to the 82nd Airborne Division. He worked that job for about a year and a half. During his first deployment - to Iraq - he did the mechanic job for about a month before taking the opportunity to reenlist with a new job - 19D Cav Scout. He used a personal connection with the command sergeant major of 1st Squadron 73rd Cavalry Regiment to get tasked over to their unit for the rest of the deployment. Instead of using wrenches and grease guns, he was a turret gunner for a combat unit.

Jimmy loved being a gunner. It was his favorite assignment in the cavalry units. During his second deployment, they were doing a torch mission with a very high operational tempo. Constant raids for high-value targets. His favorite part during these missions was being on the assault team. "[It was] very exciting and scary, but fun."

A scout team in 1-73 was just three people - a gunner, a radio man, and an observer. If the gunner has a 240-B, the gunner is carrying the gun, the tripod, and the food for it. With vehicles, he would be on a .50 caliber machine gun.

It wasn't all fun though. Airborne operations come with an element of risk. Winds, drop targets, and many other variables are outside the control of the troopers.

On a cold January night, Jimmy was doing a joint forcible entry exercise. He was jumping the 240-B, the platoon leader's radio and a few other things. It was a heavy combat load. As the C-130 approached Salerno dropzone, the greenlight went on and he exited, counted to 4, checked his canopy and gained canopy control. Looking down, he could not see the dropzone. It was nothing but trees below. He remembered his training and wanted to slip away from the trees. Looking below, he spotted a small clearing to aim for. He maneuvered his canopy directly to the clearing and released his risers to guard his face. Releasing the risers caused the canopy to flare and then get wrapped in the trees. Again he followed his training: he jettisoned all unnecessary equipment, cracked a chemlight and dropped it to check his height. It vanished below him. A short time later, the recovery team arrived to check on him. His entire stick had ended up in the trees and recovery efforts were ongoing.



"I cracked a chemlight from my helmet and dropped it to check the height from the ground. The chemlight completely disappeared and I thought, holy crap I'm way up here. This isn't good."





He lowered his reserve parachute to see if it would be possible to climb down. The recovery team shouted up to him that it wasn't even on the ground and he would need to jump. "No way!" Jimmy replied and climbed back into his harness. The recovery team told him to sit tight and they'll get a cherry picker. As the time passes, Jimmy regrets ditching his ruck. All that cold weather gear would be really nice to have. A few cold hours later, he hears a helicopter in the distance. "Good idea, better to be safe and have medevac ready if something goes wrong," he thinks.

A moment later he sees the helicopter coming closer to him with a crewmember hanging out. The closer it gets, the more the rotor wash is pushing him. He feels the canopy coming up. The rotor wash finally overpowers the snag and his canopy is lifted up. Jimmy falls a few feet only to get stuck upside down. A heartbeat later, a branch breaks and he starts to fall.

The next thing he remembers is waking up on the ground trying to clear his mouth so he can breathe. There is a lot of blood. His section leader finds him and tells him not to move.

When the medics arrive, the first thing they do is cut all his clothes off. The medevac flies with the doors open to take him to the hospital. More than the pain or worry about injury, it's the cold he remembers all these years later.

It would take him a year to recover from his injuries but he would make a full recovery.

Once recovered, he deployed again as a buck sergeant. That deployment was his favorite. He spent the most time as a gunner and doing team assault roles.

Being a cavalry scout allowed Jimmy to attend many desirable Army schools.

In addition to airborne school, he attended jumpmaster school at the 82nd Airborne Division Advanced Airborne School (where he would later be cadre and the 1st Sergeant of the unit), sniper school, pathfinder school, and others.

While many soldiers may have earned the pathfinder badge, few have put the badge to use. Jimmy boasts credit on dropzones in Wyoming, Nevada, and Cape Cod.

In his career he has held a multitude of roles. With his advanced airborne experience, you would be hard pressed to find someone more knowledgeable on airborne operations. All the way!



ISG (Ret.) Grimes will take over duties of the Executive Director of the 82nd Airborne Division Association starting January 1st, 2024.



From The Chapter

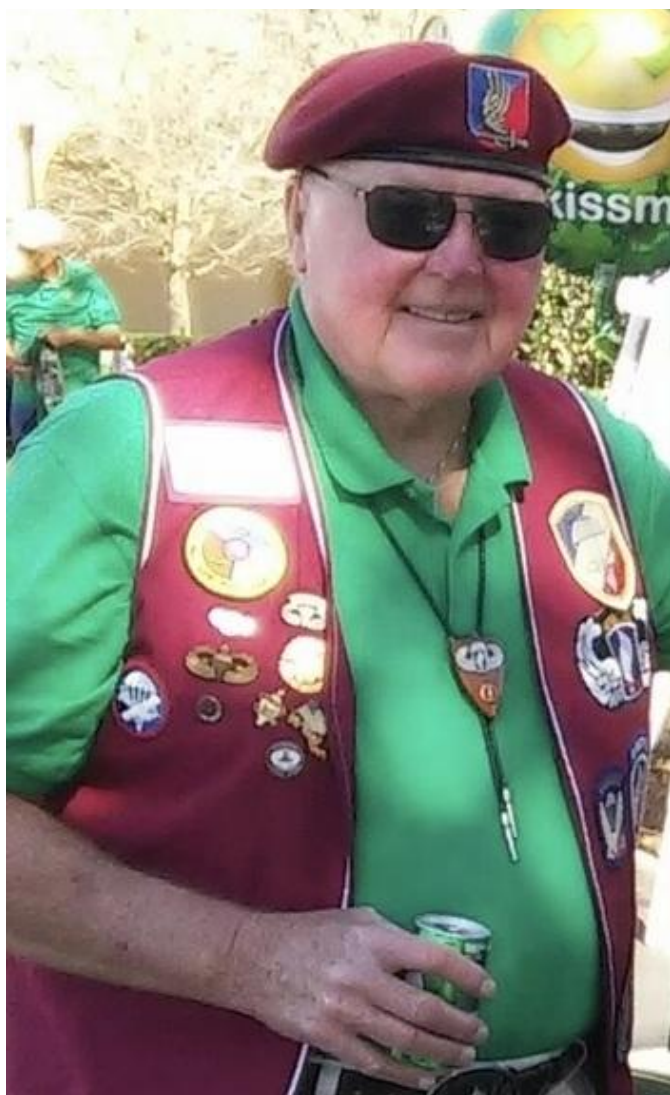


Photo by Tony Alger.

Remembering Fran

On Wednesday, November 22nd, we learned from Peggy Dolan that her husband, Francis "Fran" Dolan, had passed the day before. He had been in New York for several months following a surgery and some unexpected cancer intervention. His passing was sudden. Fran served with the 173rd Airborne Brigade in Okinawa, Japan. He was our chapter chairman from 2013-2014 and was editor of *The Canopy* for more than a decade. Fran was always at the meetings, always up front.



Fran where he always was - up front. Photo by Ron Dahlgren

When I first started attending the NCFAAC meetings, Fran was one of the first faces I saw. He made a point to introduce himself and ask some questions. The meeting after that, he had convinced me to take over *The Canopy*. He said he'd been doing it for almost fifteen years and he was ready to pass the torch. He gave me a manilla envelope with everything I would need inside. The envelope contained address labels with the recipients already printed, a roll of stamps, past issues, and what he called "ammunition" - little cartoons or jokes that could be used to fill up an area when short on content. Fran really set me up for success with that packet of material. As our chairman, Tony Alger put it, "We'll miss this big anchor of a man."

The chapter sent flowers with the following message:

Fran & Family, With our love and endearing gratitude to a life well lived. He is in our thoughts and prayers as he makes his final jump. AIRBORNE! Fellow Troopers of the North Central Florida All Airborne Chapter

Francis Dolan

Tuesday, October 4th, 1938 - Tuesday, November 22nd, 2023



Photo by Tony Alger

Our WW2 Vet at The Villages Christmas Parade

Edward (Ed) Kory, our chapter's only World War II veteran, was recently honored at the Christmas Parade in The Villages. Ed served with the 511th Parachute Infantry Regiment, part of the 11th Airborne Division. The 511th occupied Japan after the country's surrender. Tony reports Ed is jovial and in generally good spirits.

Chapter Officers Re-Elected

The Chapter Officers, reinforced, met on Wednesday, November 8th at the Panera Bread at Sumter Landing. During the meeting, the existing cadre, except the vice chairman, was re-elected. Although several officers have been in their roles for a number of years, they agreed to continue serving for another year. Jerry Brust is retiring as the vice chairman after 3 years in the role. You could be the next vice-chairman!

Vice Chairman

The Vice Chairman shall perform all duties of the Chairman in the absence, disability, or death of the Chairman. [Article II, Section 3, NCFAC Bylaws].

Additionally, the Vice Chairman has also historically said the Airborne Prayer at meetings and been responsible for the POW MIA Table at events.



Photo by Tony Alger

Christmas Party 2023

It's already that time of year again! Our biggest event – the annual Christmas Party. We will have food, entertainment, and lots of opportunities for bonding with your airborne brothers. The Christmas Party starts a half-hour earlier than our usual meetings – 12:30pm – at the standard location. If you are willing and able to help with decorations and setup, please show at 10:00 am.

Make sure you have sent your completed RSVP form to Heath Davenport or Rich Troop.

Be sure you attend. There will be a lot of attendees and I heard Tony is setting up a kissing booth – you don't want to miss that!

Saturday, December 9th, 2023 12:30 pm – 3:00 pm
 VFW Post 8083
 12666 Hwy 441,
 Belleview, FL 34420



75th Ranger Regiment Update Fall 2023

Operation Urgent Fury remembered, new FIRES Center & more



Ft. Moore, GA - The 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment hosted veterans and set up static displays to observe the 40th anniversary of Operation Urgent Fury. The battalion brought veterans of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and current troops from the 75th and 160th SOAR for a ceremony honoring the 19 troops killed in action during the operation.

Operation Urgent Fury was the United States invasion of Grenada on October 25th, 1983. According to Wikipedia, A and B companies of 1-75 were informed mid-flight to prepare for a parachute landing rather than an air landing due to runway obstructions. The operation lasted approximately four days.

Photos by Tracy Bailey, 75th Ranger Regiment Deputy Public Affairs Officer



Ft. Moore, GA - The 75th Ranger Regiment has unveiled a new Fires Center for Fire Supporter training. The Domeij Fires Center is named for SFC Kristoffer B. Domeij. SFC Domeij was the Fires Support NCO for 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, when he was killed in action in Afghanistan on October, 22, 2011.

SFC Domeij was known as a legendary FISTER around the Ranger Regiment. SFC Robert Reynolds, a forward observer with the 75th says "[he] came to Ranger Regiment pre-9/11 in a world where things were changing, capabilities were being delegated down, he oversaw all of it. He led the way. He was a man who could layer effects and layer fires in a way that was kind of next level."

The new facility will allow for training even when weather or equipment availability is a problem. Live fires with fire support elements, especially air support, requires a lot of coordination and equipment.



Photo by Sgt. David Soflin, 75th Ranger Regiment



SFC Domeij's mother, Scoti Domeij cuts the ceremonial ribbon. Photo by Sgt. David Soflin.



Photo from <https://www.army.mil/bestsquad/?from=features>

Washington, D.C. - The US Army Best Squad competition ran from September 24th to October 6th, 2023. Events included a 12-mile ruck march, individual and squad tasks and drills, and weapon lanes. The four finalist teams were sent to a board-style interview to test their knowledge. The 75th Ranger Regiment represented USASOC in this competition and came out with the first place.



11th Airborne Conducts Squad Live Fires

Infantry squads from 3rd of the 509th rehearsed battle drills

Photos by Sgt. Avery Cunningham, 11th Airborne Division Public Affairs Office




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