The Canopy

Issue 5 / Volume 34 / Oct 2026



The Food Advisor

A CW4 in charge of chow? Look closer.

Read more on page 3.

The Spring 2027 Window

April is the month the experts keep watching.

Read more on page 5.

Urgent Fury

The 82nd's first fight since Vietnam.

Read more on page 7.

Chapter Officers

Position	Name
Chairman	Gary Blasczienski
Vice Chairman	Stephen Fern
Treasurer	Heath Davenport
Secretary	Vacant / Interim
Service Officer	Joyce Damon
Events Officer	Tony Alger
Recruiting / Villages	Tony Alger
Recruiting / Ocala	Tig Blackman
Canopy Editor	Ron Dahlgren

Upcoming Events and Historical Notes

10 October @ 1300 hrs	Chapter Meeting	VFW Post 8083
08 November	Golf Cart Parade	The Villages

From the Editor



October is here! We finally are getting a break from the heat. A welcome break. It always seems like summer drags on forever here in the sunshine state. This month's issue looks at an assortment of topics of interest that came up over the last month. The Spring 2027 window, in particular, has my brain staying busy with "what ifs".

On Sunday, November 8th, the Golf Cart Parade is taking place in the Villages. Registration is $10.00 per cart. Proceeds go to Villages Honor Flight. For more information see `https://zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/golf-cart-parade`.

Looking forward to seeing everyone at the October meeting!

This month's cover comes from Sgt. Tanisha Karn, 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne). Taken September 24, 2018.

Airborne! All The Way!

Ron Dahlgren
Editor, The Canopy
`https://www.the-canopy.org`

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

Galen Mitchell
John Kinney
Thurston Helmes
Ken & Linda Hall
Jerry & Robby Brust
Heath Davenport
Christopher Adams
Nick Harty
Regis Rossa
Darla & Jay Tatman

The Food Advisor

By Ron Dahlgren



Sgt. Barrera and Staff Sgt. Reed serve lunch during the Connelly Competition. Photo by Sgt. Christian Dela Cruz, 10th Special Forces Group

A Chief Warrant Officer Four in charge of food service. I'll be honest, I had to read that twice. My first instinct was to assume the reporter got the rank wrong. Then I started digging into what a special operations group food advisor actually does, and I realized I had it backwards. The rank fits the job. It's the rest of us who don't understand the job.

The Rank Behind the Role

The warrant officers in this field are senior and serious. Chief Warrant Officer 4 Georgene Davis is a U.S. Army food advisor who has been around Army cooks for more than two decades. Chief Warrant Officer 3 Miranda Dawdy serves as the Food Service Advisor for the 404th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade. These are technical experts who set standards, evaluate units, and advise commanders, not mess hall managers.

The warrant track exists because field feeding is a science. You don't reach CW4 by flipping eggs. You get there by mastering sanitation, logistics, menu planning, and personnel management, then proving you can teach it.

Cooks Are Soldiers First



Staff Sgt. Danny Oquendo prepares chicken wings during the Connelly Competition. Photo by Sgt. Christian Dela Cruz, 10th Special Forces Group

The best proof came out of Afghanistan. Sgt. Javier Rodriguez-Torres, a food specialist assigned to Headquarters Support Company, 1/10th SFG(A), served as the primary food specialist at Forward Operating Base Kutschbach. The FOB sat in a heavily contested region, with Taliban insurgents maneuver-

ing just outside the perimeter. He came under siege no fewer than 24 times, taking rocket-propelled grenades, 82 mm mortars, and 107 mm rockets.

One morning, as he was about to start breakfast, a 107 mm rocket blasted ten feet above his head. He checked on his three local national cooks, led them to the bunkers, then ran to a mortar pit and fired rounds at the enemy. He built and ran a kitchen feeding 150 U.S., Afghan, and ISAF personnel, and taught three Afghan contractors the trade.

His ODA commander told the Stuttgart Citizen: "He went above and beyond what is expected of a support Soldier working with seasoned Special Forces operators."

The Bronze Star recommendation hit resistance. "I initially received resistance with a comment of: 'A cook? We've never had a cook receive a BSM,'" the commander told the Stuttgart Citizen. He sent the citation anyway, and the award went through.

Davis attended the ceremony in Stuttgart. "He put himself in harm's way, displayed remarkable courage and showed that cooks are Soldiers first," she told the Stuttgart Citizen. "His actions should make every Soldier in the entire food service specialist field proud."

52 Years of Chow

Flavius Futch's career shows how deep this trade runs. He joined the reserves in high school with his parents' signature, and the Army made him a cook when his eyes weren't good enough for surveyor school. He spent 22 years on the floor, from mopping to running the mess hall, did a tour in Vietnam, served in Alaska and Korea, made sergeant major in 1981, then added 22 more years as a civilian food program manager.

"I spent 22 years on the floor [doing everything from] mopping the floors to running the mess hall," he said in an Army news story. He even helped develop a computer system to track food service accounts, back when that was a radical idea. "We now track almost every butter patty."

That's the history of the role. The food advisor isn't a desk job. It's a career built on feeding troops in garrison and under fire.

The Connelly Standard



Staff Sgt. Andrea Diamond prepares steaks during the Connelly Competition. Photo by Sgt. Christian Dela Cruz, 10th Special Forces Group

The Philip A. Connelly Award is the Army's program recognizing excellence in military food service operations in field and garrison environments. It's the yardstick food advisors use. The 10th SFG(A) has competed. In August 2015, food service specialists with the group provided meals at the LaRochelle Dining Facility at Fort Carson, which earned its fourth consecutive Garrison-Level Connelly award that year.

Evaluation is no joke. Senior food advisors drill specialists with practical tests and verbal questions, then inspect field kitchens for sanitation, food temps, and portion control. The standard holds whether it's a National Guard company or a Special Forces group. And it's not just stateside; in Europe, the competition just reached its 50th round. A U.S. Army South food advisor handed a finalists plaque to 21st Theater Sustainment Command cooks at Kleber Kaserne.

Why It Matters

The facts don't give me a formal job description for the 10th SFG food advisor, and I won't invent one. But the pattern is clear. The food advisor sets the standard, trains the specialists, evaluates the units, and advises the commander on feeding readiness. When a group deploys, the advisor makes sure the cooks can feed the force under any conditions.

Rodriguez-Torres said it best: "Even though I'm a cook, I know that I'm a Soldier first, and as a Soldier, [I am] mentally prepared for any situation or circumstance."

That's the standard. And for the paratroopers reading these pages, it sounds familiar. It's the same one we hold ourselves to every time we stand in the door.

Sources include Army News Service coverage of Flavius Futch's retirement and Stuttgart Citizen reporting on the Rodriguez-Torres award ceremony.

The Spring 2027 Window

By Ron Dahlgren



An illustration of paratroopers waiting for the green light. Image generated with seedream-5-0-lite

FORT BENNING, Ga. — The week of September 14th, the Maneuver Warfighter Conference here spent a fair amount of its agenda on a calendar. Not training rotations or deployment schedules. A window. The experts in the room see spring 2027, April specifically, as the high-risk period for a Chinese move on Taiwan, with October and November of next year as the fallback windows.



An illustration of a paratrooper studying a sand table. Image generated with seedream-5-0-lite

Why the calendar matters. The logic runs through two dates. The 21st CCP Congress is scheduled for the end of 2027, and Xi Jinping has urged the PLA to greet its 100-year anniversary that year with a fresh political outlook. Meanwhile, the military advantage China holds is seen as potentially dwindling after 2027, as the advanced weaponry Taiwan has purchased becomes deployable around that year. If Beijing is going to move, the window is closing.

The capability timeline. Intelligence assessments differ on the date. In May 2022 testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee, Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines said China is "working hard to effectively put themselves into a position in which their military is capable of taking Taiwan," and described the threat as acute for the rest of the decade. That month, Adm. Charles Richard, head of US Strategic Command,

told lawmakers: “Their intent is to achieve the military capability to reunify Taiwan by 2027.”

Weeks later, CIA Director Bill Burns said the Ukraine crisis had not shaken Xi’s resolve on Taiwan: “I don’t think for a minute it’s eroded Xi’s determination over time to gain control over Taiwan.”

The pressure campaign is already running. China keeps a substantial military presence on the Fujian coast, flies sorties into Taiwan’s air defense identification zone, and has stepped up military drills in recent years. October has form: in the first five days of October 2021, the PLA Air Force flew at least 150 sorties violating Taiwan’s airspace or ADIZ, the most flagrant infringement since the provocations began in 2016.

The PRC’s Anti-Secession Law threatens military action in response to any formal declaration of Taiwanese independence, which the ROC government has understood to mean a military invasion. China’s ambassador to the US, Qin Gang, warned in January 2022 that if Taiwanese authorities, “emboldened by the US, keep going down the road for independence, it most likely will involve China and the US ... in a military conflict.”

Chinese experts have outlined three scenarios for a forced unification:

1. A war of deliberation.

2. A war of diversion.

3. A war from miscalculation.

In the diversion scenario, Xi could decide on military action if he feels threatened within his own CCP leadership circle.



An illustration of a paratrooper scanning the horizon from a ship. Image generated with seedream-5-0-lite

The US posture problem. It is arguably harder for the United States to deter a PLA attack on Taiwan today than it was a quarter of a century ago. The Ukraine war sharpened the calculus: Chinese analysts and policymakers likely concluded that Russia’s nuclear arsenal deterred the United States from intervening, and that nuclear weapons create more room for conventional operations. China may conclude it can deter US intervention by raising its nuclear alert level or conducting tests at the outset of a conflict. The Department of Defense estimates China’s arsenal will reach at least 1,000 warheads within the decade.

Richard Haass and David Sacks of the Council on Foreign Relations have argued that strategic ambiguity is “unlikely to deter an increasingly assertive China with growing military capabilities,” and they urge Washington to “introduce a policy of strategic clarity: one that makes explicit that the United States would respond to any Chinese use of force against Taiwan.” Ivan Kanapathy of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments said the loss of Taiwan “would validate and propel Beijing’s narratives of the inevitability of American decline.”

For the paratroopers reading these pages, none of this is academic. The window is real, the capability is real, and the question of who stands in the door when it opens is not a staff exercise. April is closer than it looks.

Sources: Institute for the Study of War China-Taiwan Update, April 24, 2026; congressional testimony, May 2022; Maneuver Warfighter Conference, Fort Benning, September 2026.

Urgent Fury

Airborne Notes



82nd Airborne soldiers wait to load into a C-141 Starlifter at Pope.

Photo courtesy of War.gov

On 19 October 1983, Maurice Bishop, Grenada's prime minister, was machine-gunned down in broad daylight by a faction of his own People's Revolutionary Army. Six days later, American forces invaded his island. The 82nd Airborne Division, alerted at Fort Bragg, flew south to Point Salines airfield behind the Rangers who had seized it. It was the division's first combat deployment since Vietnam.

The airfield

The operation began early on 25 October with assaults on airstrips at Point Salines and Pearls. Only Navy SEAL, Army Delta Force, and two Ranger battalions parachuted in; the 82nd airlanded by C-141. The lead C-130 lost its inertial navigation system, delaying the airdrop thirty-six minutes and costing tactical surprise.

Peter Geier, a specialist fourth class with C Company, 519th Military Intelligence Battalion, went on alert at 4 a.m. on 25 October, then was stood down. That afternoon, his battalion commander, Lt. Col. Patrick Niemann, drove him to Green Ramp at Pope Air Force Base.

His C-141 touched down at Point Salines in the middle of the night with its lights off. A senior noncommissioned officer met him with blunt instructions: "Stay off the flight line. Be alert and keep your head down. Find cover and go up the hill in the morning."

Ed Harm, then a 20-year-old artillery forward observer with Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 319th Field Artillery Regiment, attached to the 2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, saw tracer fire as the doors opened. "We exited the aircraft and went to a drainage ditch and took cover," he told Army Times at a 40th-anniversary event in Fayetteville, "and the first thing I can remember is one of the first sergeants who was a Vietnam vet said, 'Man, this looks just like Vietnam.'"

The students

President Ronald Reagan had called on U.S. forces to rescue 600 American students and 400 foreigners. Rangers overcame stiff Cuban resistance at the airfield, rescued students at True Blue, then learned of others at Grand Anse and radioed for reinforcements. On 26 October, Major General H. Norman Schwarzkopf commandeered Marine helicopters aboard the USS Guam to fly Rangers from Point Salines to Grand Anse, where they brought out nearly two hundred students.

Ernie Washington, a battery commander with Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 319th Field Artillery Regiment, saw the students brought to the runway. "They spent a couple of harrowing days locked away not knowing what was going on, hearing gunfire explosions and things like that," he said.

Keith Nightingale, battalion commander of the 2nd Battalion, 505th PIR, remembered students breaking ranks and running toward his troops, thanking them even though his men had nothing to do with it. "In my mind, that really put Vietnam behind us," he said. "It was one of the first times the public could see the good that the Army was doing."

The chaos

The operation revealed flaws. Navy A-7 Corsairs mistakenly bombed a mental hospital near Fort Frederick on 25 October. Two days later, an Air-Naval Gunfire Liaison Company lacking Army communications-electronics operating instructions failed to coordinate an attack near Frequente; the Corsairs hit an 82nd Airborne brigade headquarters, wounding seventeen soldiers, three seriously.

The resistance was thin: poorly coordinated pockets of ill-trained and ill-equipped men. After Hudson Austin, the coup leader, was captured by Charlie Company, the war was essentially over. "From then on the war was over essentially," Nightingale said, "and then we started going out basically looking for ex-members of the Revolutionary Guard, thugs, hoodlums and outlaws."

The clearing

Mark Rocke, attached to Charlie Company, landed between 1 and 2 p.m. on 25 October, on the division's third aircraft. After the runway and airhead were secured, his unit took a compound twelve kilometers north at Frequente. "We secured an enormous amount of Soviet munitions, ammunition, vehicles, weapons, binoculars and six pigs," he said. Rocke credited the

enlisted paratroopers for staying professional with Grenadian citizens; building trust helped them learn from locals where enemy activity and stockpiles remained.

John Sulek, assigned to Bravo Company of the 319th, spent his first night on the airfield. "We spent the first night on the airfield, and the next day we moved out to the pig farm," he recalled, where his unit set up a base camp and patrolled wooded areas. His unit left December 9; the 2nd Battalion, 505th PIR, stayed longest, leaving December 15.

Geier's small unit saw the island's oddities. A radio shack held a bulky Soviet R-250 HF radio and manual, essentially a 1960s-era ham set. Cases of Cuban cigars and Populares cigarettes turned up; they were later told the cigarettes contained marijuana. The map he carried was dated, showed no airfield, and marked salt ponds near Point Salines that the Cubans had filled in to lay the runway.

The lessons

The operation succeeded but exposed weaknesses in joint command and control. Memories of the Iranian hostage crisis and Desert One pushed policymakers to move in haste. The Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 followed partly from Urgent Fury's lessons. General John Vessey, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, offered his postscript: "The huge mistake at the National level was failing to find a way to take some press along."

Nineteen U.S. combat deaths. A half-built Cuban runway. A coup, a rescue, a war that lasted days and a mission that ran fifty-one days. For the paratroopers who flew south in October 1983, it was the first time the division had gone to war since Vietnam, and the first time in years the country saw what the Army could do. When it turns green, you go.

Primary sources include Army University Press's Operation Urgent Fury, Grenada 1983: A View at Eye Level; Army Times and Military Times 40th-anniversary interviews; and the Joint Chiefs of Staff's Operation Urgent Fury: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations.

Support The Canopy

Your booster donations help to cover expenses related to reporting and publication. Your $25 covers a month of website hosting, or a half-tank of gas, or a day's worth of meals on the road, or 20% of a hotel stay. Please consider sending a donation to:

$25/month Donation



THE CANOPY
c/o SWGY, Inc.
Box 1324
Minneola, FL 34755-1324

$2.50/month Donation



THE CANOPY

c/o SWGY, Inc.
Box 1324
Minneola, FL 34755-1324