

7 AIR COMMAND SOCIETY REUNION 2026

AFTER ACTION REPORT (edition 1 July 2026)

INTRODUCTION: This AAR provides an overview of the events, actions taken and outcomes observed during our recent 7 ACS Reunion 2026. The purpose of this AAR is to evaluate performance. Identify improvement areas and document key lessons learned.

EVENT OVERVIEW: As Reunion Chair, Russ Painter did a magnificent job coordinating this year's event. The 7 ACS Reunion was held 22-26 April 2026 at the Home2 Suites 1930 Lewis Turner Blvd FWB, FL 33547. On Wednesday, April 22, registration and check-in, Country Store, hospitality room was all organized and set in motion. On Thursday, 23 April, a Golf Tournament started at 9am. Registration desk and Country Store opened at 9am. The evening Banquet in the hotel ballroom began at 6pm. On Friday, April 24, Eagle Claw Memorial/ceremony was held at Hurlburt Field Air Park at 9am, while country store remained open from 2-6pm. A Sunset Cruise also set sail that evening at 6pm near AJ's docks Destin, FL. On Saturday, April 25, Hash Run started at 9am, Country Store opened at 9am, Business Meeting in the Hotel conference room ran from 1-3pm and *Wurstburn* in the Hotel's outdoor patio started at 5pm. On Sunday, April 26, a Memorial Service was planned for 10:30am followed by burgers in the patio.

ADVERTISING:

- The reunion was promoted for well over a year on our own website "7thsos.org" as well as our FaceBook page (7th Air Commandos), and a personal e-mail to every 7 SOS Member on their birthdays, and e-mail blasts to all members registered on our website. Additionally, I posted on LinkedIn. We also sent out multiple newsletters with all the information on the reunion.
- The cost to advertise is not worth it and in the past resulted in Zero people signing up as a result of paid advertising.

ACTIONS TAKEN:

- The Registration desk was manned by Max and The Vogt's primarily.
- Financials of how much food/drink was bought compared to what was left over. Were the name brand items of food/drink ok? Right kind? Right amount? Were any recommendations received for other items?
- The Country Store was managed by Joe Primosch and Willie Kramer with help from others, as needed. It was open for business from Wednesday to Sunday. Remaining items not sold were removed and stored at Jim Peterson residence.

- Golf was held at the FWB Golf Club immediately adjacent to our hotel. Very convenient.
- Banquet Dinner. Guest Speaker was BG Clay Freeman.
- Eagle Claw Memorial. Late sign-up. Discouraged those that wanted to attend but did not sign up early to not go. Personal vehicles used to ride share to event.
- Sunset Cruise was fun. A bus provided transportation for everyone, which was the right way to keep everyone together and on schedule.
- Hash Run started early. Max provided the Hash Briefing behind the Hotel. Hares were Joe Primosch and Janeice Hedrick. The start and end were behind the hotel. The course stayed within 1 mile of the hotel. Weather was ideally cool, cloudy and threatening rain. Even though it was more of a walk-run-walk hash, everyone toasted drinks to its success at the debrief.
- The Secretary prepared the minutes of the business meeting in a separate document and submitted them to the President. The minutes contained an update on the Air Command Museum, New Board Members and Committee Chairs, new 7 SOS/CC and a summary of the 2027 and 2028 Reunions.
- Wurst Burn was fantastic. The food was catered and served sausages, potato salad, sauerkraut and apple strudel. Excellent meal. Everyone loved the food. Atmosphere was private and entertaining, with ample room and lots of conversation going on throughout evening.

OUTCOMES:

Reservations at The Home2 Suites were as follows: 4/22-19 rooms, 4/23-25 rooms, 4/24-24 rooms. 4/25-20 rooms.

Registration team handled 66 entrants who signed up for the entire week; One signed up for Wednesday only, eight signed up for Thursday only, one for Friday, and 18 for Saturday for 94 total. Of these 20 were single attendees. We had 7 (\$150) all week cancellations for medical reasons that we refunded. Other sign-ups included 11 for golf 31 for the dolphin cruise, 10 for the Hash Run and 100+ for the Banquet.

A Summary of the Business Meeting Minutes follows:

Elected Officers: President Jim Peterson, Vice President Steve Noble, Secretary Joe Primosch, Treasurer Russ Painter

Board Members: Barry “B-Rat” Ratcliffe, John “Vinnie” Vincent Jr., Dennis Vogt, Darren “Darn Eskin, Lt Col Matt Sevey Change of Command 1 July 2026, Director Emeritus (non-voting) Tom Omar Bradley

Committee Chairs: Webmaster and Database Darren Eskin, Public Affairs/Communications Max Friedauer, Editor/Newsletter Bill “Hollywood” Fowler, Country Store Manager Vacant, 7 SOS Podcast Program Dennis Vogt and Bill Houston, Reunion Chairman (2027) Max Friedauer (2028) Drew Kvnner, Reunion Online Registration Darren Eskin.

JD Walker and Tammy Crawford will be the next Museum representatives to replace Buff Underwood at the end of the year.

Members approved planning for Reunion 2027 to Europe. The non-refundable \$500 deposit payment by 1 Aug 2026 and itinerary was also approved.

Members approved planning for Reunion 18 May 2028 to San Antonio, Texas.

The Country Store sold an estimated \$1,772 worth of collector items, reducing its inventory by three bins. A manila envelope of cash was left with Jim Peterson upon my departure.

LESSONS LEARNED:

Registration:

- Registration was all available on our 7 SOS website and some reservations were mailed in with checks or personally hand-delivered. When Russ Painter required triple by-pass surgery and was no longer available to handle the final phases of the reunion, Tom Bradley stepped in to coordinate everything and Max Friedauer handled the registrations since Darren Eskin also could not attend due to a family illness. Dennis Vogt assisted with registration as well.
- The problem with registration was as is the case every year. Some registered late and sent in checks or provided cash and their registration was never added to the online registration. Dennis Vogt volunteered to print all the name tags but all he had access to was the registration rolls on the Website. So when people came in and said they registered and checks were written, but we had no record of that. Max went home and brought his printer, and with the help of Aida Vogt we printed additional name tags. This slowed us down but it made those without name tags very happy. Also, some still showed up with no registration and registered with cash or wrote a check. We just hand wrote their names on the name tag. Some signed up for additional events and we accommodated all requests to include, golf, the banquet, and sunset cruise.
- Lesson learned: all registrations must be uploaded to the online database, except those who are walk-Ins on the day of. We should always accept walk-Ins but it

becomes a problem for Banquets, Golf, and other special events. Emphasize registrations to be online and limit walk-ins.

- We should be able to register people online with a computer available at the registration desk and login in walk-Ins and complete the registration. If we had anticipated the number of non-registrants and walk-Ins we could have handled that but we simply did not have time and would have needed two to three people at the registration desk.

- Lanyards were very nice but apparently a shock on the cost. Encourage all to bring back those lanyards for all future reunions. I think we had about 30 or 40 left over.

- Max made some poster like Agenda boards to display on an easel. We should always have an Agenda Board on an easel for people to easily see the schedule. We should also make copies of the schedule available for them to take at check-in. We printed additional agendas on the fly.

Country Store

The Country Store inventory is a burden to store sale items in someone's home space. Not everyone has the space nor desire to hold items until the next reunion. The Country Store Manager position is currently vacant.

Reunion schedule that was printed on poster boards seemed to be a good idea and kept everyone informed.

Name tags really helped socialize with everyone.

A Wednesday-Sunday itinerary seems to work well for the last few reunions.

Hospitality Suite:

The Hospitality Suite worked great at the Home2 Suite and was busy all the time. Bill Houston did a fantastic job managing that for the entire weekend. He did have help but he ensured all snacks were available and the beer, wine, and soft drinks were on ice. The amount of snacks was just about right with only one item running out. T-shirts, polo shirts, coins, photo albums, and framed photos were all displayed in the suite. Donation boxes were available throughout and our members were very generous.

Alcohol and other beverage purchases:

We had about the right amount of beer, wine, and sodas. We never ran out and yes, we had some left over. But I'd rather have left over beverages than run out.

Golf Thursday Morning:

11 Golfers participated and there were some issues with the Fort Walton Beach Golf Club but Jim Peterson, who coordinated and booked the three teams, resolved the issue.

Banquet Thursday Night:

- The Home2 Suites Hilton did an amazing job with the setup and food. The dinner was a banquet style buffet line with prime rib and chicken cordon bleu. The beef was tender, the chicken cordon bleu was delicious. Maybe they need to work on their burners or invest in hot water pans to keep the food warm until all have been served.
- We had 10 tables with 8 person seating for the banquet. Max bought 12 "ring-clip" table number holders and printed 7 SOS/ACS cards to be placed in each for every table. Max also printed name tent cards for the head table.
- Our guest speaker, Brig Gen. William C. "Clay" Freeman, hit it out of the park. We could all relate to what he said and he provided us some insight to current AFSOC status and the future of the command's weapon systems.

46th EAGLE CLAW Anniversary Friday Morning:

- Base restrictions limited the number of people that could attend this ceremony. Early registration and attendance by non-DoD card holders was difficult and made it hard to get access.
- Sharing rides by private vehicle was not a problem.
- Pre-ceremony reception was held at the chapel, across from the Air Park.
- Col (Ret) Bill Robb was the keynote speaker and he provided a complete and exceptional overview of Operation EAGLE CLAW.
- A ceremony was then held at the chapel in front of the rose bushes and the commemorative small chapel.
- The 8 SOS hosted a very nice hot dog and burger open house and made a MC-130J CT III available for static display.

Dolphin/Sunset Cruise Friday Night:

- Only 38 people signed up for the Sunset Cruise. The decision to purchase individual tickets was the right decision as purchasing the boat for a private cruise was too expensive.
- As it was, since we were 12 miles away, the decision was made to hire a bus company to take us to Destin Harbor and back. It was expensive but it was again the right decision. The only issue we had was unclear directions to the harbor. Many people turned left at the bottom vs right past AJs.
- Additionally, having the general public on the boat was no issue at all and we actually made some friends.
- The bus driver did not know how to get into the AJ's parking lot and was a bit late coming back to pick us up. But we had beer and wine on the bus and everything was great.

Hash House Harrier Run Saturday Morning:

- The run was setup by Max and the Hares were Joe Primosch and Janeice Hedrick. Max blessed the Hares and after they departed he led the group in a warmup exercise "Father Abraham." We only had seven runners but we had a great time walking the trail with a couple of front running bastards (FRBs). The entire run was just under 1 mile and it was all on paved roads or grass. The "On-Home" was back at the Home2 Suites and we had our On-Home celebration out on the patio. There were no beer stops on this run and none were needed. Max Discussed the 5 July 21 July 2027 Reunion to England, Scotland and Germany with a Combat Dining out with the 7 SOS on 7 July 2027 (7/7/7).
- Max also briefed the possibility of our 2028 Reunion to be held in or near San Antonio, TX. All agree to to have it near San Antonio with the Reunion Brat handling all reservations and contracts. Drew Cvnnar will be the reunion Chairman with help from Rich Garcia, Tony Gregory, and Jerry Thigpen.
- Reunions beyond 2028 will be decided at the 2028 business meeting.
- Jim Peterson thanked all for input and attendance.

Wurst Burn Saturday Evening:

- The Wurstburn was contracted through Bella Donna Catering (Donna Hardin). The wurst was absolutely delicious and Donna made the German potato salad

herself because she didn't like what another commercial provider offered to make for her. The apple strudel was baked by Lisa Schomburg from Cakemaster's Bakery. I heard no complaints and we had approx. 60 wurst left over which were given out to anyone that wanted them on Sunday, after the burger, hot dog, and Bratwurst clean up.

Clean Up/Memorial Service/Hot Dog, Burger, and Bratwurst Sunday:

- Clean-up and load-up was accomplished in one hour and all was loaded on Jim Peterson's trailer and he will store it at his house for the time being.
- The Memorial Service was chaired and conducted by Barry Ratcliffe. BRat gave the invocation. He had a different person read the name of our deceased brothers. Our flag (Our flag that has flown or been displayed at every reunion and even deployed to Afghanistan) was proudly displayed. Max played taps on his bugle.
- Steve Noble grilled burgers, hot dogs, and all the remaining bratwurst. Steve had ziplock bags pre-packaged with bratwurst and all remaining food was distributed.

Coins:

The coins were a nice touch to offset the \$150.00 cost of the Reunion. Maybe we should not have ordered that many, but we did sell a few but I suspect we have quite a bit left over.

Country Store:

The management of the Country Store appeared to go smoothly and since all items in the Store were sold with just a DONATION with the exception of the Baseball Hats, which were sold out except for 5 Khaki hats. They were definitely a big hit at \$25 which covered the 6 left over.

Business Meeting Saturday Afternoon:

- The business meeting was held at the hotel and we had a great turnout with approximately 40 members attending. We did not provide a online login but no-one requested that we do a live chat.
- The current officers were re-elected and two new Board members were elected to replace Buff Underwood and Matt Powell. The new Board Members are Dennis Vogt and John "Vinnie" Vincent.

- Buff Underwood briefed us on the Air Commando Heritage Museum and had two slides showing the parking plan and the plan for the museum.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Alcohol and other beverage purchases:

We had about the right amount of beer, wine, and sodas. We never ran out and yes, we had some left over. But I'd rather have left over beverages than run out.

Country Store

Many folks agree that the Country Store should not have any inventory and that we should continue reducing current inventory stock through on demand mail requests. Any future requests for current or new items could be replaced by a vendor bar code on the 7 ACS website. Items can be purchased individually directly from vendors, eliminating the need for maintaining an inventory. The new Country Store manager's main tasks are to find vendors, identify popular products, and update product lists on the 7 ACS website. Seragraphia, located in Fort Walton Beach, says they could help us manage this endeavor. It has also been suggested that we could hold a silent auction for much of the remaining inventory during the period that the hospitality room is open at the next reunion.

Business Meeting

The next Business Meeting should include a live Google Meeting stream for those individuals who could not be there to support the event.

Advertising and Marketing

We need to find new ways to generate interest for future Reunions. This not only includes the local non-members and active duty who didn't bother to show, but also to the remaining veterans who didn't get the word.

Gifts

Gift all vendors who supported this reunion with a signed lithograph and coin.

Gift our guest speaker with a signed lithograph and coin.

Pictures:

If at all possible it would be great to hire a photographer to document our reunions. In lieu of doing so, we should solicit for volunteer photographers. It would also be great to set up an online

share to coalesce photos taken by individuals. At a bare minimum there needs to be a group photo taken on the night of the banquet.

Note: The next FWB Reunion 2030 should include an Air Commando Heritage Museum Tour.

Although recent reunions have been successful, switching to a river or Caribbean cruise venues could offer a refreshing alternative.

Spousal Activities:

Let's organize some spousal activities as an optional event during the next reunion. Please let the future coordinator know in advance what spousal activities are available in the local area.

CONCLUSIONS: A Big Thank You to

- Russ Painter, the 2026 Reunion chairman, who exemplified service before self by coordinating this year's reunion.
- Greg Keith of Serigraphia, Inc PO Box 2046 FWB, FL 32549 and 850-240-1200 for creating, filling and delivering the name badge holders. Let's retain him as a business contact for future reunions.
- Home2 Suites was extremely accommodating and met all our contracted and additional needs. From management to staff, Home2 Suites was there to assist in setting up hospitality room, registration area, etc. This was a good venue and worth a return visit as a future Reunion site.