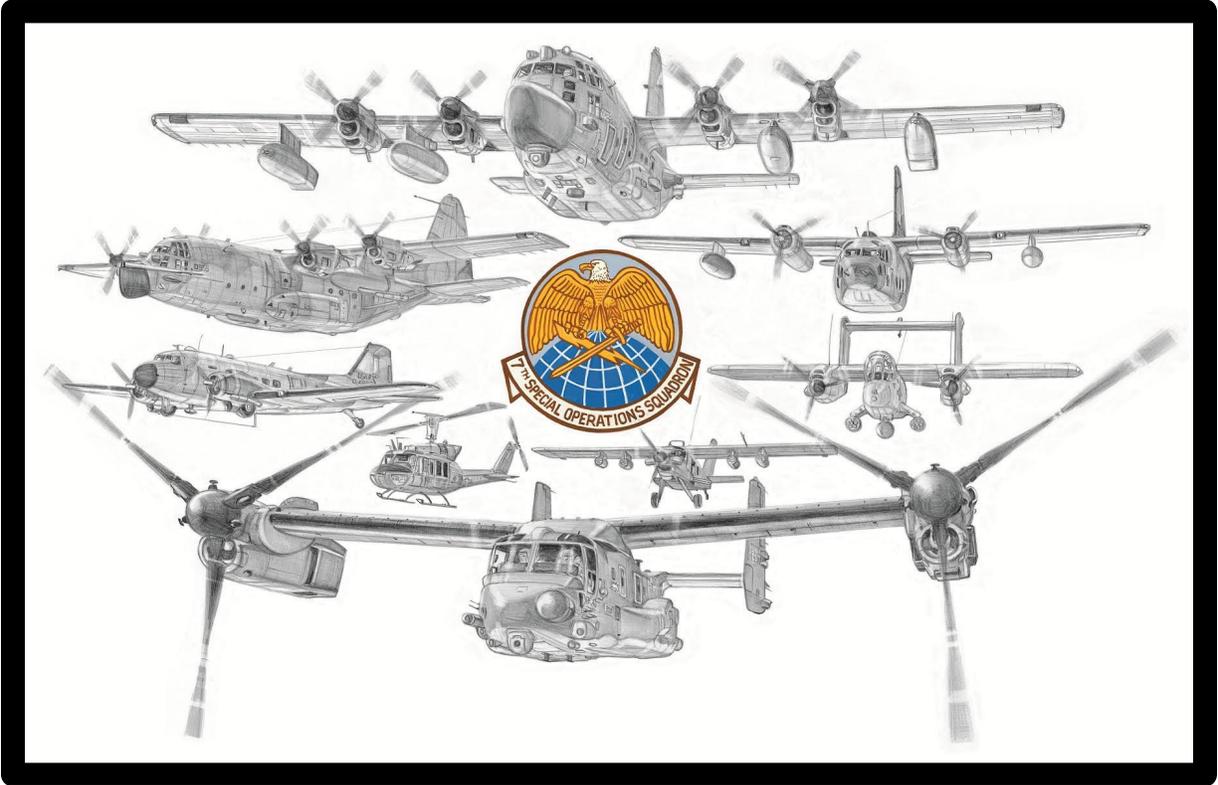




# 7th Air Commando News February 2026

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# 7th Air Commando News February 2026



[www.7thsos.org](http://www.7thsos.org)

## “Adapt or Perish”

### 7th Commander’s Page

By Lt Col Erik Towal, USAF AFSOC, 7th SOS/CC



#### Special Operations Team 7,

The TFFSITUSAF has been extremely busy since the last newsletter completing large-scale exercises in the Arctic and Mediterranean, supporting Presidentially directed operations, and posturing to support global operations as EUCOM’s only long-range vertical lift assault platform. Over the past 6 months, SOT7 supported 5x exercises/multinational rehearsals across 7 European nations and continues to train hard on cold weather and maritime operations while remaining ready to execute no-fail crisis response. Our squadron focus remains resolutely focused on *readiness, resiliency, and relevance* as we provide strategic flexibility, deliver effects, and execute SOF across the competition continuum.

From a readiness sense, the 7<sup>th</sup> held the crown as the 352nd SOW’s most ready squadron boasting a sustained readiness rate of 97% and force presenting 6 combat ready crews for potential and real-world taskings across 4 geographic and functional combatant commands.

In November, the unit deployed 4xCV-22Bs and 38 personnel to Norway supporting a 190-person multinational Special Operations Task Group in support of Exercise ADAMENT SERPENT 25. Operating alongside Swedish, Dutch, and Norwegian SOF partners, SOT7 executed 122 flying hours, movement of 43k pounds of cargo, and maneuver of 470 personnel from 4 NATO countries over 6 denied area scenarios showcasing multinational interoperability and ACE operations. Additionally, we executed a 2,400nm 3-ship infil/exfil of 28-person recce/targeting team in simulated IADs take down over 8 days and infil/exfil of 95xSWESOF with 3 ATVs on 4-day SOF airfield seizure on isolated island.



# 7th Air Commando News February 2026



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## “Adapt or Perish”

### 7th Commander’s Page (cont.)

By Lt Col Erik Towal, USAF AFSOC, 7th SOS/CC



7th SOS also executed a 1,250nm CSAR mission integrating with NOR Sandy qualified operators and MJK pararescue extracting 12xNOR SERE during a narrow air superiority window. Additionally, aircrew and 7th SOS SOFME launched on an N+1 CASEVAC ISO SWE Special Ops Surgical Team training. Our non-rated enablers laid out over a mile of ethernet cable and set up 4xSIPR stations, 3xIP phones, UHF/VHF, SATCOM, Starlink, and HF enabling redundant comms with aircraft and MX. SOFME cell treated 35x patients, conducted 2xCASEVAC missions, integrated with local rescue squadron, and conducted 3x hospital surveys assessing capabilities, HLZs, and MASCAL capacity. Finally, our intel section created 71x HLZ imagery products, developed theater SPINS, 16x aircrew EPAs, 14x situation updates for an AOR covering 6 countries & 1.4M square miles.

Also in November, the unit deployed 3xCV-22Bs, alongside 2xMC-130Js, and 36 personnel in support of Naval Special Warfare. Bridging 120+ participants from ALBSOF, 1-10 SFG (A), and NSW, we conducted readiness training and denied communications TTP development for joint missions, executed a joint/multinational Non-Combatant Evacuation Operation (NEO) scenario in a semi-contested environment ISO theater CONPLANs, and validated NSW readiness to execute assigned EUCOM taskings. Additionally, SOT7 integrated into a multi-week Multinational Special Aviation Program training exercise focused on Personnel Recovery with 25+ SOF members from Hungary, Croatia, and Slovenia to deepen operational integration with allies and support burden sharing efforts across NATO. SOW members instructed 3x courses on PR, conducted multinational mission planning, and executed two dissimilar formation flights with Hungarian Defense Forces, 86th Helicopter Wing H225M & H145M culminating in a PR Full Mission Profile recovering 2x isolated personnel expanding military capability.



# 7th Air Commando News February 2026



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## “Adapt or Perish”

### 7th Commander’s Page (cont.)

By Lt Col Erik Towal, USAF AFSOC, 7th SOS/CC



With an increase in operational tempo, resiliency remains a focus area with continued Black Friday traditions, family events, and opportunities for the unit to come together in fellowship. We executed our annual Thanksgiving Luau and unit smoke-off and Holiday party complete with Elf Voting and the requisite amount of revelry. “The Bone” continues to rotate around the squadron as members highlight themselves in spectacular fashion in an effort to continue our legacy of continual improvement through good-natured buffoonery at Black Fridays. Thank you to the members who returned 2 of the 4 original crew flags, and for those who have returned unit memorabilia to be displayed with honor in “The Blowout.”

Finally, the unit continues to be laser focused on providing operational relevance and utility to not only SOF, but the larger joint force. As this newsletter is being released, the unit will be executing a large-scale forward exercise in Norway operating for 2 weeks in challenging terrain with key NATO partners while also troop-leading the CV-22B enterprise, and AFSOC, in novel maritime capabilities. In the next 3-6 months we will focus hard on no-fail crisis response, operations in strategic terrain, and continue to invest in pushing the innovation boundary in communications capabilities in remote environments, survival capabilities in arctic terrain, and medical subject matter exchanges with key partners and allies.

Selected as the 352 SOW Operational Squadron of the Year, the 7th SOS continues our legacy of uncompromising high standards! Wish us luck as we compete at the AFSOC level and continue to swing the hammer in EUCOM and beyond and continue to uphold the proud heritage and standard of the 7<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Squadron.

#### ADAPT OR PERISH!

**Erik Towal, Lt Col, USAF Commander  
7th Special Operations Squadron  
RAF Mildenhall, UK**





# 7th Air Commando News February 2026



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## “Adapt or Perish”

7th Commander’s Page (cont.)

By Lt Col Erik Towal, USAF AFSOC, 7th SOS/CC





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## “Adapt or Perish”

7th Commander’s Page (cont.)

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7th Commander’s Page (cont.)

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# 7th Air Commando News February 2026



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## In Memoriam



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=alsnD87uOeo>



**Talon Brothers and Sisters That Are No Longer With Us**  
[https://www.7thsos.org/site.php?n=sv\\_deceased&start=151](https://www.7thsos.org/site.php?n=sv_deceased&start=151)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xy6qCeE\\_6rE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xy6qCeE_6rE)



# 7th Air Commando News February 2026



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## In Memoriam (cont.)



### William A. “Mr. Bill” Guenon Jr, Pilot

William A., Jr “Mr. Bill”, age 83 of Ashland MA, passed away on Thursday July 13, 2023, unexpectedly.

There is no doubt that Bill enjoyed a good life full of fun and adventure. Joining the Airforce as a pilot at a young age, he was very proud to serve his country for over 20 years. He held a variety of positions from Pilot to Air Traffic Control to Special Forces & Operations. He experienced many things that movies are made of, most of which are still classified. Although there were many, his proudest moment was during his tour of duty in the Vietnam War, known as the “Son Tay Raid”. Decades later, he had the opportunity to visit Son Tay, Vietnam and tour the area where the raid had happened. His eyes twinkled when he informed us that he had been detained by the Vietnam police that day, but his charisma and charm came in handy, and he was quickly released. In his retirement years, he was delighted to write and publish a book about his experience with the Son Tay Raid named “Secret and Dangerous” and spent his days touring the country making presentations to many different military organizations and clubs, making great friends along the way.



# 7th Air Commando News February 2026



[www.7thsos.org](http://www.7thsos.org)

## In Memoriam (cont.)



### **Melvin (Mel) Frank Hendrickson, (SMSGT, Ret.) Avionics Maint.**

Melvin “Mel” Frank Hendrickson of Shreveport, Louisiana, passed away peacefully on Wednesday, January 21, 2026 at the remarkable age of 100.

Mel attended Media Community High School, where he played football, basketball, and wrestled. He left school after his junior year to support the World War II defense effort, working for Butler Steel Manufacturing Co. Shortly thereafter, Mel enlisted in the United States Maritime Service. After returning home, he managed a neighbor’s farm until 1948 when he enlisted in the United States Air Force, beginning what would become a distinguished 28-year career while also completing both his high school education and four years of college.

Following basic training and aircraft and engine specialist training, Mel was assigned to Carswell AFB in Fort Worth, Texas, where he spent eight years maintaining B-36 bombers during the Cold War. In the final 12 years of his career, he served as the Noncommissioned Officer in Charge of the Avionics Section supporting classified MC-130E (Combat Talon) aircraft for Special Operations Forces. His service included a tour in Vietnam from September 17, 1967, to October 5, 1968, as NCOIC of the Avionics Maintenance Section of the 15th Special Operations Squadron at Nha Trang Air Force Base.



# 7th Air Commando News February 2026



[www.7thsos.org](http://www.7thsos.org)

## In Memoriam (cont.)



### **Melvin (Mel) Frank Hendrickson, (SMSGT, Ret.) Avionics Maint.**

Mel's dedication earned him numerous awards, including the Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, two Presidential Unit Citations, the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with Valor device, the Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm, and many others. He was a lifetime member of the Air Force Association, the Non-Commissioned Officers Association, and a member of the American Legion.

After retiring from the Air Force in January 1977, Mel and Shirley moved to Saudi Arabia, where he worked for Lockheed Aircraft Corp. They later settled in Niceville, Florida, before relocating to Shreveport in 1996.

The family extends heartfelt thanks to Rosalind Brown and her daughter Kiesha Robinson for their devoted care and true friendship.

A service celebrating Mel's life was held on Friday, February 13, 2026 at Osborn Funeral Home in Shreveport, Louisiana. Visitation begins at 11:00 a.m., followed by a service at 12:00 p.m. Following the service, he was laid to rest with full Military Honors at Northwest Louisiana Veterans Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to the [Special Operations Warrior Foundation](#), P.O. Box 89367, Tampa, FL 33689, (813) 805-9400.

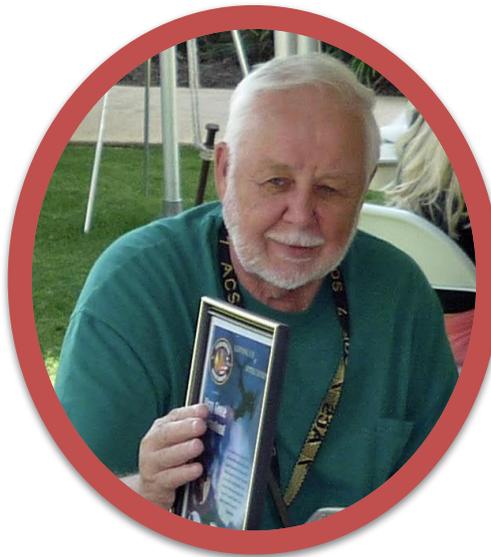


# 7th Air Commando News February 2026



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## In Memoriam (cont.)



### **Charles (Charlie) McGuire (Maj./Ret) Navigator**

Major Charles A. McGuire died of a cerebral aneurism on Monday 15, 2025 in Kokomo, IN. He was cremated and his ashes sent to his children.

Services are held in private and obits not published, per Charlie's request.

Charlie will be missed by all Sons of 7th and may he now rest in peace.



# 7th Air Commando News February 2026



[www.7thsos.org](http://www.7thsos.org)

## In Memoriam (cont.)



### **Dan Winnie (MSgt/Ret) Loadmaster**

Master Sergeant (Ret., USAF) Daniel Robert Winnie passed away on January 8, 2026.

Born in 1954, Daniel grew up in south Everett and attended Saint Mary Magdalen and Mariner High School, where he was a member of the swim team, Civil Air Patrol, and ROTC.

Upon graduating, he entered the United States Air Force, beginning a 24-year career. Dan was a combat veteran who served in Afghanistan, Grenada, Iraq, Kuwait, Panama, Saudi Arabia, and many other places. He was in Berlin when the Wall fell.

Following his military retirement, Dan flew for Kilata Air Lines, where his missions involved returning the remains of fallen service members to their families. Later he worked as a flight instructor around his home base in Seattle.

Daniel had an unbounded sense of adventure. He explored six continents by air, truck, and motorcycle. A few years ago, he completed a one-month, 48-state motorcycle ride—having ridden to Alaska the year before. He loved camping, whether alone or with friends. Like a true Winnie, he appreciated a strong cup of black coffee and good conversation. He always had a story to tell, including his long-running feud with the neighborhood raccoons.



# 7th Air Commando News February 2026



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## In Memoriam (cont.)



### Dan Winnie (MSgt/Ret) Loadmaster

Dan enjoyed what he called his "\$500 hamburgers"—flying with a friend a few hundred miles to a small airport, sharing a meal, and savoring the time spent in the air.

Quiet generosity was one of his defining traits. The list of people he helped is too long to mention. Typically, whenever Dan left on a trip, he ensured the outside automatic cat feeder was correctly loaded so his feral friends would be fed.

Services honoring Dan was held at Evergreen Washelli Funeral Home, 11111 Aurora Ave N, Seattle, on January 29. Following the ceremony, Dan was interred at Tahoma National Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, please donate to Children's Hospital, a favorite charity of his.

The photo Album is on his FaceBook link here:

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.25836825222580631&type=3>



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## ADDRESS AND STATUS CHANGES



**Moving? New phone? Be sure to let us know so we can stay in touch with you.**

If you have a change to your name, address, phone, or e-mail, you can do it online.

You can also send directly to [admin@7thSOS.org](mailto:admin@7thSOS.org) or [darreneskind@gmail.com](mailto:darreneskind@gmail.com). My phone number and address are also on that link.

If you are paying dues, send to Russ Painter. He will forward your info to me.

If you are not in the computer mode, contact me at (225) 324-1433 or 13157 Gentry Ave, Baton Rouge, LA 70817.

**Darren Eskind**  
**Database/Website Mgr.**



# 7th Air Commando News February 2026



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## 7th SOS Memories





# 7th Air Commando News February 2026



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## 7th and Final Burns Supper of 2026

Submitted by Will Bissett



That's a wrap! 7th and Final Burns Supper of 2026. Piped in the guests, and the haggis, and addressed the haggis. This one was a fundraiser for ALMT, a charity that supports amazing work among some of the world's most marginalised children. Fantastic night, some generous gifts and a lot raised to continue their work.

<https://www.almt.org/>



# 7th Air Commando News February 2026



[www.7thsos.org](http://www.7thsos.org)

## AFSOC Tactical Communications Course



Air Force Special Operations Command recently completed the second iteration of the AFSOC Tactical Communications Course at Hurlburt Field, Florida.

The tactical communications course is several weeks of a specialized training program designed to teach Air Commandos the skills and knowledge needed specifically to work communications for special operations missions.

The tactical communications course, which incorporated Airmen from all over AFSOC's active duty, guard, and reserve wings, covers everything from USSOCOM network fundamentals and satellite communications to tactical radios and mission planning.

Communications in AFSOC and USSOCOM are uniquely characterized as being highly adaptable, redundant, and secure in austere, rapidly changing environments. Communicators must establish and maintain connectivity with limited infrastructure and be able to operate in a denied or contested electromagnetic spectrum.

The course serves as a force multiplier, advancing training so Air Commandos can fulfill duties at their home units and seamlessly transition to deployed environments, where they become even more mission critical to sustaining operations and generating airpower as part of the agile combat employment concept.

The course covers everything from USSOCOM network fundamentals and satellite communications to tactical radios and mission planning.

The course was created to address training gaps and to train AFSOC communicators on SOF-unique equipment and SOF employment for USSOCOM missions.



# 7th Air Commando News February 2026

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## 1st SOW Change of Command



U.S. Air Force Col. Mark L. Hamilton assumed command of the 1st Special Operations Wing from Col. Patrick T. Dierig during a change of command ceremony at Hurlburt Field, Florida, Oct. 6, 2025. The 1 SOW is responsible for preparing special operations forces for worldwide missions in support of joint and coalition objectives. The 1 SOW at Hurlburt Field is one of six Air Force active duty special operations wings which fall under AFSOC. Hurlburt Field employs more than 7,600 military and approximately 1,700 civilian personnel. Previously, Col. Hamilton served as the 1 SOW's Deputy Commander of Operations, where he was responsible for employing manned and remotely piloted fixed-wing aircraft, including the AC-130J Ghost rider, MC-130J Commando II and MQ-9 Reaper.



# 7th Air Commando News February 2026

[www.7thsos.org](http://www.7thsos.org)



## Skyraider II, Reviving a Legend



A new chapter in American airpower quietly took flight this April as Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) welcomed the first missionized OA-1K Skyraider II aircraft into its fleet. Rugged, modular, and cost-effective, the Skyraider II is a 21st-century tribute to its namesake—the legendary A-1 Skyraider of Korea and Vietnam fame—tailored for today’s complex, low-intensity warfare needs.

Built on a proven agricultural airframe, the OA-1K is a modern solution to a persistent problem: providing close air support and ISR (intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance) in austere, remote regions where larger and more expensive jets can’t go. With its recent delivery to Hurlburt Field, Florida, and ongoing crew training at Oklahoma’s Will Rogers Air National Guard Base, the aircraft is taking on a critical role under the Armed Overwatch program.

More than just a throwback, the Skyraider II represents a highly modular approach to warfare. Outfitted with electro-optical turrets, Hellfire missiles, APKWS rockets, and advanced communications, it’s designed to loiter for hours, support special operations forces on the ground, and respond to crises with surgical precision. Its low operating costs and STOL (short takeoff and landing) capability allow it to deploy in rugged environments—from jungle clearings to desert outposts—with minimal logistical burden.



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## Skyraider II, Reviving a Legend (cont.)



AFSOC's commander, Lt. Gen. Michael Conley, emphasized the aircraft's agility and adaptability, calling it "the start of a new era in aircraft modularity." At the Skyraider's delivery ceremony, 98-year-old Vietnam veteran and former A-1 pilot Lt. Col. Bill Buice stood as a living testament to the legacy the new OA-1K now carries forward.

Yet while it excels in irregular warfare and counter-insurgency operations—particularly in Africa and the Middle East—the aircraft's slower speed raises questions about survivability in high-end conflicts against peer adversaries. Even so, Pentagon leaders remain interested in the aircraft's potential, with officials hinting at expanded roles and further sensor upgrades.

As the military pivots toward deterrence in the Indo-Pacific, aircraft like the Skyraider II offer a potent reminder that not every mission calls for stealth or supersonic speed. Sometimes, the right tool for the job is one that's built tough, flies slow, and sticks around long enough to get the job done.



# 7th Air Commando News February 2026



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## Operation Sword Strike: The Beginning of America's War on Terror



In the early hours of October 19–20, 2001, just weeks after 9/11, U.S. Special Operations Forces launched Operation Sword Strike — the first major American ground assault in Afghanistan. Its targets, Objectives Rhino and Gecko, marked the opening chapter of the Global War on Terror.

### Objective Rhino

Under the cover of darkness, 200 Rangers from the 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment parachuted onto an airstrip south of Kandahar. The assault force seized the site, established a forward operating base, and demonstrated that U.S. forces could strike anywhere, at any time. Rhino became the launch point for future missions deeper into Taliban territory.

### Objective Gecko

Simultaneously, Special Mission Unit operators conducted the longest helicopter assault in history, targeting a compound believed to house Taliban leader Mullah Omar. Though Omar had fled, the mission sent a clear message — there would be no safe haven for those who harbored terrorism.



# 7th Air Commando News February 2026



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## Operation Sword Strike: The Beginning of America's War on Terror (cont.)



### The PSYOPS Message: A Warning to the World

In the days that followed, the Department of Defense released night-vision footage of the Ranger jump and the assault on Objective Rhino as part of a global psychological operations (PSYOPS) campaign. Broadcast across major news outlets, the video showed American aircraft and paratroopers striking deep inside Afghanistan.

The message was unmistakable: the United States was on the offensive — capable, determined, and ready to bring the fight to the enemy's doorstep. The footage became one of the most widely circulated visuals of the early war, reinforcing both national resolve and international awareness of U.S. Special Operations capabilities.

Sword Strike's objectives, and the strategic communication that followed, showcased the courage, precision, and readiness of the Special Operations community. Many who took part in those early missions would go on to serve — and sacrifice — in the years that followed.

There are certain tactical details that remain classified to this day, such as exact insertion times, communications logs, and specific after-action reports from participating units.



# 7th Air Commando News February 2026



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## Air Commando Heritage Foundation Aims to Preserve Legacy



If these walls could talk, they would tell stories of COURAGE. They would speak of missions few knew about and people who never asked to be known.

One day, a child will walk the Air Commando Museum halls and learn what QUIET VALOR looks like.

One day, when these walls talk, they will remind us that history doesn't preserve itself. It takes care, intention and people who REFUSE to let these important stories...these important lives...fade.

These walls don't exist yet, but the stories do. And they are worth preserving. Help us build this museum where Air Commando legacy and valor will LIVE ON.

Learn how to help: [aircommandoheritagefoundation.org](http://aircommandoheritagefoundation.org)



# 7th Air Commando News February 2026



[www.7thsos.org](http://www.7thsos.org)

## **Air Commando Heritage Foundation Aims to Preserve Legacy with New Museum (cont.)**

While the focus is often on the operators at the tip of the spear, the museum will also pay tribute to the unsung heroes—the support personnel whose expertise makes every mission possible. From intelligence specialists and maintainers to medics and logisticians, these Air Commandos work behind the scenes, embodying the Quiet Professional ethos, never seeking recognition, yet playing an essential role in the success of special operations.

“Many of these stories have never been told,” Heithold emphasized. “That changes here. This museum will shine a light on the entire Air Commando community—every operator, every supporter, every mission.”

The vision for this museum is a space that honors service and sacrifice while inspiring the future. A state-of-the-art STEM classroom will provide hands-on learning to engage the next generation.

A dedicated area for military retirements, ceremonies, and events will ensure this museum remains a living, breathing tribute to those who serve.

“Young people who visit will see the grit, determination, and innovation that define Air Commandos,” Heithold added. “They’ll see what it means to be part of something greater than themselves, to push the limits of what’s possible. And when they leave, they won’t just be inspired—they’ll want to be the next Air Commando.”

Beyond preserving history, the museum will be a point of pride for the panhandle, drawing visitors nationwide, strengthening the bond between the military and the community, and supporting local businesses.

The Air Commando Heritage Foundation has one mission: to raise the funds to build and sustain this museum.

“This is about more than history,” Heithold emphasized. “It’s about preserving a legacy of valor, service, and sacrifice—not just today, but forever.”

Because legacy and valor should never fade.

For more information on how to donate, get involved, or support the museum project, visit <https://aircommandoheritagefoundation.org>.



# 7th Air Commando News February 2026



[www.7thsos.org](http://www.7thsos.org)



## Air Commando Heritage Foundation Aims to Preserve Legacy with New Museum (cont.)



The Air Commando Heritage Foundation is in the process of initiating solicitations for donations from various sources. Discussion is in progress on how individuals may make donations. Obviously folks can write a check but we are also looking at selling "Bricks" and some other type of memorial item that can be purchased and annotated with your name or that of someone you want to remember.

Presently in the air park contractors are in the process of installing water & electrical sources adjacent to all the aircraft (they have to be rinsed occasionally, salty air you know), excavating sites to pour concrete pads for placement of all the aircraft from in front of the Chapel. The prep work and relocation of aircraft should be finished by September.





# 7th Air Commando News February 2026



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Ron Howard is set to begin filming military drama 'Alone at Dawn' an adaptation of the nonfiction book by Dan Schilling and Lori Longfritz, which tells the true story of Medal of Honor recipient Master Sergeant John Chapman.

The story centers on Air Force Combat Controller John Chapman and men from SEAL team Six struggling to take the summit to find a lost teammate, with enemy fighters on all sides. During the assault, Chapman is badly wounded and the SEALs abandon him to die alone.

He regains consciousness, only to find the enemy closing in. What follows is how he, mortally wounded, engages two dozen fighters alone becoming a posthumous recipient of the Medal of Honor.

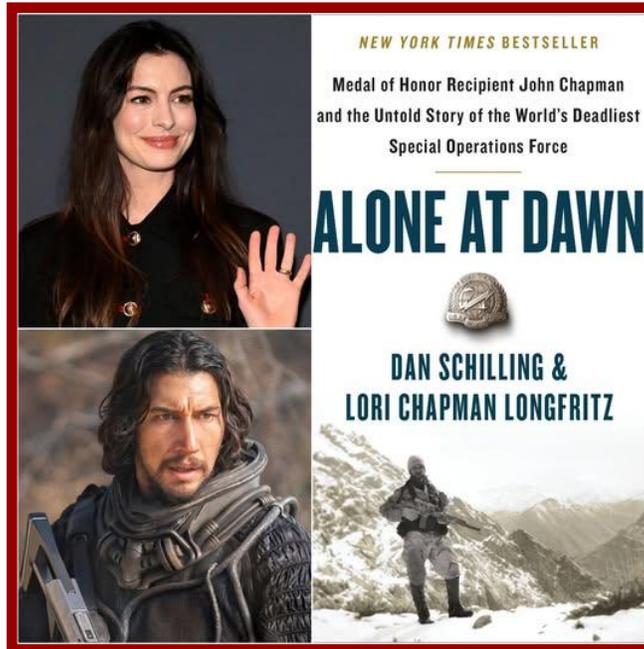


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## ALONE AT DAWN (cont.)



Adam Driver and Anne Hathaway are teaming up in "Alone at Dawn," a new Amazon MGM military drama directed by Ron Howard. Based on the bestselling book by Dan Schilling and Lori Chapman Longfritz, the film tells the true story of Air Force Combat Controller John Chapman, who gave his life to save fellow soldiers, and the investigation that later earned him the Medal of Honor. Driver, a former Marine, takes on the lead role, while Hathaway joins as his co-star. With Howard's track record of powerful true-life films like Apollo 13 and A Beautiful Mind, this project is already one of the most anticipated releases in development.



# 7th Air Commando News February 2026



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## President's Letter

*The Prez Sez,*



**7th Family,**

Today I am looking at the to-do list for our upcoming reunion in Fort Walton Beach this April. The list of planned events sounds fun, but thinking back to previous reunions, my favorite moments were those spent with both old and new friends from the 7<sup>th</sup>. Once again I am getting excited about spending time with people that I don't get to see very often anymore. We are doing all of the usual stuff, including a banquet, sunset cruise, golfing and a wurst burn. We are also planning on attending the Eagle Claw Memorial and there is rumor of a Hash run. It sounds like there will be much to do, regardless of what you're into. Since we are holding it in late April, the weather should be warming up, so there will also be great opportunity to spend some time at the beach or out on a boat. If you have any additional ideas, feel free to reach out and we'll see if we can accommodate. Please sign up as soon as possible to allow us to plan for the correct number of people and definitely make sure you rest up ahead of time, because there is so much you'll want to do here. I definitely can't wait to see all of you in April!

**AoP**

**Jim**



# 7th Air Commando News February 2026



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Matt Powell  
7th SOS Rep: Lt Col Erik Towal*

*Darren Eskind  
"Buff" Underwood*

*Tom "Omar" Bradley (non-voting)*



# 7th Air Commando News February 2026

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## NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTORS

### **JIM PETERSON**

Our fearless leader,  
proudly serving the  
7th ACS/SOS



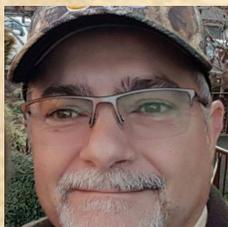
### **RUSS PAINTER**

7th ACS/SOS  
Treasurer



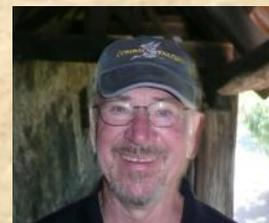
### **DARREN ESKIND**

Website/Database  
Manager for the  
7th ACS/SOS



### **MAX**

**FRIEDAUER**  
“Anytime, Any-  
place”, keeping  
us straight



### **BILL “HOLLYWOOD” FOWLER**

Publisher & Editor  
of the 7th ACS/SOS  
Newsletter



### **LT COL ERIK TOWAL**

Commander, 7th SOS  
And Great Supporter



#### **Note From the Editor:**

As the Publisher & Editor of the 7th ACS/SOS Newsletter, I depend on all of my fellow 7th ACS/SOS family members for inputs to the newsletter - it's not my newsletter, it's **OURS**. So please help me by sending a current “SITREP” on what's happening within our 7th ACS/SOS Family

**Load Clear**  
**“Hollywood”**

Feedback is Always Welcome



# 7th Air Commando News February 2026



[www.7thsos.org](http://www.7thsos.org)

## 7th ACS/SOS Website

By Ryan O'Brien, Website Administrator

Great News! Our previous Offline & Online databases have been merged into one online database on our website at [www.7thsos.org](http://www.7thsos.org).

For those of you who have had access to the website in the past but forgot your password or if you're new to the site and have never been registered, you are now registered but **we need you to update your Profile**. Please follow the below procedures to login and view your profile:

1. Go to the following address and use your primary email address to login. You may also have received an email already asking you to validate and update your profile and login.  
[http://www.7thsos.org/site.php?n=sv\\_subscribe&action=request\\_pw\\_reset](http://www.7thsos.org/site.php?n=sv_subscribe&action=request_pw_reset)
2. You will receive a secure "password reset" email.
3. Click on the "Reset Password" Link in the email.
4. On 7thSOS.org website, enter your new desired password. MUST be a minimum of 12 Characters, include Upper & Lower-case characters and at least 1 number. Longer phrases of words not typically found together with mixed numbers and or special characters is best, be creative, but memorable, and write it down. Don't worry, you can always reset this later using the same above procedure.

Now you should be able to login with your Primary email and your new password.

Fully Paid-Up Members receive full access to the Gallery (pictures, movies, and Papa Joe's songs), Forum (announcements, news, and a place for you to post and communicate), News, important links, history, and a digital copy in PDF format of the "PraetorianSTARShip" by Jerry Thigpen. If your dues are not current, have never paid dues or do not wish to become a dues paying member, you will still have access to the website to browse our "Country Store," check on upcoming reunions, update your profile, and receive important emails from your society, and can send an email to our 7th ACS administrators.



# 7th Air Commando News February 2026



[www.7thsos.org](http://www.7thsos.org)

## 7th ACS/SOS Website (cont.)

By Ryan O'Brien, Website Administrator

**SPECIAL NOTE:** We upgraded the website with new and stronger security protocols and you can be assured that your data is safe. We do not provide information to any public service or advertise and you'll never see an ad on our website except our own message to provide you with the latest news. **IMPORTANT:** If your login fails, please **do NOT** repeatedly try logging in, as you may get locked out of the website completely. If this happens please contact [admin@7thsos.org](mailto:admin@7thsos.org). **Other News!** In addition to other methods, you may now pay & check on your dues payments or register for future Reunions while logged into our website, as well as update your Profile, Contact info, Duty History, and other information.

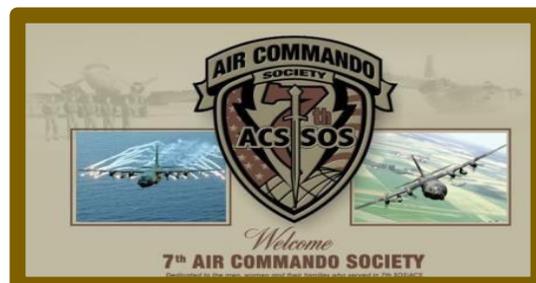
We have seen quite a few of our members attempt incorrect logins. The result is, you will be automatically banned from the site entirely for repeating the same bad action over and over again. The website will defend itself against a perceived threat like this.

If you do not know what your password is, then please click on the "Forgot Password?" link under the Login button on the Login errors page. This will send you an email you can use to reset the password. In the future, you can avoid being banned by not repeating the same bad action over and over again. Instead, please reset your password, or contact Darren Eskind for help, [darreneskind@gmail.com](mailto:darreneskind@gmail.com) or (225) 324--1433.

Login to the website

1. Click on the "Profile" Link on the top horizontal Admin Links bar.
2. Click on Edit on the top of the Profile to change your profile info.

**To view and make Dues payments see the Dues section below your profile info.**

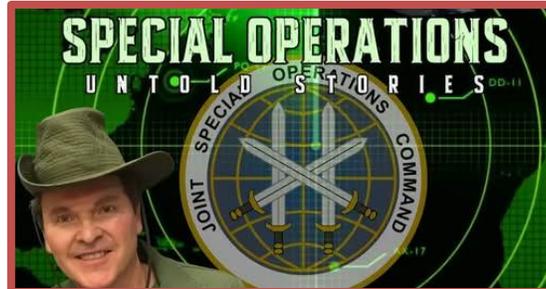




# 7th Air Commando News February 2026



[www.7thsos.org](http://www.7thsos.org)



On September 5<sup>th</sup>, 1972, the Palestinian terrorist group “Black September” stormed the Olympic Village during the Olympic Games in Munich, Germany. In a brutal act of violence, they killed two members of the Israeli Olympic team and took nine other Israeli team members hostage.

As the hostage crisis unfolded that day, an aircrew from the 7<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Squadron was deployed to Northern Germany to pick up elite German sharpshooters and take them to Munich.

On our first podcast we talked with Bill Houston who was one of the pilots that landed with the shooters that night in Munich. Bill will give us a firsthand account of what happened on that mission. He shares the fast engines running load of the snipers at their runway. Bill took us into the pilot’s seat as he landed at Furstenfeldbruck airport that night.

Bill described having the shooters in the MC-130E plane, then unloading them and being told to park away from the terminal building. The shooters were there to kill the terrorists. You will hear how the hostages and terrorists arrived by helicopter and buses. What happened on the runway as they arrived. You will learn about how the situation became chaotic, and no one seems to be in charge.

Then around 10:00 PM the shit hits the fan. A firefight starts and bullets are flying everywhere. Bill hits the ground and hides behind the wheels on his plane, hoping to survive.

Tune in to the link below for Episode 1 of the podcast for this Summer.

<https://opsuntold.transistor.fm/>

**Note:** We are interested in hearing from all Air Commandos that have declassified stories they would like to share on our podcast. Please send your contact information and a short note on the story/mission you would like to share to:

[Dennis4AmericanSOW@gmail.com](mailto:Dennis4AmericanSOW@gmail.com)

**New Podcast Series  
By Dennis Vogt**





# 7th Air Commando News February 2026



[www.7thsos.org](http://www.7thsos.org)

Stay connected with **#SOWF** through our bi-monthly newsletter, the SOWFocus! ... **See more**



# SOWFOCUS



[SPECIALOPS.ORG/NEWSLETTER](http://SPECIALOPS.ORG/NEWSLETTER)



# 7th Air Commando News February 2026



[www.7thsos.org](http://www.7thsos.org)

## Special Operations Warrior Foundation (SOWF) News and Updates



**BY THE NUMBERS - INCEPTION through December 16, 2025**

**1,421**  
WARRIOR  
FATALITIES

**38**  
NON-MILITARY  
SPOUSE  
FATALITIES

**1,200**  
CHILDREN  
ELIGIBLE

**607**  
COLLEGE  
GRADUATES

**1,335**  
SEVERELY  
WOUNDED, ILL  
& INJURED

**2,008**  
SURVIVING  
CHILDREN



# 7th Air Commando News February 2026



[www.7thsos.org](http://www.7thsos.org)

## Combat Talon Memorial Foundation(CTMF)



Dear Talon Memorial Committee,

Yes, you can count on me to make a donation to the Combat Talon Memorial Foundation whose goal was to design and erect a memorial to honor all Combat Talon warriors and especially those who made the ultimate sacrifice. A special commemorative coin will be presented to anyone making a minimum \$20 donation.

The Memorial was dedicated and placed adjacent to the MC-130E Combat Talon I aircraft (Serial # 64-0567) in the Hurlburt Field Memorial Air Park. Updates will be provided via the 7th ACS/SOS, SGI, and Combat Talon Memorial Foundation organizational websites and Facebook pages and newsletters.

Enclosed is a one time donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_. Please make check payable to "CTMF" and mail with this form to:

Bill "Boomer" Saier  
1359 Players Club Cir.  
Gulf Breeze, FL 32563-3521  
[Saier.william@gmail.com](mailto:Saier.william@gmail.com)  
850-221-1845

I would like to make this a recurring donation. I pledge \$\_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ years for a total donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_.

I would like to make a gift In Honor or In Memory of a Combat Talon warrior. To make a donation in honor or in memory of someone, please indicate in the space below.

I would like my contribution honoring a Combat Talon warrior to be acknowledged by the Combat Talon Memorial Foundation.

I understand that while no formal recognition of my contribution in memory of someone will be made on the memorial itself, the Combat Talon Memorial Foundation may publish my name/designation on their website and in their newsletters.

<b>Donor Information</b>
Name:
Address:
City/State:
Zip/Postal:
Phone:
Email:
<b>Please indicate your affiliation with Combat Talons (squadron/years/duty position/family member):</b>



# 7th Air Commando News February 2026

[www.7thsos.org](http://www.7thsos.org)



## Financial Report Combat Talon Memorial Foundation (CTMF) By Bill "Boomer" Saier, Treasurer

Our current CTMF balance is \$4,540.88 This remains an important CTMF reserve for any future expenses with the care and tending of The Rock. We will, of course, still be accepting further financial donations to cover any future costs.

We still have DVDs of The Rock dedication ceremony available for a nominal donation of \$10.00 (covers the production and postage). The DVDs are in either standard or Blu-Ray format. If you would like a DVD, you can send me a check for \$10 per DVD, to:

CTMF  
c/o Bill Saier  
1359 Players Club Circle  
Gulf Breeze, FL 32563

Make sure you include your address and which format (standard or Blu-Ray) you want to receive. Also included in the mailer with the DVD will be a copy of the ceremony program and a CTMF coin. Naturally, all donations will remain in the CTMF treasury to meet future expenses with regards to The Rock.

Feel free to contact me with any questions or comments. My email is: [saier.william@gmail.com](mailto:saier.william@gmail.com)

Regards

Boomer





# 7th Air Commando News February 2026



[www.7thsos.org](http://www.7thsos.org)

## Future 7th SOS Reunions



### 7th ACS/SOS Reunion

**April 22-26, 2026**

by Russ Painter

2026 Reunion Chairman

[ctload7and8@oulook.com](mailto:ctload7and8@oulook.com)

We're off the beach but next to the Ft. Walton Beach Golf Club. These dates will also allow everyone to attend the 46<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Desert One ceremonies on Friday April 24<sup>th</sup>.

Tentatively, a golf outing is planned on Thursday April 23<sup>rd</sup>, with a banquet for Thursday night. Followed with an evening cruise on Friday April 24<sup>th</sup>. Saturday April 25<sup>th</sup> we'll have the wurst burn.

Our guest speaker for the banquet on Thursday, 23 April will be Brig Gen William C. "Clay" Freeman, our 28<sup>th</sup> 7 SOS Commander, 26 Jun 12 - 13 Jun 2014. Gen Freeman is currently serving as the Director of Operations, Headquarters Air Force Special Operations Command at Hurlburt Field FL." I'm sure he will have some interesting personal career stories and updates on AFSOC, Talon III, and CV-22.

They have a nice patio area for the wurst burn, so no need for a tent.

**Go to this link to register:**

[https://www.7thsos.org/site.php?n=sv\\_reg](https://www.7thsos.org/site.php?n=sv_reg)



# 7th Air Commando News February 2026



[www.7thsos.org](http://www.7thsos.org)

## Future 7th SOS Reunion (cont.)

**2026 Registration Form**

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_ First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ MI: \_\_\_\_\_

Name to display on ID badge(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse/Guest: \_\_\_\_\_ Arrival Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Children Attending: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Guests: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Units Assigned to: \_\_\_\_\_

Crew Position/Support Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Duty Station(s): \_\_\_\_\_

**FEES: (7th ACS/SOS Widow/Widower No Charge for Reunion Attendance, Excludes Golf and Sunset Cruise)**

**Fees are Per Adult Attendee**

Entire Reunion (Excludes Golf and Sunset Cruise)	_____ @ \$150.00 = _____
Wednesday Only	_____ @ \$15.00 = _____
Thursday Only	_____ @ \$80.00 = _____
Friday Only	_____ @ \$30.00 = _____
Saturday Only	_____ @ \$30.00 = _____
Child Wurst Burn (Children under 15)	_____ @ \$15.00 = _____
Golf	_____ @ \$80.00 = _____
Sunset Cruise	_____ @ \$60.00 = _____
Dues (1 year \$15.00, 2 years \$30.00, 3 years \$40.00)	_____
Total Enclosed	\$ _____

Please make checks/Money Orders payable to 7<sup>th</sup> ACS, or pay online at [www.7thsos.org](http://www.7thsos.org) . Mail checks/Money Orders to Russ Painter, 1717 Thunderbolt St, Navarre, FL 32566

More details on the following page.....



# 7th Air Commando News February 2026

[www.7thsos.org](http://www.7thsos.org)



## Future 7th SOS Reunion (cont.)

by Russ Painter

2026 Reunion Chairman

[ctload7and8@outlook.com](mailto:ctload7and8@outlook.com)

### Reunion Proposed Schedule of Events

The 2026 reunion is in the planning stages for April 22 thru April 26, 2026, at the Home2 Suites by Hilton, 1930 Lewis Turner Blvd, Ft Walton Beach, FL

April 22, 2026 Wednesday	April 25, 2026 Saturday
1200-2000 Registration (POC Darn) 1200-2200 Hospitality Room (POC Omar) 1200-2000 Country Store (POC Deb)	0900-2000 Registration 0900-1100 Hash Run (POC Ben) 0900-1800 Country Store 1300-1500 Business Meeting, Valor Room 1700-2000 Wurst Burn, Patio (POC Russ)
April 23, 2006 Thursday	April 26, 2026 Sunday
1000-1400 Golf, FWB GC (POC Jim) 0900-2000 Registration 0900-2200 Hospitality Room 0900-1800 Country Store 1800-2100 Dinner Banquet, Valor/Honor Rooms (POC Russ)	0900-1200 Cleanup/Hospitality Room 1030-1100 Memorial Service, Patio (POC B'rat) 1100-1300 Burgers/Hotdogs & Wrap Up, Patio (POC Russ)
April 24, 2006 Friday	
0800-1300 Eagle Claw Memorial (POC Jim) 1400-2000 Registration 0900-2200 Hospitality Room 1400-2000 Country Store 1800-2000 Sunset Cruise (POC Russ)	

**Rooms:** For room reservations call Home2 @ (850) 315-0017, or [www.hilton.com](http://www.hilton.com) (rates in effect until March 23, 2026). King Studio with one king bed \$159.00, Queen Suite with two queen beds \$169.00. We've reserved a block of 30 rooms so make your reservations now. For special requirements contact Jackie Blue @ (850) 449-2756, or [Jackie.b@odomhotelz.com](mailto:Jackie.b@odomhotelz.com).



# 7th Air Commando News February 2026



[www.7thsos.org](http://www.7thsos.org)

## Future 7th SOS Reunions (cont.)

7th SOS 2027 Reunion

**"Back to Our Roots"**

**July 2027, Approx. 14 -16 Days**

by Max Friedauer

[max@7thsos.org](mailto:max@7thsos.org)



We're just 1 1/2 years out from our Epic Return to our roots with the 7th Special Operations Squadron on July 7th of 2027. After careful consideration and getting input from the approximate 50+ people that have expressed an interest in going, we have decided on the following itinerary:

- 4 July - Personal travel and departure to London.
- 5 July - Arrive in London, pick up Bus transport to Angel Hotel in Bury St Edmonds.
- 6 July - Self-guided tours around Bury St Edmonds.
- 7 July - Visit with 7 SOS and attend Combat Dining out with the Squadron that evening.
- 8 July - Possible Duxford Legends Air Show
- 9 July - Travel to Edinburgh Scotland (either fly or by train).
- 10-11 July - Travel around Scotland.
- 12 July - Fly to Berlin.
- 13-14 July - Travel around Berlin, Germany.
- 15 July - Travel to Heidelberg Germany.
- 16 July- Visit Heidelberg.
- 17 July - Travel and visit Weingut Friedauer for lunch, spend the night in Stuttgart.
- 18 July - Travel to Ulm, Augsburg, spend the night in Munich.
- 19-20 July - Visit Munich.
- 21 July - Everyone departs and travels back home on their own.



# 7th Air Commando News February 2026



[www.7thsos.org](http://www.7thsos.org)

## Future 7th SOS Reunions (cont.)

7th SOS 2027 Reunion

**"Back to Our Roots"**

**July 2027, Approx. 14 -16 Days**

by Max Friedauer

[max@7thsos.org](mailto:max@7thsos.org)



- You will be responsible for your own airfare to arrive London (preferably Heathrow) on 5 July 2027. Strongly recommend making flight reservations by 15 September. (Limited to one 50 lb checked bag per pers. + a carry-on)
- Tour ends in Munich the morning of 21 July 2027 with individual return flights or personal agendas.
- I hate to estimate but maybe the per person estimated cost is \$6,000 based on double occupancy and \$7,000 based on single occupancy. (Prices are still an estimate and they will change up or down depending on final contracts and exchange rates.) Prices could increase if we don't have 45 people for the bus as that is a sunk cost split by all of us. Also, many of the tour rates are based on 40-50 attendees so less will cost us a bit more. I'm hoping to keep the cost below \$6,000 per person for double occupancy. Prices in Europe have doubled from 10 years ago and we have air travel from Edinburgh to Berlin and longer bus trips than what we had in 2017.



# 7th Air Commando News February 2026



[www.7thsos.org](http://www.7thsos.org)

## Future 7th SOS Reunions (cont.)

7th SOS 2027 Reunion  
“Back to Our Roots”

July 2027, Approx. 14 -16 Days

by Max Friedauer

[max@7thsos.org](mailto:max@7thsos.org)



We will update everyone at our 22-26 April Reunion in Fort Walton Beach on the final itinerary and cost. We will require a \$500 no refund deposit on 1 June to begin booking buses, hotels.

If you are interested in going and wish to be added to the notification/ update list, e-mail me at [max@7thSOS.org](mailto:max@7thSOS.org) or call me at 850-543-0475. Trish Blanton “The Reunion Brat” is handling all of the tour accommodations and her agent will meet us at the airport in London and be with us the entire trip all the way to Munich.

Hope to see you in July 2027 for a fabulous reunion tour. Cheers my brothers and sisters.





# 7th Air Commando News February 2026



[www.7thsos.org](http://www.7thsos.org)

## Financial Report 7th Air Commando Society (7th ACS/SOS)

By Russ Painter

We remain in good financial standing, current balance as of January 21, 2026 is \$16,101.00.

<b>Balance Sheet</b>		
<b>Accounts</b>	<b>Activity Date</b>	<b>Actuals</b>
Checking Account Balance	1/21/2026	\$523.38
Money Market Account	1/21/2026	\$15,472.02
Savings Account Balance	1/21/2026	\$105.60
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$16,101.00</b>

Contact info remains the same; email, [famousg@me.com](mailto:famousg@me.com), or [ctload7and8@outlook.com](mailto:ctload7and8@outlook.com), Home (850)710-3292 or cell (850) 281-4858.

**Russell E. Painter**  
7th ACS/SOS Treasurer



# 7th Air Commando News February 2026



[www.7thsos.org](http://www.7thsos.org)

## 7th ACS/SOS Country Store Update

By Deb Primosch

The most sought after item is the soft cap with the Pterodactyl. The guy that made the last batch was a robbery victim so it took him a minute to recover. I have an order in for denim blue, dark grey and light grey. I have a list of names of those who reached out asking about them. Prices will be \$20/hat+shipping. If you are interested, let me know.



We still have some Blue T-Shirts commemorating 50 years of Talon Programs. I will bring them to the Reunion along with any other stragglers. I do not foresee reordering T-Shirts in the future unless they are Reunion specific. Polo shirts might be a possibility, but we won't stock them.

I designed a pendant for a necklace, but the price of gold is high right now. If you are interested in one, let me know and I can get you a current quote.



**Design Concept**

We still have lithographs. Let me know if you are interested. They will be at the Reunion.

I am trying to get a Volksmarching hat pin made for those of you interested in attending future Oktoberfests. It can be used as a lapel pin.

The Store was bloated with bulk. I intend to keep it lean and order on demand. I'd like to supply quality, usable items. I am open to suggestions: Wind Chimes with the 7th Emblem, Decanters and/or Tumblers, Bar/Golf Towels?

**Aim High!**

**Deb**

**Contact info** - Deb Primosch, Country Store Manager  
Email: [Murdoch\\_007@yahoo.com](mailto:Murdoch_007@yahoo.com), Phone: (727) 642-0325



# 7th Air Commando News February 2026



[www.7thsos.org](http://www.7thsos.org)

## **“TDY” Sites to Visit (Don’t forget our 7th SOS Website)**

### ***7th ACS/SOS Gallery -***

Check out our Gallery too. We have all of the 7th SOS songs by “Papa Joe” Sheldon, movies, and lots of pictures. Check it out at:

[http://www.7thsos.org/site.php?n=sv\\_gallery](http://www.7thsos.org/site.php?n=sv_gallery)

### ***C-130E(I) Combat Talon I (1965 - 2013) -***

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K\\_axy1PDb48](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K_axy1PDb48)

### ***Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) Facebook Page -***

<https://www.facebook.com/AfsocOfficial/>

### ***Air Commando Association (ACA) -***

<https://aircommando.org>

### ***USSOCOM “Tip of the Spear” October 2025-***

<https://www.socom.mil/latesttots>



# 7th Air Commando News February 2026

[www.7thsos.org](http://www.7thsos.org)



## One Last Thing.....



**Never be without your Coin (RMO)**