

Q&A: Brig. Gen. Edward M. Reeder Jr.

Brigadier General Edward M. Reeder Jr. was commissioned in the infantry through the Appalachian State University ROTC program in 1982. He earned a Master of Science degree in administration from Central Michigan University and a Master of Science degree in national security strategy from the U.S. National War College.

His military education includes the Infantry Officer's Basic and Advanced Courses, Airborne, Ranger, Special Forces Qualification Course, the Defense Language Institute, the U.S. Command and General Staff College and the U.S. National War College. Reeder has held a variety of command and staff positions. His command assignments include platoon leader and weapons platoon leader, 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division (Forward) in Germany; commander, Special Forces Operational Detachment-Alpha, 3rd Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) in the Republic of Panama and commander, Special Forces Operational Detachment-Bravo, 3rd Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) at Fort Bragg, N.C.

He served as deputy commanding officer, 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) and commanded the 2nd Battalion, 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne) at Fort Bragg. Reeder commanded the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) and most recently commanded the Combined Forces Special Operations Component Command in Afghanistan. His staff assignments include company executive officer and battalion adjutant with the 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division (Forward) in Germany.

He served as the aide-de-camp to the commanding general, U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School and the ground operations officer at the Joint Special Operations Command at Fort Bragg. Reeder served as the chief of J3 Plans and chief of J3 Training at the U.S. Southern Command and the Joint Interagency Task Force in the Republic of Panama.

He served as a battalion and group operations officer and group executive officer for the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) at Fort

WARRIOR LEADER: USASFC(A) Focuses on UAVs, UGVs, Vehicles, Rifles and More



**Brigadier General Edward M. Reeder Jr.
Commanding General
U.S. Army Special Forces Command (Airborne)**

Bragg. He was the assistant chief of staff, G3, for the U.S. Army Special Forces Command (Airborne) at Fort Bragg. Reeder also served as the executive officer to the commander, United States Special Operations Command in Tampa, Fla.

His combat tours include the National Civil Defense Advisor in the Republic of El Salvador in 1988. Reeder commanded Special Forces Operational Detachment-Alpha 786 during Operation Just Cause in 1989 with the 3rd Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) under Task Force Black in the Republic of Panama. He commanded Special Operations Task Force 32 (2nd Battalion, 3rd Special Forces Group) in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan in 2002 and again in 2003.

Reeder commanded the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force (7th Special Forces Group) in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan in 2006 and in 2007. He also commanded the Combined Forces Special Operations Component Command – Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom from 2009 to 2010.

Reeder's personal awards include various U.S. and foreign decorations and badges.

Q: What is your assessment of USASFC and its mission performance?

A: Our Green Berets continue to provide geographic combatant commanders and U.S. ambassadors with the best SOF support across the globe. With the majority of our force employed in Iraq and Afghanistan, we have built the most competent and proficient security forces in each country with an institutional training base for their future sustainment. The forces we have mentored in Iraq and Afghanistan continue to receive the highest marks from our deployed commanders. Although not widely publicized, about 4,000 Green Berets are routinely deployed on a persistent basis to about 50 different countries, working with partner forces to increase respective partner nation capacity and regional security.

Q: Both Admiral Eric Olson and Admiral William McRaven, as commanders of USSOCOM, have said they see fraying around the edges among special operators, after a decade of war. What steps have you taken to lessen stress on personnel?

A: Yes, we have seen some 'fraying around the edges' after a decade of war. The regiment has taken multiple steps to lessen stress on personnel while continuing to ensure we have trained and ready Green Berets for worldwide missions.

We have recently added an operational psychologist to every group and have also received allocations for an additional psychologist per group provided by the Public Health Service. This is a critical component in our fight to reduce stigma by having internal behavioral health assets within the groups. These psychologists are experts in the area of the best assessment and selection methods for the SF operators and are involved in monitoring their performance to include any treatment or additional preventative programs that may be necessary.

Each of the groups have developed a soldier resiliency program/ team that provides a proactive approach to help

soldiers deal with multiple life decisions, i.e., relationships, finances, use of time, stress/anger management, etc. These teams are composed of medical personnel, chaplains and members of the command. They use interactive teaching methods, role playing and emphasize a teamwork approach. The programs are early in their activation, but have proved very valuable already. These incorporate many of the components of the comprehensive soldier fitness program that the Army started in late 2009.

Another example of a novel, comprehensive, SOF-focused risk and resilience program was started at 5th SFG [A] a few months ago. It is comprised of a soldier screening form, screening and monitoring procedures, and leader resilience/hardiness training. They just completed their final class for all the leaders in group—minus a BN still deployed. An analysis of feedback surveys given at the end of each leader training indicate the program was well received and found useful by leaders. Every aspect of the program was uniquely designed to be SOF-friendly and more useful than similar programs/ screening methods/resilience programs in the Army.

We have also had great success with the THOR 3 program [Tactical Human Optimization Rapid Rehabilitation and Reconditioning], which is designed to increase combat performance, prevent injuries, improve health and longevity, and facilitate rapid return to duty. While this program is mostly ‘rehab’ oriented, these professionals are all working in the area of preventative care as well to enhance resilience and stress hardiness.

The 360-degree feedback program for battalion leadership will now be offered at the lowest level to better prepare and maintain our most junior leaders. This program will provide Special Forces Operational Detachment-Alpha [SFODA] team leaders with both written and verbal feedback from their superiors, peers and subordinates on the job they’re doing and make changes when needed.

As always, we continue to push the need to select only the most stress-hardy individuals, train them to hone these skills, and provide monitoring support and/or treatment when needed to keep them supporting their mission.

Q: How do you see the effort to replace the Ground Mobility Vehicle? Is the JLTV too big or heavy? The MRAP? Are you expecting to increase the fleet size?

A: Replacing the GMV [currently a highly modified M1165 HMMWV] is a necessary move in order for Special Forces ODAs to

have the mobility required to accomplish all assigned missions and be ready for future deployments anywhere in the world. Replacing the GMV, with a new vehicle purposely built for special forces mission sets, will give our SFODAs an extremely reliable light mobility vehicle able to conduct all assigned core missions, without the need to modify or procure other vehicles. The recent decision to cut the joint light tactical vehicle [JLTV] program places even greater emphasis on the need for establishing a SOF-unique mobility platform program.

For our future mobility requirements, Special Forces plans to retain a number of MRAP vehicles, for training and contingency operations, in addition to keeping a close eye on the HMMWV recap program. It is unrealistic to ... plan on one vehicle being able to fill all mission requirements in all environments when you look at the full range of military operations. Special Forces has documented requirements for a purpose built vehicle to support SOF in a Capabilities Production Document—GMV 1.1

Q: Do you have a weapon of choice for special operators, such as the M4 or the SCAR?

A: The M4 remains the staple for special forces operators. New developments in ammunition, like the Army M855A1, the SOCOM SOST [Special Operations Science and Technology] round, and heavier SOCOM mid-range bullets like the MK262 Mod 1, have optimized the capability of the M4 for the short range fights out to 300 m. To date, in testing and official evaluations, no other 5.56 mm weapon system has been determined to give a marked advantage over the M4; therefore, Special Forces has kept the M4 for general-purpose assault rifle use.

The one drawback of the M4 is it will not fill the mid- to longrange gap we find ourselves in around the world today. To date, only a 7.62 mm rifle will meet the requirements of the mid- to long-range engagements we face, specifically noted in Afghanistan. Special Forces intends to eventually adopt the new Army M110A1 with 16-inch barrel and collapsible stock when available. For now, special forces operators bridge the gap with the SOCOM selected MK17 SCAR 7.62 rifle.

Q: Is use of UAVs and UGVs organic to special ops units, and is employment of these assets increasing?

A: Employment of small unmanned aerial systems [SUAS] is increasing and many units are asking for better systems. The 10th SFG[A] has expanded their SUAS capability by adding the Silver Fox UAS. Tenth SFG[A]

is also pursuing special purpose payloads for enhanced capability. USASFC[A] has a requirement for an electronic warfare and/or SIGINT payload for tactical unmanned aerial systems [TUAS].

The unmanned ground vehicle [UGV] is not a program of record for ARSOF at this time and is not organic to the SFG[A]. The special forces groups have been offered various UGVs in the past but there has not been much interest. Presently, 12 Talon IVs have recently come available and requests for utilization have come from 1st SFG[A] and 20th SFG[A]. My G8 is confident that as the technology improves in UGVs, the demand will increase in SF.

The RQ-11B, Raven SUAS and the RQ-7B, Shadow 200 TUAS are organic to the SFG[A]. The Army programs of record include the RQ-11B SUAS, the RQ-7B TUAS, and the MC-1C, Grey Eagle, Extended Range Multipurpose [ERMP] UAS. The MC-1C ERMP organization will be organic to USASOC/160th SOAR after 2014- 2015. Currently, there are two platoons of MC-1C ERMP assigned to 160th SOAR with duty in Afghanistan.

Each SFG[A] has a TUAS platoon that consists of 22 soldiers, CMF 15, four Shadow 200 air vehicles, and other associated equipment. Each Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force [CJSOTF] employs a TUAS platoon on a rotation schedule maintained by the G3. The TUAS provide full motion video and a communications relay payload.

Each SFG[A] has 26 [NG] – 34 [AC] SUAS. The basis of issue is two SUAS per HQ, SFG[A] and eight SUAS per SF battalion.

Q: Are there changes that you would like to see in training Special Forces personnel, or do you think current training is about right?

A: There is not a change required to training as much as we need to overcome the challenge to find more training time, given our high OPTEMPO. Some of our skills have atrophied over the last five to six years based on our high OPTEMPO, the percentage of the force required to support OND and OEF and the focus on the skills associated with those mission sets. We are currently addressing our shortfalls through updated training guidance to the force and professional education at SWCS. Over the past five to six years we have relied too much on contracted training support provided by a number of companies that employ retired or former soldiers. We need to provide our NCOs, the best trainers in the world, the opportunity to conduct more training internally.

Q: There is talk of extensive cuts that may be made in defense spending. Given the current and expected future demand for special operations missions, how needed are your requested fiscal 2012 funding levels?

A: The precise capabilities of the Special Force Regiment require extensive training and the best equipment to ensure success in combat and also in our global persistent engagement operation. Given the ongoing requirements from geographic combatant commanders to maintain the current operational tempo of U.S. Special Forces Green Berets to conduct COIN, UW, CT, FID, SR and DA missions, we believe the Department of Defense will continue to support our funding requirements.

Q: Are technology advancements in night vision keeping us ahead of our adversaries' growing capabilities?

A: Asymmetric combat operations have forced us to break old paradigms in system requirements that were based on Cold War standards. Specifically today, special forces need to look at night vision gear in two dimensions: defensive and offensive capabilities. Defensive capability is defined as at what range can an operator engage a target accurately—a target that has been identified as hostile and met the rules of engagement. Offensive capability is defined as the range in which an operator can make a shoot or no shoot decision, identify friend or enemy, by virtue of what he is holding, using, wearing and doing. This means more pixels on target than needed simply to engage.

To optimize offensive night vision capabilities, multi-spectrum and fused devices need to be developed. This includes fused clipon sights that will help the operator identify friend or enemy far faster and at greater ranges. Additionally, to replace the current near infrared device shortcomings we need to develop 'out of band' solutions like short-wave infrared so our operators can once again own the night. As technology increases exponentially around the world, the days of being truly ahead of our adversaries dwindle. New tactics, techniques and procedures need to be developed, as well as new multispectral devices, to gain the advantage in asymmetric warfare.

Q: What platforms or equipment that you do not now have would you most like to obtain for special operators?

A: Small lightweight handheld and weapons-mountable multispectral devices, pointers, strobes and illuminators that are passive and/or out-of-band will allow us to truly own the night anywhere in the world.

- Individual assault rifle and optimized optic that is fully capable across all spectrum of combat, from the close-in fight to the long-range fight, 600 m and beyond
- Long-range standoff multispectral observation devices with anti-shimmer technology to allow high magnification use and biometric printing
- Miniature individually used UAVs
- Lightweight long-range communications and situational awareness systems and linkage
- Lightweight breathable ballistic armor
- Smartphones with supporting Mobile Mesh Network capability

Additionally, there will always be a need for other types of platforms and equipment. Special forces have motorcycles, snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles, and two-seat light tactical all-terrain vehicles. Without a doubt, these commercial vehicles have come a long way in the past few years. The challenge has been, and currently is, to procure these quickly when required and then decide whether or not it is cost beneficial to have an extensive sustainment tail with parts in storage or better to buy new when needed and keep a training fleet. The current acquisition process is not set up for this type of procurement and large amounts of man hours are expended trying to make these systems programs of record. Special Forces is always looking to make the current vehicles better. As an example, a current challenge is tire quality. There have been advances in non-pneumatic tire technology, and my G8 is keeping a close eye on these technologies. These tires alone would increase the mission success rate and save a tremendous amount of money currently spent on replacing tires.

Q: What upgrades would you like to see in platforms and equipment you already possess?

A: Our operators are always providing feedback on the platforms that they currently use and what they'd like to have to make their missions more effective. Reliability is probably the first and foremost problem with every vehicle in our inventory. The amount of time, and money, spent repairing vehicles in the field and during missions has to come down.

Increased payload is another request from the field. This directly relates to reliability and should be solved with our new GMV 1.1 requirement. Many of the vehicles used in theater today are having issues carrying payloads that they were never designed to carry.

Increased off-road performance, while carrying a full mission payload, is high on the list. If our operators are in an area where they can drive off road they will: It's much safer and is tactically the right thing to do. In some urban areas, a large MRAP is necessary, but this limits the amount of battlespace which can be controlled and gives free rein to the enemy everywhere there is not a decent road.

More interior room and better human factors are also consistent requests from the field. This is probably the most overlooked area in military vehicles today. The soldiers deal with it, but that does not make it right. More leg room, better seat comfort, and seats designed for a soldier with full kit are needed. Our operators are in these vehicles for days on end, riding on the roughest terrain, over the length of numerous deployments. We have addressed this in our GMV1.1 requirement, but this needs to be addressed in all vehicle requirements across all services. Our warriors deserve the best. We also need to simplify the vehicles to make them better. The addition of more electronics, screens, sensors, adjustable ride height, wires and buttons, has to be limited to combat requirements only. ARSOF is currently having discussions with the motor sports industry here in North Carolina, and are learning a lot. The North Carolina motor sports industry designs and builds vehicles for quick repair with minimal tools. Motor sport seat design is unmatched for safety and comfort and the technology should be closely looked at for our vehicles. Drivers also have cooling vests, and other comfort gear, for operating in high-temperature environments, the same high-temp environments that our warfighters see. Since all of our soldiers wear body armor, we are looking at the possibility of mating our body armor with their cooling vests and running simple hoses to the soldier. There is absolutely no reason we should not strive for the same type of efficiency on the rest of our vehicles.

Q: Do you have any closing thoughts on USASFC and those who serve in it?

A: The most valuable component of Special Forces is the dedicated men who choose to do this work and remain committed to serving our nation. Green Berets are our military's premier unconventional warfare experts who excel at working by, with and through other forces. Given a legacy that began during World War II and forged by combat in jungles, desert, mountains and across the globe, our current generation of Green Berets have repeatedly demonstrated their unmatched capabilities over the last decade. I could not be more proud or honored to serve alongside them.