Air Force Combat Controllers - already in Afghanistan on 9/11/2001 - were among the first to strike a punishing blow against Osama bin Laden and his Al Qaeda terrorists.

For sixty-five years, a small band of Air Commando’s has quietly operated at the Eye of the Storm. Beginning in 1944 -- and continuing through today’s Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) -- the mission of this obscure band of American airmen has been to provide command and control for allied air-power storming into a combat airhead. In the GWOT, these quiet professionals operate at the tip of the US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) spear.

In his book, Gene touches on the shortfalls of World War II US Army PathFinders and highlights the introduction of US Army Air Force (USAAF) Combat Control Teams (CCT) in 1944. From there, the reader is taken on an abbreviated tour of World War II airborne operations. Next, is a summary of the painful birth and early growth of CCT in the US Air Force (USAF). Finally, Adcock offers an in-depth -- fifty-year -- look at CCT’s phenomenal growth into a premier fighting force. The final chapter focuses on 21st Century GWOT operations.
Pathfinders to Combat Control Teams

The Invasion of Sicily - Code named Operation Husky, the invasion of Sicily was counted as a major campaign of WWII. It involved both amphibious and airborne assaults. In the airborne operation, more than two hundred C-47s were launched. Of those, a tenth were mistakenly shot down by US Navy gunners – while approaching the Sicilian coastline.

- For those who made it, poor visual references and 35 mph winds wreaked havoc with two battalions. They landed 30 miles off the drop zone - and a third landed 55 miles away. In all, the entire airborne invasion force missed the objective area by a wide margin.

- Major General James M. “Jumpin’ Jim” Gavin was the Deputy Commander of the 82nd Airborne Division. Because of the aerial delivery problems at Sicily, he decreed that future paratroop operations must incorporate a method for assuring the safe delivery of more fighters into the target area.

- Army Pathfinder teams were created in response to Gavin’s decree. The teams were formed as a small group of specially trained airborne troops. Their mission was to jump in advance of the main airborne force. Upon arrival at the objective, their job was to install visual navigation aids and radar beacons that would help guide the main airborne armada to the designated objective. Thus, in 1943, General Gavin planted the first Combat Control Team seed.

By the end of 1944, many of the problems noted during the invasion of Sicily had been fixed.

- Most C-47s were fitted with self-sealing fuel tanks.
- Most gliders were equipped with parachute arresters and reinforced noses.
- Glider pilots had gotten additional training with a requirement for at least five landing per month and additional infantry training.
- USAAF Combat Control Teams had already been formed and prepared for combat operations.

US Army Air Force Combat Control Teams - A total of nine Combat Control Teams had been organized and trained by the US Army Air Force (USAAF). Their charter was airhead air traffic control (AATC); IE, to provide the much-needed command and control communications on the ground and issue terminal guidance to inbound troop carrier aircraft.

Operation Varsity - By March 1st, 1945, the allies began to line up at the west bank of the Rhine River, along a 450-mile front stretching from Holland to Switzerland. Varsity would be the first test of the new Combat Control Teams. The addition of Combat Control Teams was seen as a long overdue action that had the potential for saving lives among troop carrier crews, while aiding ground forces with aerial re-supply and medical evacuation.

For Varsity, two USAAF Combat Control Teams were assigned to each of the four Airborne Divisions; the 13th, 17th, 82nd, 101st; with one CCT held in reserve. On March 24, 1945, USAAF Combat Control Teams made their first successful combat assault.

"The Combat Control Teams – after undergoing some operational streamlining – would find their most effective and extensive application in the later stages of World War II as Airfield Control Teams (ACT). The ACTs coordinated the use of the crowded skies and airfields in Germany that were taken over by IX Troop Carrier Command for re-supplying the rapidly-advancing allied armored columns."

Colonel Charles H. Young, from his book “Into the Valley" The Untold Story of USAAF Troop Carrier in WWII

(BACK COVER and FLAPS)
CELEBRATING SIXTY-FIVE YEARS OF COMBAT CONTROL OPERATIONS - 
THESE ARE SOME OF THE NOW DECLASSIFIED STORIES OF CCT OPERATIONS.

1944  2009

This diary is a readers digest of the individual exploits of combat controllers. 
The stories were collected from sixty-five years of CCT combat training, combat operations 
and humanitarian missions. The contents of this book have been cleared for public release.

CCT @The Eye of the Storm

by

Gene Adcock, CMSgt, US Air Force (CCT) Retired


Life Member Combat Control Association, Air Commando Association and Airlift Tanker Association

“History will be kind to me for I intend to write it.”

Winston Churchill

The Eye of the Storm chronicles the exploits of individual combat controllers. 
It is told in a series of stories - many etched in blood.

“If history were taught in the form of stories, it would never be forgotten.”

Rudyard Kipling

The story begins with the appearance of first CCTs - teams cobbled together by the US Army Air Corps for the invasion of Germany in 1945. The story continues through the 21st Century fight in the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT).
AT GRADUATION, COMBAT CONTROL SCHOOL STUDENTS ARE TOLD
“You are now part of a brotherhood and you will soon become part of a team of silent warriors – a team of professionals – executing classified mission veiled in secrecy. Many of your battles will never be public knowledge; but your deeds will not go unnoticed by those who matter – your comrades in arms. For it is they who will truly understand your contributions and sacrifices during your combat control career, do your comrades and ancestors proud – remember their contributions and establish even greater goals for those who will proudly follow in the trail of your boot prints.”

“History is a version of past events that people have decided to agree upon.”
Napoleon Bonaparte

DEDICATIONS
To those Combat Controllers whose stories will never be told!
Through our own neglect we lost them - they deserve better!
and
To the family members who have lost Combat Controllers.
We will remember - always!

“A dog in the fight is concerned with survival - not history!
History isn't important - until he's history!”
Gene Adcock
US GOVERNMENT ARTICLES & THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

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THE EYE OF THE STORM (EOS) is the title given to the group of three statues proposed for future installation at the Combat Control School (CCS), Pope AFB, North Carolina. When completed, the EOS will be a monument to combat controllers past, present and future.

The EOS is a grouping of three, individual combat controllers, shown is a idealized formation at the control point of a drop zone. One (left) is the air traffic controller; the second (center) is operating long-haul, over-the-horizon communications; a third (right) is providing team security and standing ready to step into either control position. Each statue is individually cast and will be set in a formation in the CCS Memorial Walkway.

The eye of the storm refers to the center of a hurricane - a relatively quiet zone - around which scores of turbulent forces are violently churning and - in some cases - raining death and destruction. In the CCS EOS scenario, the combat controllers are depicted at the center of air operations - a location known as the air-head, air traffic control point. It is the job of combat controllers to integrate, synchronize and control air power at the targeted battlefield.

In many operations, the EOS is at the center of relatively mundane aerial delivery operations – either by parachute or by airdropping assault. However, today’s combat controllers are fully capable of bringing destructive forces to bear on enemy formations. It is these airmen, their skills and their dedication to the Air Force mission that will be memorialized by the Eye of the Storm monument.

A portion of the proceeds from the sale of this book will be donated to the Eye of the Storm project.

Gene Adcock, CMSgt, USAF (CCT) Retired - Author, The Eye of the Storm
Chairman, Combat Control School Association and the Benini Heritage Center
- Combat Control Association Life Member-026
- Air Commando Association Life Member-836
- Airlift Tanker / Association Life Member
ABOUT THE AUTHOR - On March 11, 1937, Doris Adcock gave birth to Albert Eugene (Gene) Adcock at the home of her father, Erva Biby. Erva and wife Delphi Biby lived on a small farm – on the hard road – a half-mile south of Christopher, Illinois. Gene is the only child of two only-children. His father Leon; grandfather's Isaac Adcock and Erva Biby were all career coalminers and worked at the Bell & Zoller Coal Company in Zeigler, Illinois. Times were hard during his adolescent years; but, his dad offered to help him get a job at Bell & Zoller, as soon as he graduated from high school. However, he didn't recommend it. Within months after graduation from Christopher Community High School - Class of ’54 - Gene took his father's unspoken advice and enlisted in the Air Force. Still seventeen, he celebrated his 18th birthday - on March 11, 1955 - while in Basic Training at Lackland AFB, Texas.

Assignments - From basic training A/3C Gene was sent to Scott AFB, Illinois. At the time Scott was Headquarters, Air Training Command and the home of the Ground Radio Maintainer course, among many others.

In January 1956, A/2C Gene graduated as a ground radio maintainer and was sent to the Shiroi AB, Japan. Shroi was a highly-classified USAF Security Service radio-intercept facility, located about 30 miles east of Tokyo.

In the summer of 1957, A/1C Gene returned to Sewart AFB, Tennessee, home of the 314th Troop Carrier Wing and the 314th Communication Squadron, to which he was assigned. Within a year, Gene volunteered – and was accepted for Combat Control Team assignment – with the 2nd Aerial Port Squadron at Sewart.

- 1958 - 1963 - Over the next five years, SSgt Gene concentrated on filling CCT training squares and settled into the job as an operational combat controller. From Sewart, Gene’s combat control career progressed through the following assignments:
  - 1963 – 1966 – 7th Aerial Port Squadron – Tachikawa AB, Japan
    - SSgt - TSgt
    - Three short-TDY combat tours in Vietnam
    - TSgt - SMSgt
    - Three long-TDY combat tours in Laos
    - CMSgt
    - MAC IG Team - Combat Control Inspector

On 31 January 1977, Gene retired as a Chief Master Sergeant and immediately entered the civil work force. Over the next thirty years, he was actively involved in the development, marketing and sales of specialty products for combat identification, survival, escape, rescue, evasion, close air support and assault zone operations.

- Gene was instrumental in the development and fielding of the Quick Fix Suite of covert, through-sight combat identification devices for Gulf War II. Historically, the American combat fratricide rate had averaged more than fifteen percent in all its wars since World War I. As a result of the Quick Fix fielding, the US Army judged the Guf War II fratricide rate to be less than two-percent.

Military Awards, Decorations and Certification
- Air Crew Wings – Combat Award
- Master Parachute Wings – w / Combat Star
- Vietnamese Army Master Parachute Wings
- HALO Certified Jumpmaster
- Bronze Star Medal w / 1 Oak Leaf Cluster (OLC)
- Air Medal w / 5 OLC
- Meritorious Service Medal w / 2 OLC
- Air Force Outstanding Unit Award w/Combat V and 6 OLC
- Numerous Service Medals
Education

- Master of Arts, Business Administration, Webster College, St. Louis, Missouri - 1977
- Bachelor of Arts, Business and Economics, Park College, Parkville, Missouri - 1975
- Associate of Arts, Air Traffic Control Management, Johnson County Community College, Olathe, Kansas – 1973

Publications

- Owning the Night - Cross Border Control International - 1996
- We Own the Night – Night Vision Equipment Company -1993.

ABOUT THE COVER

Combat controllers from the 21st Special Tactics Squadron, Pope AFB, North Carolina pose in an idealized circle-the-wagons formation on a drop zone at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. In combat operations, combat controllers are at the eye of the storm; i.e., they are the airhead-air-traffic-control for the vertical envelopment of the targeted battle area. In a tactical operation the control team would operate in a lower profile. In a combat operation, the CCT would consist of a twelve to eighteen man team. Shown here is only the airhead-air-traffic-control element. The other team members are unseen - but are nearby - forming an outer security perimeter.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- This book would not have been possible without the assistance of scores of authors who supported the project; some knowingly, others unwittingly. To each of you, I express my sincere thanks and deepest gratitude. Your contributions were instrumental in documenting the never-before-told history of Air Force Combat Control Teams.
- To Jim Parsons - CCA Life Member 641 - I offer my sincere thanks for your technical support. Without your generous assistance the history would not have been possible.
- And finally, to my long time friend, Johnny Pantages - CCA Life Member 453 - thank you for your material support in the form of computer service and digital document storage.
It is my honor and privilege to open this important and vital work. I cannot fathom an individual more uniquely qualified to author *The Eye of the Storm* than U.S. Air Force Chief Master Sergeant (Ret) Gene Adcock. Gene is a master historian having studied the U.S. Air Force Combat Control career field from its inception 55 years ago to today.

More to the point, Gene Adcock is not only a researcher, he’s a doer. Firsthand, he has experienced the horrors of combat, the sometimes mind-numbing boredom suddenly interrupted with jags of adrenalin -- and the sadness for teammates who have paid the ultimate sacrifice. Gene speaks with moral authority, the rare but necessary “*I was there*” credibility.

He has also endured challenges of a wholly-other nature: Air Force leaders with no concept of what I consider to be the Air Force’s most demanding career field. Gene has experienced organizational mismanagement, archaic tactics directed from on-high, and hand-me-down equipment. Not that many years ago, the Air Force literally ate its young from this career field. Mid-level managers and leaders, in order to progress up the promotional ladder, were forced to cross-train to other specialties at precisely the point at which they’d reached the height of their experience and knowledge.

Thankfully and fortunately for our nation and my Air Force, that is no longer the case.

Over a half century I’ve closely observed the highs and lows faced by combat controllers. I’ve also repeatedly asked myself, “Where do we get these exquisite individuals?” Due to visionaries like Gene and his comrades, today’s combat controller represents the best trained, best equipped, and most patriotic airmen and officers found in any military service.

On military installations today, it is common to see senior non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and officers proudly wearing their red berets and bloused jump boots (symbols of the pride and professionalism which separates them from their peers). Two combat controllers wear the stars of general officers; an impossible thought just twenty years ago. In spite of the challenges they’ve endured over the last 55 years, US Air Force combat controllers have always represented the very best this great country has to offer.

An extremely difficult Special Tactics Team selection course is held at the US Army Ranger camp at Delonagha, GA. To get this far you have to have already proved yourself mentally and physically. Combat controllers and Pararescue (PJ) men must join other service teams, such as SEALS, Special Forces, and Rangers, in small numbers. Normally, these closely knit units don’t welcome outsiders warmly into their special fraternity.

I once asked the selection psychiatrist what he looked for in Air Force candidates to this highly-specialized career field. He said “*A bit of a used car salesman.*” They come in as outsiders and they must be better physically, professionally, and socially. Today, you would be hard pressed to find any sister service team that wants to go into combat without their Air Force brethren.

Ironically, hardships and adversities have drawn this special fraternity closer. Excessive tasking and long periods of family separation still force the decision: “*It is either my family or my profession.*” That choice is clearly understandable.

I can’t help but recall Thomas Wolfe’s book, *The Right Stuff*. He said, “*In the 50s it was difficult for civilians to comprehend such a thing, but military officers and enlisted men tended to feel superior to civilians. It was really quite ironic given the fact that for a good thirty years the rising business class in cities has been steering their sons away from the military, as if from a bad smell. The officer and enlisted corps had never been held in lower esteem. Well, their contempt was returned in trumps. They looked upon themselves as men who lived by higher standards of behavior than civilians, as men who were bearers and protectors of the most important values of American life, who maintained a sense of discipline while civilians abandoned themselves to hedonism, who maintained a sense of honor while civilians lived by opportunism and greed. When the showdowns come—and the showdowns always come—not all the wealth in the world or all the sophisticated weapons and radar and missile systems it could buy would take place of those who had the uncritical willingness to face danger; those who in short had the RIGHT STUFF.*”*
I’ve lived through the “If it feels good do it” era of the ’60s, and the “I want it now” generation of the 70s and 80s. Sadly, today’s average citizen is worried more about their 401K than the heroes who are risking it all to preserve America’s freedom in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Thankfully, the military forces of the 21st century are held in much greater esteem than my comrades and me when we came home from Southeast Asia.

An inescapable fact of the American culture lies in the fact that as a people we have a short attention span. We have little reliance on lessons of the past and have tremendous impatience. President Harry Truman said “The only thing we don’t know about the future is the history we have forgotten.”* We will make the same mistakes. We will pay for them in huge outlay of dollars and worst, the loss of life.

On a closing note, I join my comrades in the Special Tactics profession in honoring two past Secretaries of the Air Force who recognized a diamond when they saw it and took action to provide leadership, resources, and support - the Honorable Whitten F. Peters and Dr. James G. Roche. General Duane H. Cassidy, Commander-in-Chief, Military Airlift Command, approved the reorganization of Combat Controllers and Pararescue into a Special Tactics Group and several Squadrons.

These units were trained and equipped to sprint to the sound of battle. After 9/11, response was immediate. They were on their way before the smoke cleared in New York and at the Pentagon. I cannot imagine the deficit we would have faced without the organization, training, equipment, and recruitment ensured by the above visionaries. The results speak for themselves.

My prayer is that The Eye of the Storm will wake up America to a special brotherhood within. The combat controllers are a fraternity which has written, and continues to write, truly unique and heroic chapters in American military history.

Bob Patterson, Major General, USAF, Retired
And proudly, Combat Control Association Honorary Life Member Number 5

Major General Robert B. Patterson - At retirement, Major General Robert B. Patterson was commander of Military Airlift Command’s 23rd Air Force, Hurlburt Field, Florida, and commander of Air Force Special Operations Command. He entered the Air Force in August 1956 and received his pilot wings at Vance Air Force Base, Oklahoma, in October 1957. He is a command pilot with more than 9,600 flying hours and 293 combat hours. He has flown 44 types / models of aircraft. He was promoted to major general September 1, 1984, with date of rank March 1, 1981.

General Patterson’s strategic thinking was critical, especially after the birth of the unified U.S. Special Operations Command. For the first time, CONUS-based special operations forces of the Army, Navy and Air Force were unified under one joint commander. The 23 AF served a dual role – still reporting to MAC while also functioning as the air component to USSOCOM. In July 1987, General Patterson issued a statement concerning his understanding of the new relationship among MAC, USSOCOM, other unified commands and Headquarters 23rd AF. Historians recorded this as the most definitive directive concerning command relationships issued by HQs 23 AF. It was this document that informally designated General Patterson’s air component as the Air Force Special Operations Command. His leadership made a lasting impact on AFSOC’s organizational structure and how it fits in with USSOCOM and the rest of the Air Force today.

At his retirement ceremony at Hurlburt Field in October 1989, General Patterson was recognized by General Duane H. Cassidy, Commander in Chief, Military Airlift Command as “the best field commander in the Air Force.” Combat Controllers who know him wholeheartedly agree.

viii
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## INTRODUCTION

### THE 1940s - CCT HERITAGE

#### THE EUROPEAN THEATER - CONVENTIONAL OPERATIONS
- THE GERMANS AT CRETE: 1
- THE ALLIED INVASION OF SICILY: 1
- GAVIN’S DECREE: 1
- AT THE BULGE: 2
- OPERATION VARSITY: 2
- THE RED WACO: 4
- ONE COMBAT CONTROLLERS PATH TO OPERATION VARSITY: 5
- A WORLD WAR II COMBAT CONTROLLER'S EXPERIENCE: 5

#### THE PACIFIC THEATER – SPECIAL OPERATIONS
- THE USAF WAR AGAINST JAPAN: 7
- THE AIR COMMANDO'S! A HERITAGE WRAPPED IN SECRECY: 7
- OPERATION THURSDAY: 7
- WHAT DOES ANY OF THIS HAVE TO DO WITH THE 21ST CENTURY AIR FORCE?: 8

### SUMMARY
- WHY ARE THEY CALLED COMBAT CONTROL TEAMS?: 11

## CHAPTER 1

### THE 1950s – A LONG, HARD GESTATION
- THE KOREAN WAR: 13
- PATHFINDER ACTIVITIES AT FORT BRAGG: 13
- AIR FORCE INDECISION: 14
- AIR FORCE TAKES FIRST POSITIVE STEP: 16
- THE ARMY VS THE AIR FORCE: 16
- EARLY GROWING PAINS: 16
- THE AIR FORCE PATHFINDER PROBLEM: 16
- CAREER FIELDS, PRE-1956: 23
- CAREER FIELDS, POST-1956: 24
- AIR FORCE PARACHUTIST BADGES: 24
- TWENTY-TWO COMBAT CONTROLLERS RECEIVE JUMP WINGS: 25
- FIRST REAL WORLD MISSION: 27
CHAPTER 2

THE 1960s – MISSION VALIDATION

- AFRES COMBAT CONTROL TEAM 29
- THE BLUE MASTERS 33
- COMBAT CONTROL CANINE CAVORTS IN 'CHUTE 36
- COMBAT CONTROLLER MAKES FIRST SUPersonic EJECTION 37
- THE TOP SECRET JUNGLE JIM PROJECT 38
- LEMAY ON JUNGLE JIM 39
- THE BUON ENAO PROJECT 40
- CCT'S FIRST COMBAT CASUALTY 41
- SERGEANT VON RYIK 46
- POPE COMBAT CONTROL TEAM 47
- PROJECT CLOSE LOOK 50
- TESTS OF IMPROVED GPES 51
- GPES AT KHE SANH 54
- THE AIR COMMANDOS 54
- COMBAT CONTROL SUPPORTS THE INDO-CHINA WAR 58
- AN EIGHT-MILE PLUNGE TO GLORY 61
- AIR COMMANDO'S TRAIN COLUMBIANS 64
- CCT PREPARES FOR COMBAT EXERCISE WITH 173RD AIRBORNE BRIGADE 66
- CCT INSTRUCTORS AT THE AIR FORCE ACADEMY 67
- DRAGON ROUGE – HOSTAGE RESCUES IN THE CONGO 67
- TOP SECRET - OPERATION DRAGON ROUGE 73
- THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC INVASION 77
- CCT FACs DURING THE VIETNAM WAR 79
- FORWARD AIR CONTROLLING IN LAOS 79
- COMBAT CONTROLLERS DEPLOY WITH CAV TO VIETNAM 80
- FIRST CONVENTIONAL CCT DEPLOYMENT TO VIETNAM 81
- DET 1, CCT VIETNAM DEPLOYMENT 87
- THE SECRET WAR IN LAOS 94
- BUTTERFLY FACs 94
- THE HOLE IN THE PORTER 94
- THE STINGING BUTTERFLY 95
- PROJECT LUCKY TIGER 99
- COMBAT CONTROLLER STILL MISSING IN ACTION (MIA) 100
- THE WATERPUMP & BUTTERFLYS 101
- BUTTERFLY 39 103
- CALVIN THE COMMANDO 104
- CONTROL TEAM SECURES ZONE 105
- RAVENS BORN OF BUTTERFLY SUCCESS 105
• FIRST JOINT USAF / US ARMY COMBAT JUMP 107
• BIRTH OF THE VIETNAM ERA BERET FLASH 108
• VIETNAM ERA BERET FLASH 110
• THE SIEGE OF KHE SANH 110
• LANDING AND TAKING OFF FROM KHE SANH 112
• TAILPIPE FREQUENCY CHART 113
• COMBAT CONTROL WORLD-WIDE SYMPOSIUM 114
• COMBAT CONTROLLERS RESCUED 114
• RESCUE AT KHAM DUC 115
• COMBAT CONTROL SCHOOL GRADUATES 13 AIRMEN 117
• DINING-IN GRADUATION AT SEWART 118
• FORWARD AIR GUIDE TRAINING IN LAOS 122
• AIRBORNE COMMAND AND CONTROL CENTER 124

CHAPTER 3

THE 1970s – RESTRUCTURING THE FORCE

• COMBAT CONTROL SCHOOL MOVES TO LITTLE ROCK 125
• FIRST USAF COMBAT CONTROLLER RETIRES 125
• EARTHQUAKE PERU 127
• DETACHMENT 1, 56TH SPECIAL OPERATIONS WING 128
• CCT & THE AFA PARACHUTE PROGRAM 129
• SPECIAL OPERATIONS SUPPORT IN SOUTHEAST ASIA 145
• PPN-18 BEACON OPERATIONS IN LAOS/CAMBODIA 156
• MANAGUA, NICARAGUA INTERNATIONAL RELIEF EFFORT 159
• DASH-18 CANOPY SLEEVED FOR FREE-FALL 160
• PITSENBARGER AWARD GOES TO BRABHAM 161
• THE MAC CONSOLIDATION 162
• USAF COMBAT CONTROL TEAM REQUIREMENTS FOR THE FUTURE 164
• LOST-THE BLUE BERET – WON-THE SCARLET RED BERET 178
• ODE TO THE MEN IN THE SCARLET RED BERET 178
• THE RED BERET FLASH 179
• VAN, TURKEY INTERNATIONAL RELIEF EFFORT 179
• CHAOTIC TIMES & TAILORED TRAINING 180
• RESCUE IN ZAIRE 181
• MASS SUICIDE LEAVES 914 DEAD 182
• COMBAT CONTROL SCHOOL MOVES TO POPE 185
• THE IRANIAN HOSTAGE CRISIS 185
• THE HOSTAGE RESCUE PLAN 185
CHAPTER 4

THE 1980s – A DECADE OF PROMISE
• THE IRANIAN HOSTAGE RESCUE MISSION 189
• A NIGHT TO REMEMBER - RECONNAISSANCE MISSION IN IRAN 189
• DESERT ONE 192
• EAGLE CLAW 196
• HISTORY OF THE SPECIAL OPERATIONS WARRIOR FOUNDATION 197
• GRENADA INVASION 198
• US AIR FORCE SPECIAL TACTICS FORMED 199
• JSOC AND TWA FLIGHT 847 199
• JSOC’S ACHILLE LAURO RESCUE MISSION 201
• THE BIRTH OF SPECIAL TACTICS 203
• OPERATION JUST CAUSE 204

CHAPTER 5

THE 1990s – A VERY BUSY FORCE
• CCT OVERVIEW 207
• THE AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND 208
• DESERT SHIELD / DESERT STORM 209
• MAC COMBAT CONTROL OPERATIONS IN DESERT SHIELD / STORM 211
• AIR FORCE UNIT CITATION - 1616th COMBAT CONTROL SQUADRON PROVISIONAL 214
• 720TH SPECIAL TACTICS GROUP 214
• THE SOMALIA OPERATION 215
• AIRHEAD OPERATIONS – WHERE AMC DELIVERS 217
• 'CHUTE FOR THE STARS 218
• NO WIMPS ALLOWED 219
• A HARD ROAD 220
• NEW SECAF VISITS POPE, TAKES A FALL 223
• UAV DEMO BRINGS STRANGE SHAPE OVER EGLIN 223

CHAPTER 6

THE 2000s - THE BEGINNING OF A NEW ERA FOR CCT
• AFSOC SHOWCASES MISSION 225
• CCT TRAINING CHANGES, MOVES TO HURLBURT FIELD 227
• PROTECT AND SERVE 229
• EXERCISE NORTHERN EDGE 229
• AIR NATIONAL GUARD'S AIRMEN OF THE YEAR ANNOUNCED 361
• 720th SPECIAL TACTICS GROUP WELCOMES NEW COMMANDER 362
• HOUSE RESOLUTION 1364 364
• COMBAT CONTROLLER AWARDED TWO BRONZE STARS, PURPLE HEART 366
• A MESSAGE FROM COLONEL BRAD THOMPSON, COMMANDER 720TH SPECIAL TACTICS GROUP 367
• GENERAL NORTON SCHWARTZ RELATES STORY OF COMBAT CONTROLLER'S PROFESSIONALISM 368
• AIRMAN FULFILLS “LIFELONG CAREER DREAM,” RETURNS TO SPECIAL TACTICS 368
• SPECIAL TACTICS UNIT ARRIVES IN HOUSTON TO AID IKE RELIEF 370
• STTS GRADUATES AST CLASS-26 371
• ACADEMY HONORS GRADS WITH MEMORIAL DEDICATION 372
• 17th ASOS TRANSITIONS FROM ACC TO AFSOC 373
• COMBAT CONTROLLERS EARN BRONZE STARS, COMBAT ACTION MEDALS 374
• COMBAT CONTROL ASSOCIATION REUNION – 2008 376
• UNIT FINDS ITS PLACE IN LOW PROFILE, HIGH SPIRITS 379
• 21st SPECIAL TACTICS GWOT OPERATIONS 382
• FIERCE BATTLE ABOVE SHOK VALLEY EARN SILVER STARS 385
• TRAINING BRINGS U.S. AND POLISH SPECIAL FORCES TOGETHER 389
• AIRMAN SAVES LIVES IN AFGHANISTAN 390
• CCA NEWSLETTER # 14 – 2008 REUNION EDITION 393
• COMBAT CONTROLLER KILLED IN ACTION 403
• COMBAT CONTROL INSTRUCTOR EARNS BRONZE STAR 403
• SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND AIRMAN DIES IN AFGHANISTAN 405
• COMBAT CONTROLLER RECEIVES AIR FORCE CROSS, PURPLE HEART 407

• BIBLIOGRAPHY TBA
• GLOSSARY TBA