



Inside SWCS

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Back and Forth

Command Sgt. Maj. Ledford Stigall is no stranger to SWCS, but he's seen his fair share of operational assignments too.

Maintaining that balance is rare, but Stigall, and SWCS, are better for it.

By Dave Chace
SWCS Public Affairs Office

Command Sgt. Maj. Ledford Stigall has served in seven different leadership positions at the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, but he's considered himself to be a teacher ever since graduating the Special Forces Qualification Course in 1988.

"I believe that the core strength of a Special Forces Soldier is his ability to teach, and when I say teach, I'm not just talking about training," Stigall said. "I mean educating, training, developing and mentoring."

Fresh off an assignment as the senior enlisted advisor for Combined Forces Special Operations Component Command—Afghanistan, Stigall assumed responsibility as the senior noncommissioned officer in SWCS in a ceremony Sept. 9.

Considering the size and scope of SWCS' units and directorates, Stigall has a relatively robust resume of assignments in SWCS, including its out-of-training student company, two rotations at the Special Forces Underwater Operations School in Key West, Fla., command sergeant major positions in both 2nd Battalion, 1st Special Warfare Training Group (Airborne) and the Special Warfare Medical Group (Airborne), and as commandant of the Noncommissioned Officer Academy.

"My experience has been pretty varied here at SWCS, and I think it's always been balanced out with operational tours," Stigall said. "I've had the ability to see what the force needs, and then see how we train for that need."

When not assigned to SWCS, Stigall's 29-year military career is rounded out as a weapons and intelligence sergeant in 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne), team sergeant in 5th SFG(A), company and operations



Command Sgt. Maj. Ledford Stigall addresses a group of SWCS Soldiers and instructors about the command's initiatives to optimize cadre assignments and professionally develop special-operations Soldiers while serving within SWCS. Having recently returned from a deployment to Afghanistan, Stigall assumed responsibility as the SWCS Command Sergeant Major on Sept. 9. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Russell Lee Klika, SWCS PAO)

sergeant major in 3rd SFG(A), operations sergeant major for Special Operations Command—South in Puerto Rico, and a return to 7th SFG(A) as its 1st Battalion's command sergeant major.

His rotations as an instructor and leader in SWCS, coupled with its instructor training course and a bachelor's degree in education, has set Stigall up for success during these operational assignments, he said.

"When I was a team sergeant with 5th SFG(A), I deployed to Pakistan and Kuwait, and both occasions we were teaching maritime operations to our indigenous sister forces," he said.

"I used my knowledge learned from being an instructor, both on teaching methods and the subject matter, to break down lessons, develop enabling learning objectives and give a very professional exchange training program."

These joint combined exercises for training, or JCETs, are a common core capability within the Special Forces community.

"I enjoy teaching, it's a chance to motivate people," Stigall said. "They say leadership is the ability to motivate somebody to do something that they may normally not want to do, and teaching is an important part of that."

Stigall said that his current assignment is the first time he's volunteered to come work at SWCS; each past assignment was just that: an assignment.

"It's strange; if you talk to any cadre member at SWCS, they'll tell you they didn't want to come here, and if you talk to guys in the operational force, they'll

tell you they don't want to go to SWCS," he said. "But if you get them by themselves and get them to start talking about what they're doing here, a lot of times you'll find that they're very motivated and passionate about developing their future regiments. They take that to heart and I think they believe in it."

Stigall said that he's hoping to draw more special-operations Soldiers' interest in volunteering for assignments at SWCS, and he thinks that developing cadre members will play a role in that.

"If we make our cadre better, then when we task one Soldier to do a couple different things, they'll all be done at a high standard," he said. "That's part of the quality development."

Stigall also supports the SWCS Commanding General's initiatives to professionalize and educate the special-operations force through civilian education.

"[Maj. Gen. Bennet S. Sacolick] said he was going to create education opportunities for NCOs, and it's happening," Stigall said. "What I want to do is make sure that those become institutionalized. I want to push that through so that it becomes a staple in our community."

Stigall is working on his own master's degree in education, he said.

As the SWCS command sergeant major, he's here to listen to Soldiers' questions and concerns, offer his professional advice and deliver messages to the appropriate authority.

"A sergeant major's got a role, and it's not to be the quiet guy sitting in the corner," he said.

"I believe that the core strength of a Special Forces Soldier is his ability to teach."

Command Sgt. Maj. Ledford Stigall
SWCS Command Sergeant Major

SWCS CSM shares personal leadership philosophy, advice

By Command Sgt. Maj. Ledford Stigall
SWCS Command Sergeant Major

I consider it to be a personal honor and privilege to assume responsibility as the command sergeant major to the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School.

Through my 29 years of service in the U.S. Army, I've been fortunate to have served as a leader in several of SWCS' subordinate organizations as well as the Special Forces operational units. With each new assignment, I've gained a further appreciation for the Soldiers and civilians who dedicate themselves to developing our regiments' newest warriors so that they may serve alongside our peers.

To all the Soldiers assigned to SWCS, I want to make it clear that you don't work for me – I work for you. I believe that a command sergeant major's role is to provide adequate, sensible, relevant advice to their commander, and that's what I'm here to do for you.

If you've got a message that needs to get to our commander, or our operational units, I am a venue to provide some personal and professional feedback and carry that message along to an appropriate authority.

Whether you've got a grievance, complaint, recommendation or something to applaud and sustain, you can count on me to listen.

I expect the personnel within our organization to continue to live their lives and perform their duties in accordance with the eight Army special-operations core attributes: integrity, courage, perseverance, personal responsibility, professionalism, adaptability, capability and the ability to be a team-player.

In addition, I'd like to share my personal philosophy for success as a noncommissioned officer, and it boils down to four things: patience, presence, approachability and persistence.

Be patient with your superiors and your subordinates; I'll show each member of this organization that same courtesy.

You must stay involved with your unit and Soldiers or you're not helping to create solutions and make our regiments better. I think it's very important to lead from the front, in both training and operational environments, so when I talk about presence, I'm talking about finding your voice as a NCO, but I'm also talking about the basics that can't go overlooked, such as professional appearance and fitness.

Presence is an important characteristic for any NCO, but in this community presence alone won't help our instructors and students develop. It's important for each NCO to be approachable; if you're not approachable, you may as well not be there, because Soldiers will not come to you with their questions and concerns.

Finally, I encourage you to be persistent with your tasks, initiatives and goals. I've always found that the Soldiers assigned to SWCS are very motivated and passionate about their roles here. If you believe that your ideas are going to make our Soldiers and regiments better, then you can't accept no as an answer.

I'm looking forward to meeting and working alongside each and every one of you. Thank you for welcoming me back to SWCS.



Stigall

SOF community mourns one of our own: Command Sgt. Maj. Conrad R. Fernandez

Oct. 24, 1965 — Sept. 26, 2011



Command Sgt. Maj. Conrad R. Fernandez (right) is awarded the Legion of Merit by Lt. Gen. John F. Mulholland, Jr., commanding general of the U.S. Army Special Operations Command, in a ceremony Aug. 26 at his home in Carthage, N.C. Fernandez, a U.S. Army Special Forces non-commissioned officer since 1992, most recently served as the command sergeant major to the Support Battalion for the 1st Special Warfare Training Group (Airborne), part of SWCS at Fort Bragg. Fernandez passed away on Sept. 26. (U.S. Army photo by John Barrera, 1st SWTG(A))

Command Sgt. Maj. Conrad R. Fernandez, a former command sergeant major for the Support Battalion, 1st Special Warfare Training Group (Airborne), passed away Sept. 26 at his home in Carthage, N.C.

Fernandez was born in Washington, D.C. in 1965. He started his military service as an infantryman in 1989, when he attended basic training, advanced individual training, airborne school and the Ranger indoctrination program. Upon completion of this training, he was assigned to the 3rd Battalion of the 75th Ranger Regiment at Fort Benning, Ga.

He attended the Special Forces Qualification Course in 1992, following which he was assigned to an operational detachment—alpha with the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) at Fort Bragg, N.C., where he served as a detachment weapons sergeant.

From 1996 through 2003, Fernandez served as a communications sergeant in 7th SFG(A), including time in Panama, and then as the first sergeant to the support company for 3rd Battalion, 7th SFG(A).

In 2007, Fernandez graduated from the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy at Fort Bliss, Texas, and was assigned as the company sergeant major to C Company, 3rd Battalion, 7th SFG(A). He later served as the company sergeant major for the headquarters detachment in 2nd Battalion, 1st SWTG(A) in the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School.

Fernandez was appointed to command sergeant major and assigned to the 1st SWTG(A) Support Battalion on Dec. 3, 2010.

Fernandez's military education includes all levels of the noncommissioned officer education system, basic airborne course, Ranger course, Special Forces Qualification Course, Special Forces Advanced Reconnaissance Target Exploitation Course, Special Operations Target Interdiction Course, Static-line Jumpmaster Course, Military Freefall Course, Military Freefall Jumpmaster Course and SERE training.

His awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Joint Service Commendation Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal (with four oak leaf clusters), Afghanistan Campaign Medal with a combat star, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Non-commissioned Officer Professional Development ribbon, Army Serve ribbon, Special Forces and Ranger tabs, Combat Infantryman Badge, Expert Infantry Badge, Military Freefall Jumpmaster Badge and Master Parachutist Badge.

He is survived by his wife, Suzie Fernandez and sons Joshua and Anthony Fernandez; he was preceded in death by a son, C.J. Fernandez.

A funeral for Fernandez was held Sept. 30 at the Southern Pines United Methodist Church, and a memorial service was held Oct. 1 in the John F. Kennedy Auditorium on Fort Bragg.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Wounded Warrior Project, 7020 A.C. Skinner Parkway, Suite 100, Jacksonville, FL 32256. Online condolences may be made at www.bolesfuneralhome.com.

SWCS Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
2	Civil Affairs Qualification Course Graduation (Reserve) 9 a.m. JFK Auditorium	4	SWCS Language Summit	Civil Affairs Qualification Course Graduation 9:30 a.m. JFK Auditorium	Training holiday	8
9	Columbus Day	TRADOC Staff Assistance Visit (through Thursday)	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	Military Information Support Qualification Course Graduation 9:30 a.m. JFK Auditorium	Robin Sage begins