



SENTINEL

NEWSLETTER OF THE QUIET PROFESSIONALS

SPECIAL FORCES ASSOCIATION CHAPTER 78

The LTC Frank J. Dallas Chapter

VOLUME 15, ISSUE 8 • AUGUST 2024

First to the Front

*The Untold Story of Dickey Chapelle,
Trailblazing Female War Correspondent
Review and Excerpt Inside!*



Jennifer Casolo —
the Mata Hari of San Salvador

No Fallen Comrade Left Behind



SENTINEL

VOLUME 15, ISSUE 8 • AUGUST 2024

From the Editor



US ARMY SPECIAL OPS COMMAND



US ARMY JFK SWCS



1ST SF GROUP



3RD SF GROUP



5TH SF GROUP



7TH SF GROUP



10TH SF GROUP



19TH SF GROUP



20TH SF GROUP



8TH SF GROUP



11TH SF GROUP



12TH SF GROUP

IN THIS ISSUE:

From the President 1

Global Gathering of Green Berets—SFACON 2024 2

Book Review: First to the Front—The Untold Story of Dickey Chapelle, Trailblazing Female War Correspondent by Lorissa Rinehart.....3

An Excerpt from First to the Front..... 4

Jennifer Casolo — the Mata Hari of San Salvador 10

No Fallen Comrade Left Behind 18

SFA Chapter 78 June 2024 Meeting..... 22

FRONT COVER: Members of ODA 595, part of Task Force Dagger, and Afghan forces ride into northern Afghanistan in October 2001. Then-SFC Chris Spence, the team’s communications sergeant, said, “No one will believe this!” Picking up his camera he shot this photo that captured history. This was the image displayed to the public by then-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld when speaking about the U.S. response to the September 11 terrorist attacks. The picture is currently on display at the Smithsonian Institute and served as the template for the “America’s Response Monument” located in Liberty Park in New York City. (Photo by MSG Chris Spence/U.S. Army)

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How Miller
Sentinel Editor

Our cover photo was taken by our very well received June chapter meeting speaker, Chris Spence of ODA 595 (the Horse Soldiers), pictured on our Chapter Meeting page. Read the President’s column for more chapter news and an update on the progress of registration for the Global Gathering of Green Berets—SFACON 2024 cruise. Note that time is running out soon to register for SFACON 2024.

This issue includes a review of Lorissa Rinehart’s *First to the Front*, the story of reporter Dickey Chapelle, a woman who defied gender discrimination to cover wars worldwide. It is an amazing tale about a woman who only wanted to get the truth out to the public. From Iwo Jima and Okinawa during the battles to freedom fighters in Cuba, Algeria, and beyond, and back again with our allies, the Vietnamese Airborne Brigade, Laotians fighting communist North Vietnamese, and finally the U.S. Marines.

Lorissa shares with us “The Sea Swallows,” a chapter from her book about a group resisting communism in the Mekong Delta. This group was a forerunner and foundation for the pacification effort largely directed by SF and the CIA.

Frequent contributor and investigative reporter Greg Walker, a retired Green Beret, takes us behind the scenes to the chaotic struggle by our Central and South American neighbors to throw off the impending yolk of communism.

Greg investigates a missionary, Jennifer Casolo, who used her position to deceptively raise funds for communists in El Salvador. When she was caught, no less than Senator Ted Kennedy threatened to cut off all funding to El Salvador if she wasn’t released. Using first-person sources, Greg puts Jennifer’s efforts in perspective and lifts the cover stories further off than before, including her possibly running reconnaissance for the guerrillas during her visit to Salvadoran 4th BDE headquarters at El Paraiso, just prior to the devastating raid on March 30, 1987.

Green Beret SSG Gregory A. Fronius was killed during that raid, the first KIA adviser in El Salvador. LTC (ret.) Lucius “Gus” Taylor describes how Gregory did not die in his sleep from a mortar, as mistakenly reported, but held off the attackers for so long that, when he was wounded and captured, they blew him up with a mine because they were so pissed off. Gus recently passed in June of this year, and Greg writes a tribute to him as well.

So that our staff can take a well-deserved and overdue rest, there will be no print edition of the *Sentinel* for September 2024. For September, the *Sentinel* online “electronic” version of the publication will expand on our monthly “From the Archive” feature with a compilation of stories from past Sentinels. We trust that you will enjoy these informative articles that have already received very favorable comments. ❖

How Miller, *Sentinel* Editor

From the President | August 2024



Aaron Brandenburg
President SFA Ch. 78

On behalf of Chapter 78 I want to extend a warm and hearty welcome to the new national leadership team of the Special Forces Association. As you assume your new duties for the exciting journey of leading our organization forward, I'd to express our sincere enthusiasm and support for your fresh perspectives, ideas, and initiatives that you bring to the table. Welcome aboard, and here's to a successful and productive tenure ahead!

At the beginning of June, James McLanahan (Chapter 78 VP) attended the SFQC graduation where our Chapter Co-Sponsored the student graduation BBQ with Chapter 1-18. I have been fortunate to have attended a couple of the BBQ/Graduations in the past. In my opinion, it is reassuring to see and meet the new SF soldiers filling our ranks for the future. I like to congratulate the graduates and welcome the Southern California recipients of the lifetime memberships to Chapter 78. We hope to see you at our meetings soon. Our June guest speaker was Chris Spence. I have received several emails and phone calls praising Chris's presentation. While I was unable to attend the June meeting due to my daughter's wedding, I want to extend a thank you to Chris on behalf of the chapter. Also in June, we had a chapter board meeting to discuss the "road ahead". I will present the discussion points at the July meeting, and I encourage an open discussion.

This month we celebrated July 4th; a significant part of July 4th is the celebration of freedom and democracy. In addition to its historic importance, July 4th has become a day of national pride and unity. Across the country, our communities come together to celebrate with parades, fireworks, BBQs, and various festivities. As we celebrate July 4th each year, we reflect on the value sets that define us as a nation and recommit ourselves to upholding the ideals of liberty, equality, and justice for all. Independence Day serves as a profound reminder of the continuing importance of freedom and democracy in shaping the American identity and guiding our nation as we lead the free world into the future.

Lastly, the Global Gathering of Green Berets or SF Cruise is nearing (10/19-10/24). There was an email sent yesterday saying that 908 cabins have been registered and a forecast that all 1055 cabins will be reserved in the next 60 days. If you are interested in attending, I suggest that you reserve your place soon. This is going to be an iconic SFACON, and I look forward to seeing everyone there.

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Aaron Brandenburg,
President Special Forces Association Chapter 78



Chapter 78 VP James McLanahan with new chapter members from the SFQC Graduating Class 336 after the graduation ceremony in June.



Left to right, June Chapter meeting guest speaker Chris Spence, Chapter 78 VP James McLanahan, and Chapter 78 member and Artemis instructor "the Colonel" Jim Duffy at the post-meeting shooting event held at Artemis Defense Institute (adi.artemishq.com) in Lake Forest, CA.



SFA Chapter 78 Monthly Meeting

August 17, 2024

Breakfast – 0800 • Meeting – 0830

Courtyard by Marriott

5865 Katella Ave, Room A, Cypress, CA 90630

2024 Meeting Schedule

September 21 | October 19 | November 16
December (to be announced)

GLOBAL GATHERING OF GREEN BERETS

SFACON 2024

5 Night Bahama Cruise on the Carnival Paradise

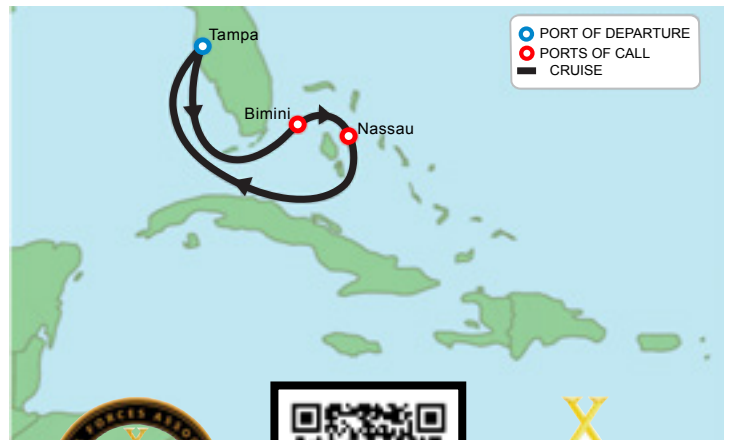
Ports of Call: Nassau, Bimini and Tampa, FL

OCTOBER 19-24, 2024

Don't miss this epic gathering of Special Forces friends, sharing stories and building strong bonds with warriors of all ages.

This 5-night Bahama cruise departing from the Port of Tampa, Florida, on October 19, 2024, includes:

- Ports of call in Nassau and Bimini and fun-filled sea days with your Special Forces friends and family.
- Access to excellent on-board dining options featuring endless culinary variety, including 5-star dining in the main dining rooms.
- Enjoy a refreshing drinks at lounges and bars throughout the ship.
- Broadway-style shows, comedy club entertainers, deck parties, and music for everyone throughout the ship.
- Try your luck in the Majestic Casino or enjoy a game of bingo, blackjack, or Texas hold'em.
- The fun shops onboard have duty-free shopping—cruise-related items to take home as a mementos of a great time.
- For the kids—tons of activities, including the Waterworks water slide area, pools and splash pads, as well as Circle C and Camp Ocean.
- For adults—pools, hot tubs and the adult-only Serenity deck area for quiet lounging, as well as the piano bar and library to catch up on some reading.
- A state-of-the-art fitness center and sports deck.



www.SFALI.org



For itinerary, events schedule, general information and registration visit
<https://www.specialforcesassociation.org/sfacon-2024/>

All 1,055 cabins expected to fill in the next 45 days. REGISTER NOW to secure your place on board!

Book Review

First to the Front—The Untold Story of Dickey Chapelle, Trailblazing Female War Correspondent by Lorissa Rinehart

By How Miller

In *First to the Front*, Lorissa Rinehart wonderfully conveys the astounding details of the life of Dickey Chapelle. Relating her vulnerabilities and self-doubts as well as her sheer determination to get meaningful coverage to the public, Lorissa brings to life what Dickey was about and what she accomplished, using various sources, including Dickey's own writing.

As a groundbreaking, credentialed female World War II reporter, Dickey covered fighting from Iwo Jima and Okinawa, and was instrumental in conveying to the American public why they should donate blood and where and how it was being used to save thousands of lives.

She went on to experience, partially with her husband Tony, the onset of the Cold War in Europe and how so many now faced a new relentless tyranny of communism. They did this under the auspices of different publications and NGOs, including the Quakers' Brotherhood of Friends and even the U.S. government.

She was drawn again and again to where the action was. On Iwo Jima and Okinawa, she asked to go "as far forward as you will let me." In Hungary, in 1956, she went into hostile territory to help refugees find their way across the border to freedom. This resulted in her eventually being captured and enduring several weeks of solitary confinement in the infamous Fö Street Prison, an experience that forever bound her to freedom fighters across the world.

From Cuba to Algeria and beyond, she was able to accompany freedom fighters so she could tell the world what was really going on.

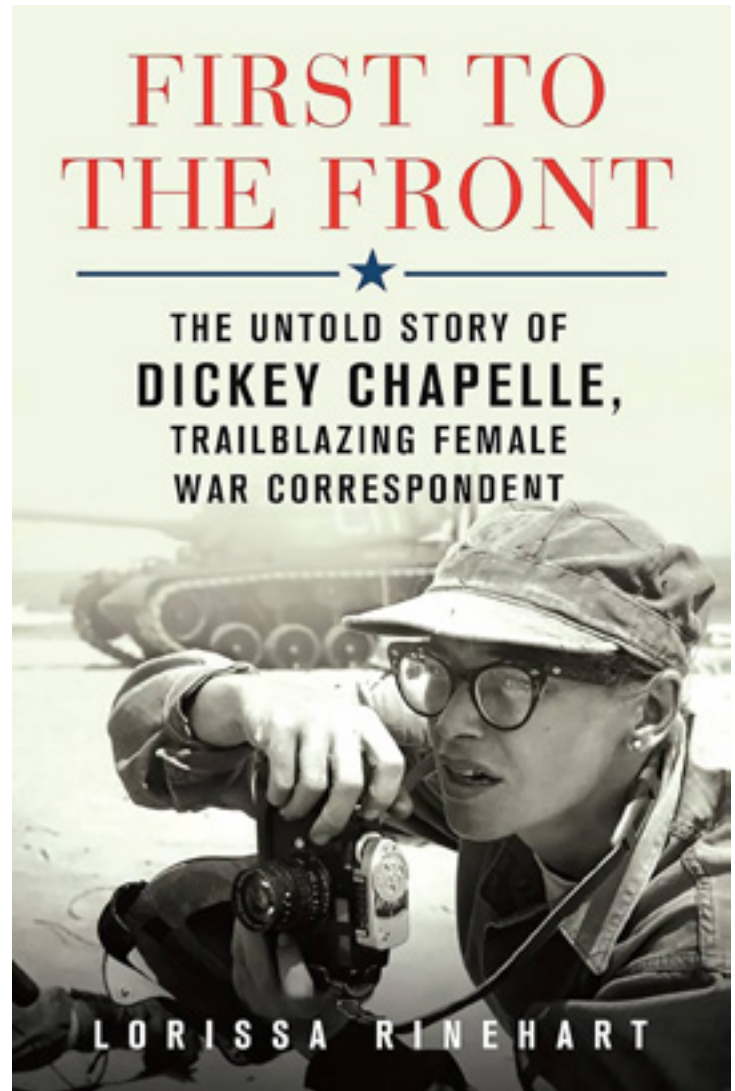
She became such an expert on guerrilla warfare that she was sought out by military brass to consult and even was asked to write a much-quoted "An American's Primer on Guerrilla Warfare." This was important for trying to change the military mindset from "capture and control territory" to meet the challenge of the communists, who tried instead to control the populace and coerce them into joining their side at gunpoint.

Dickey spent time with all types of military units, earning her "jump wings" with the 101st ABN DIV. She jumped with 1st SFG (A) in Korea. She also earned her Vietnamese "jump wings" and had at least 9 combat jumps with the Vietnamese Army Airborne, whom she highly respected for their courage and competence.

Dickey said in an interview that she wanted to die on operation with her beloved U.S. Marines. As a fitting end to her extraordinary career, regrettably, she got her wish on 4 November, 1965.

Next, Lorissa shares with us the story of Dickey and the Sea Swallows, run by a Chinese Catholic priest who fled with his flock from China to Cambodia to the Mekong Delta and decided to stand his ground. With the help of the CIA and then the Special Forces, they were at the forefront of setting up the very successful territorial defense forces.

You will find this excerpt starting on the next page. ❖



[First to the Front: The Untold Story of Dickey Chapelle, Trailblazing Female War Correspondent](#)

By Lorissa Rinehart

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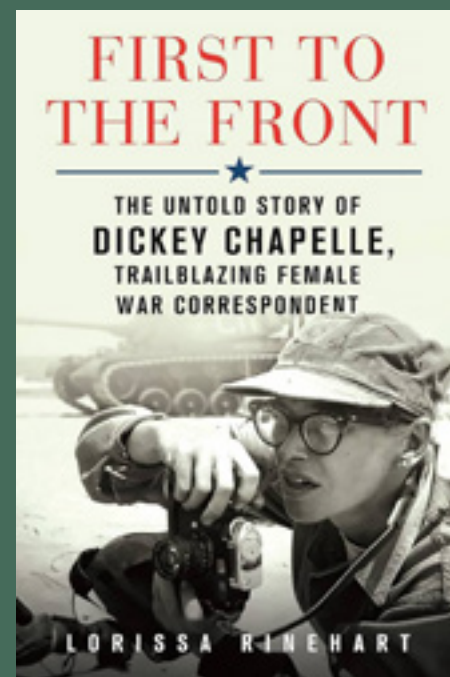
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AN EXCERPT FROM FIRST TO THE FRONT

THE UNTOLD STORY OF DICKEY CHAPELLE TRAILBLAZING FEMALE WAR CORRESPONDENT



By Lorissa Rinehart

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28

The Sea Swallows

She first heard of Father Augustin Nguyen Lac Hoa over the dying embers of a campfire on the Ho Chi Minh Trail from a couple of MAAG advisors debating who was the toughest man they had ever met.

“Nobody is tougher than Father Hoa,” said one of them, a veteran paratrooper. The rest nodded in silent agreement.

As a country priest in Canton Province (now Guangdong), China, Father Hoa had been pressed into teaching the sons of river pirates how to read. As compensation, his pupils taught him jujitsu while their fathers taught him the principles of guerrilla warfare. During World War II, the priest’s unlikely military training continued when the government drafted him into the army where he learned the basics of munitions. He survived to return to his flock. But after Mao Zedong seized power, Catholics became the target of mass arrests, torture, and execution. Father Hoa and his parish fled to Cambodia until communist guerrillas began to harass them there as well.

Resettling once more, this time on the mouth of the Mekong River Delta, they established the village of Binh Hung and gained citizenship in time for the 1959 national elections. Aware of their politics, the Viet Cong, who had recently gained a foothold in the region, told the priest that his village shouldn’t vote. Several communists were on the ballot and the Viet Cong knew his parish would cast their ballots against them. Undaunted, Father Hoa, along with every adult of voting age,

trekked several hours to their polling place in the regional center of Tan Hung Tay. As a reprisal, the Viet Cong hung an eleven-year-old boy named Ah Fong from a cross with a sign on his chest reading, THIS CAN HAPPEN TO ALL YOUR CHILDREN.

Already twice made refugees by communists, the parish collectively chose to stand their ground this time. Putting his military training into practice, Father Hoa formed the Sea Swallows, a counterinsurgency militia named for the nearly indestructible species of tern that migrated through the Mekong Delta each spring. Since its founding, the Sea Swallows had grown from several dozen soldiers to a force of seven hundred that included volunteers from almost every province in South Vietnam.

Eager to meet this fighting priest, as she would later dub him, Dickey arranged for them to have tea at the American embassy in August. Over their second cup of oolong, Father Hoa invited Dickey to come live with them for a while, another first for any reporter.

The chopper dropped her off in mid-October. A squadron welcomed her on the landing pad, firing a twenty-one-gun salute and raising their flag. Dickey quickly fell into the village’s rhythm.

Every morning, bugles called the village to wake, soldiers to drill, and prisoners to work. Ducks and pigs and dogs and babies composed the chorus of afternoons. Stringed pipas, instruments similar to guitars, and mouth harps announced the end of the workday. Sometimes when the air was cool enough, the militia’s radio picked up the Saigon jazz station that was piped through an enormous Pioneer loudspeaker, washing the village in Coleman and Coltrane, Evans and Getz, Mingus and Roach. The resounding percussive of tanggu drums called the devout to evening prayers at the Our Lady of Victory Chapel. In the dark, gongs made from flattened mortar shell tips rang out the all clear every hour on the forty-five, except when incoming Viet Cong bullets made them chime like kindergarten triangles. This music played almost every night. The

Sea Swallows replied with their own refrain of artillery, mostly left over from the French Indochina War, along with psyops messages broadcast over the same loudspeaker that earlier might have played jazz.

But more than defend, the Sea Swallows went on the offensive against the Viet Cong and had so far secured a five-mile perimeter around the village. Dickey of course insisted that she accompany them. The night before her first patrol, she joined the officers for dinner in their mess beside the Sea Swallows' armory. On one side of the long table, two German shepherds, gifts from US Army Research and Development, strained at their leashes. On the other, soldiers tossed their scraps to caged boa constrictors. Dickey sat in the center beside the ranking officer, Captain Nguyen, who talked of the liberation of Vietnam while Dickey used chopsticks to feed succulent crab to the cat that had crawled on her lap. Occasionally, a soldier would interrupt, asking the captain to inspect his modifications on a 1953 French mortar or World War I bullets that had been polished back into working order. Each time, he nodded a hesitant approval. They needed new weapons, but these would have to do. After dinner, Nguyen handed her a carbine to carry the next day. "You might need it," he cautioned.

Dickey went back to her quarters to practice carrying the gun along with her cameras. "How do Marine combat correspondents do it with an M-1?" she wondered in her journal, then packed her pockets with extra film and cigarettes for tomorrow's march.

They left in a thick rain at dawn, made too much noise, and only had a captured flag to show for their mosquito bites. "I scratched like a civilian," Dickey wrote. Still, the squadron gave her the flag. She would later unfurl this keepsake from her purse on stages in the Plains states in order to drive home the necessity of supporting the Sea Swallows and groups like them.

That afternoon she photographed the demolition class in the chapel. Like her, the instructor was an outsider, a member of the Vietnamese special forces sent here both to teach and to learn. She had met him before, what seemed like a lifetime ago, on one of her first patrols in the highlands.

"Don't you get homesick?" he asked her as his students practiced inserting fuses. Then shyly added, "I think you are willing to die for your duty."

"I'm sure you are too," she replied, then added, "We might both live through our whole careers." The look on his face told her she had said the wrong thing. He expected to die defending the freedom of his country. To think otherwise was tantamount to a dereliction of duty.

A week later, Nguyen announced the next patrol mission beyond the walls of Binh Hung. The troops assembled in a portentous gray dawn. Dickey ignored the omen, instead scanning the faces of the hundred assembled regulars as Nguyen gave them their orders. "I was surprised to realize how many of the Binh Hung faces had become familiar and even a little dear to me in the ten days I have been among them," Dickey wrote in an unpublished article about the operation. But combat, she knew, always made fast friends.

Nguyen dismissed them to load into the Sea Swallows' fleet of weathered motorboats with mounted automatic rifles at the bow and stern. Amidships, soldiers clutched their American M-1s and French Lebel's with shells in the chambers and their safeties off. Bathing children



Dickey Chapelle—"She's Ready to Defend America," a portrait of Georgette Louise Meyer (aka Dickey Chapelle), as a member of the Women Flyers of America, an organization formed in 1940 to teach women to fly and then to ferry American bombers to Great Britain. (© Milwaukee Journal Sentinel – USA TODAY NETWORK; Reprinted with the permission of the estate of Dickey Chapelle)

laughingly swam out of their way as they departed down the canal. Dickey noted with no small degree of sentimentality the woman who saluted the soldiers, then blew a kiss to her husband, blushing behind his Browning automatic.

Outside of the village, water lilies and floating buttercups swirled in the eddies of their wake. Skirting the edge, farmers on the way to market poled their sampans stacked high with bundles of watercress, bananas still on the stalk, baskets full of fish, and clinking bottles of home-brewed beer. On the banks, children played and fishermen fished, boatbuilders caulked their hulls, and housebuilders thatched a new roof. The whole scene seemed so utterly pastoral, so opposed to their actual purpose.

A stone lion and live Tommy gunners guarded a Buddhist temple just outside Tan Hung Tay where they rendezvoused with a company of Montagnard militia. "They are mountain people from central Vietnam," wrote Dickey, "the Father and the captain have been delighted with their performance... My first chore of the day was to help prove it by photographing a Viet Cong corpse lying in the marketplace." She then added parenthetically, "(I guess I should point out that in my experience the public exhibition of enemy dead is still considered a pretty normal part of warfare in every culture but our own.)" Inured by now to the spectacle of violence, the marketgoers hardly noticed the body

as they went about their shopping. With equal nonchalance, Dickey focused her lens on metal spikes across his chest, classic Viet Cong booby traps, that he had been caught planting along the path into town.

Reports of an approaching enemy column took them farther down the canal to Van Binh, another Catholic Chinese refugee settlement where the Viet Cong had recently poisoned the drinking water and shelled its market. The village chief welcomed the Sea Swallows with a feast of pork liver soup, roast duckling, shrimp, crab, beer, and French brandy. Evening fell. Dickey slept in the same barracks as the soldiers and woke with them before dawn.

“The first firing came at 08:10 exactly,” wrote Dickey, “a few rifle shots and a submachine burst of three. Then for several minutes the fire was so heavy that I couldn’t count.” Dickey expended a roll of film and was loading another when she saw the mortar crew run by. She followed, film in hand, and dropped to one knee as the crew assembled the mortar in three and a half minutes flat. They fired. A dud. Military protocol dictated waiting ten minutes before loading a new shell in case the old one had simply yet to explode. But there was no time for such caution under heavy fire closing in on a thousand yards. Without hesitation, the crew reloaded and fired three more times. On the fourth, incoming fire slackened and the enemy dispersed.

Whatever misgivings the Sea Swallows or any citizens of Binh Hung had about Dickey disappeared after that. Farmers’ wives hosted dinners for her. The commander of Companies Six and Seven invited her to his wedding. She celebrated the Vietnamese Independence Day by setting off fireworks with the best of them, went to children’s birthday parties, and attended mass on Sunday. And, whenever the Sea Swallows went on maneuvers, she went with them.

She regularly joined them on perimeter night patrols and marched out to confront reported bands of Viet Cong. She came under fire nine times, endured clouds of mosquitoes so thick they clouded her glasses, and watched deadly snakes slither by her boots as she stood motionless for fear the smallest sound might alert the enemy to their location.



Refugees Crossing Hungarian Border—For weeks in the winter of 1956, Dickey documented the refugees risking their lives to escape the brutal Soviet installed dictatorship that toppled Hungary’s democratically elected government. (Wisconsin Historical Society, Dickey Chapelle, 1956, PH3301J, Box 2, Page 20, Image 4; Reprinted with the permission of the estate of Dickey Chapelle)

She described in gripping detail the dangers and difficulties of warfare in Vietnam that confronted the Sea Swallows even before one reached the enemy—charging water buffalo, mined canals and spiked foxholes, and terrain that both the Viet Cong and MAAG personnel considered equally impossible to traverse but which the Sea Swallows crossed by the mile. She portrayed them as they were under fire, cool and collected as any soldiers she’d ever seen.

“The Reds had chosen a spot where the walkers were cut off from the two boats by a hundred yards of swamp,” she wrote of her last mission with the Sea Swallows. “Suddenly there came a lone rifle shot followed by a second’s pause. Then half a dozen rifles spoke at once.” Among them she heard the sound of an American M-1, distinguishable by its cannon cracker sound. Dickey threw herself flat on the bilge as the rounds of fire intensified. “But it was not a mere single shot we were hearing now... Our own counterattack party had opened up on the Reds with burst after burst from their automatic rifles.” The firefight lasted an hour until there “came the detonation of what I took to be a grenade and finally— deep, shocking silence.” The enemy dispersed.

The Sea Swallows gathered their wounded and began their long trek back to Tan Hung Tay where they found a banquet laid in their honor. Word had reached Father Hoa that a battalion of three hundred heavily armed Viet Cong had surrounded the patrol, but he could not determine the outcome of the battle. “If there are survivors, we will sate them,” he told the women and children as they laid out the meal. “If there are not, we will rededicate ourselves to avenging their sacrifices.”

Father Hoa invited Dickey to sit at the head of the table with him. “I demurred,” she wrote, “I said that was a place for a soldier.”

“Sit down,” intoned the priest.

After dishes of crab, sweet-and-sour pork, roast goose, and broiled shrimp, it became clear why Father Hoa had wanted her to sit next to him. In front of everyone, he asked her to stand, then pinned the insignia of the Sea Swallows on the muddied shoulder of her fatigues. When she realized what he was doing, it took all of her strength not to cry. She felt honored and unconditionally welcomed. In other words, at home.

On November 6, 1961, nearly a month after arriving, Dickey left by helicopter along with the three who had been wounded in the previous day’s attacks. She lingered a long time at the porthole, watching Binh Hung fade like an island in the sea of Viet Cong territory.

Back in Saigon, a cable waited for her at the Majestic Hotel.

PLEASE FORWARD THESE WORDS TO THE FIGHTER OF BINH HUNG NAMED DICKEY CHAPELLE. WE EXTEND OUR BEST WISHES FOR YOUR SUCCESS. AS WE ARE MOVING INTO A LARGE OPERATION WE HAVE INFORMED ALL OUR FIGHTING MEN OF YOUR DEPARTURE. THIS AFTERNOON TWO COMPANIES OF OUR ASSAULT GROUPS MET AND HAD A BATTLE WITH THE ENEMY. WE HAVE HEARD VERY HEAVY SOUNDS OF GUN-FIRE SO IT IS POSSIBLE THAT WE HAVE ENCOUNTERED THE ENEMY MAIN FORCE. IT IS SO HEAVY THAT WE ARE SENDING TWO MORE COMPANIES OF REINFORCEMENTS. WE HAVE NAMED THIS BATTLE THE CHAPELLE BATTLE. DUE TO LACK OF COMMUNICATION WE DO NOT YET KNOW THE RESULT.

In the end, the Sea Swallows won the day.

But for all the declarations of mutual respect and admiration, Dickey had arrived at, documented, and in some ways unwittingly abetted one of the darkest turns in the history of the Vietnam War. The first clue she failed to decipher were the Montagnards stationed at Tan Hung Tay. A moment's pause might have led her to question why and how these indigenous highland men had come to be in the heart of the Mekong River Delta. The answer, of course, was the CIA. As with the Hmong in Laos, the CIA recruited and trained guerrillas from Vietnam's polyglot of indigenous highland peoples only to abandon them to the communists when Saigon fell.

In coordination with the decidedly pro-Catholic and openly corrupt government of President Diêm, the CIA had also started organizing the many ethnic-Chinese Catholic parishes in the Mekong Delta into a clerical paramilitary program that formed an archipelago of anticommunist enclaves within the delta region. But this operation remained in its fledgling stage when Dickey was on patrol with the Sea Swallows.

However, even in their early stages, these operations were beginning to ramp up. On October 18, 1961, Dickey wrote a letter to Hobe Lewis at *Reader's Digest* that read, "I am not being disappointed in my stay here. These Asians are daily and literally fighting Reds; I have been on four operations with them so far... They are heavily though not well armed and organized as semi-regulars... They are improvising the military doctrine of the future—and so if they succeed, the whole free world will be richer for it."

Hobe then replied to her letter on October 23, writing, "With General Van Fleet and General Taylor both concerned with guerrilla warfare, I don't need to tell you how urgently we would like to see an article on the subject. I cannot direct you since you know so much more about the subject than I do, but I do hope that you will give this top priority." As to the generals he referenced, they could not have been more consequential to the Vietnam War. General James Van Fleet had been a gunner during World War I, a hero of D-Day during World War II, and a commanding general during the Korean War. President Kennedy had recently recalled him to serve as a consultant on guerrilla warfare. General Maxwell D. Taylor had been the commanding general of the 101st Airborne during World War II, had recently become chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and in 1963 would be appointed as ambassador to South Vietnam. Whether or not the military or the CIA gave direction to the *Reader's Digest* editorial board, they were clearly the magazine's primary audience.

Five days later, on October 28, 1961, Special Forces Major Donn Fendler was welcomed on the Binh Hung helicopter pad. His presence, though possibly unrelated to Dickey's exchange with Hobe, was far from coincidental. In 1938, at the age of twelve, Fendler became famous for surviving nine days in the mountains of Maine after being separated from his family. When President Roosevelt invited him to the White House and asked him what he wanted to do when he grew up, he answered without hesitation that he wanted to join the Navy. Six years later, at eighteen, he did just that and fought in the World War II Pacific Theater with distinction. After the war, he reenlisted with the Army and trained in the 101st Airborne Division. When he arrived in Binh Hung, it was in the capacity of a military advisor, most recently and most often to the CIA's Montagnards.



Chapelle and FLN Rebels—Dickey's familiarity with military training made her comfortable with soldiers the world over, and likewise, they with her. Here, she shares a cup of Turkish coffee with members of the FLN Scorpion Battalion. (Wisconsin Historical Society, Dickey Chapelle, 1957, Image ID:12158; Reprinted with the permission of the estate of Dickey Chapelle)

Dickey did not mention his presence in any of the articles she wrote and his name appeared only once in her journal. How long he stayed, she didn't note, but an addendum to her photo captions for *The New York Times* indicated he remained long enough to go on one or more combat missions. "Publication of this photograph without prior security review by US authorities," she wrote, "would be most embarrassing to the photographer. Unfortunately both the face and name of an American frequently on duty behind enemy lines are plain in the picture."

The backward gaze of history all too easily connects these occurrences into the causality of what happened next. In early January 1962, only weeks after Dickey helicoptered out, CIA director William Colby ordered the fourteen-man "A" detachment of the Special Forces into Binh Hung on an extended assignment. As in Laos, they organized the citizens to clear a landing strip large enough to land a twin-engine Caribou transport plane. By midsummer 1962, some fourteen hundred light and heavy weapons had been delivered and the combined American-Chinese Special Forces team approached two thousand soldiers. In the CIA's estimation, Binh Hung would serve as the nucleus of the Delta Pacification Program that in turn laid the groundwork for the expanded war that emerged in 1966 and 1967.

Though she witnessed most of these developments or was made aware of them by her contacts, Dickey failed to add these parts together into their grisly and inevitable sum. In this she was not alone. Indeed, most of her journalistic peers were content to keep quoting the Kennedy administration's line that insisted the conflict in Vietnam amounted only to petty skirmishes that Saigon-based, US-backed forces had under control.

As one of the few willing and able to spend weeks at a time embedded with armed forces; one of the only accredited to paratroop; and the only reporter who wore the wings of the Vietnamese airborne and 101st Airborne and the insignia of the Sea Swallows, Dickey had a unique and hard-won knowledge of the early days of war in Vietnam. But as a survivor of the physiological torture of solitary confinement who came out of prison only to live her life primarily in active war

zones, she only saw the walls closing in on her again as America's losses mounted in Southeast Asia. As such, she searched for the only way to win she knew: fighting.

Back in the States, the Marine Corps chief of staff, Lieutenant General Wallace Greene, asked for an in-person briefing and update to her original "An American's Primer of Guerrilla Warfare." Dickey pulled no punches.

She began by characterizing the recent neutralization of Laos—meaning neither the USSR nor the US could claim it as an ally—as dangerously naive, while categorizing the half measures to contain communism with Vietnam as categorically ineffectual. "In fact," she wrote, "in both countries the pursuit of both aims is now proceeding at a rate so slow as to suggest failure of attainment of any objective in the US interest."

The solution by her estimation was an increase in commitment, if not with the number of men, then the degree to which they stood with and beside their Asian allies. MAAG personnel should be deployed to the villages where counterinsurgency militias like the Sea Swallows or regulars in the Army of the Republic of Vietnam were daily engaging the Viet Cong. They should be expected to eat the same food, live in the same quarters, walk the same distances, and take the same risks as their Asian counterparts.

Having spent five months in the field with a myriad of Lao and Vietnamese troops as well as MAAG advisors, Dickey also knew the harm caused by the racist attitudes of Americans both on a policy and personal level. She'd gained substantial insight into the stereotypes that fed these attitudes, the logical fallacies behind them, and the fallout their perpetuation catalyzed.

Dickey addressed all these points head-on in the second appendix to her primer, entitled "An American Mythology* of Asian Defense." The explanatory note to the asterisk read: "I have with difficulty resisted the temptation to substitute a forward-area term such as 'hog-wash' for the word MYTHOLOGY." Anyone in any branch of the military would have understood that by "hogwash" she really meant "bullshit."

The first hogwash-myth she addressed was that Buddhism prevented Lao and Vietnamese recruits from becoming effective soldiers. This she dismissed handily, writing, "the Pathet Lao which inexorably advanced against the Royal Lao forces month after month was almost all composed of Lao apparently uninhibited by killing." The real difference, she argued, was their training, just like any other fighting force.

Dickey additionally spoke to the idea that historical animus and language barriers prevented White American military advisors from effectively training Southeast Asian troops. For the past five years Dickey had felt nothing but welcome and warmth from numerous guerrilla forces from Algeria to Cuba to Vietnam. As such, Dickey knew that this animus, when it existed, could be overcome if Americans would only submit to the idea of a universal meritocracy. As she wrote, "This is another BIG LIE serving communism. Why do we believe it? Because, I think, of our distaste for thinking of any American in a situation where he is not automatically accepted because of his mere nationality and the cash in his wallet as a symbol of omnipotence the way we like to think Americans should be—but must earn respect by personal merit before he gets it."

She further addressed the racist idea once famously espoused by General Westmoreland that "Asians just don't have the high regard for

the value of human life that we Americans feel." The US military often cited the "human waves" tactic employed by Chinese troops during the Korean War as proof of this prejudicial concept. But Dickey easily countered this logic, "It is western military practice as well as Asian to employ human waves in war; what else is the classic infantry charge?" Iwo Jima and D-Day would come to the minds of those reading her words. "The ultimate contemplated waste of human life—the use of the nuclear bomb—is a real factor in the security plans not of Asia but of two non-Asian powers, Russia and the US."

Drawing from her own experience in Fö Street Prison when she ceased to care about her own mortality, Dickey wrote, "I have never seen any evidence that the skin color or continental origins of anyone affects his respect for life. Scientifically, only pain (of exhaustion, injury, disease, hunger, disappointment) can reduce that instinctive respect."

Realizing the full weight of this dangerous attitude, Dickey concluded her point with a personal experience worth quoting at length.

I have been in the presence of death among Asians very often. I have never known their reactions to be very different from my own if there was hope we could save a life; under that condition they eagerly did everything humanly possible just as Americans would. But there was a difference when it was clearly hopeless to try to save life. Then their reaction was to far better control the bitterness we all felt than I was able to do.

Once I remember there were tears in my eyes only as we loaded the body of a man who had just died fighting among us onto a helicopter. Later, the Asian sergeant told me:

"We liked you for crying. We think to show tears is unmanly. But you are a woman and we were glad you were there to cry for all of us."

In so many words, Dickey once again told the US Marine Corps to soldier up to the level of those they dared deride at the risk of losing their own life and liberty.

The military establishment listened to her on a great many topics, incorporating a number of her suggestions, such as stationing MAAG personnel in the field and maintaining constant contact with their Vietnamese counterparts. Undoubtedly, others made these same points. But it was a small chorus and Dickey had the voice of a drill instructor. In the coming months and years, Dickey would give numerous briefings to top brass at the Army, Navy, and Marines. She gave lectures to new recruits on the basics and specifics of guerrilla warfare. The Marines included her writing in their counterinsurgency manual. Her photographs were often used in briefings for President Kennedy and Defense Secretary Robert McNamara. After her presentation on "An American's Primer of Guerrilla Warfare," General Greene wrote her to say, "I think that you are a good Marine."

But they did not listen to her in any discernible way when it came to creating a culture of racial equality within their ranks.

In truth, by the time Dickey had seen what she had seen and said what she had said, America's racial bias had been so interwoven into its war plans that one voice could not have made a substantial difference. Instead, the opposite occurred.



Dickey Chapelle in Vietnam—Though the Geneva Conventions prohibited journalists from carrying firearms, the realities of the Vietnam War required that they be able to defend themselves—as well as help the battalions they were embedded with—if the need arose. Here, Dickey is pictured carrying a semi-automatic rifle while embedded on the Vietnam-Cambodia border with the South Vietnamese Marines. (Wisconsin Historical Society, Dickey Chapelle, 1964, Image ID:1943; Reprinted with the permission of the estate of Dickey Chapelle)

On the same visit to Washington, DC, during which she briefed the Marine Corps, Dickey was recruited by the Human Ecology Fund. Outwardly, the fund invested millions in anthropological, psychological, and sociological research on a myriad of subjects largely pertaining to human behavior. Headquartered at the Cornell University College of Human Ecology, the fund ran satellite programs at twenty separate institutions, including George Washington University, where Dickey signed a contract for “\$50 dollars a day and travel expenses” for work on unspecified “research problems in areas of your competence.”

Only two clues remain as to the nature of her work: a pamphlet advertising her lecture on methods of resisting communist attempts at brainwashing, given at a Human Ecology Fund conference; and a letter indicating she submitted a treatise on the importance of supporting a free press within a democratic society. In both cases, Dickey seems to have assumed her work would be used to expand and protect the constellation of rights enshrined in the US Constitution and Bill of Rights while informing the evolving field of international law with the ultimate goal of expanding the borders of the free world. Indeed, the

vast majority of those who received grants and contracts assumed similarly benign, if more banal, motives behind the fund since they were given no reason to suspect otherwise.

In reality, the Human Ecology Fund was a front for the research and development of MK-Ultra, a CIA-led interrogation enhancement program that used psychotropic drugs, electroshock, and psychological torture to illicit confessions from detainees across multiple conflicts during the Cold War. None of the researchers that received Human Ecology Fund grants or contracts, Dickey included, were told that their research would be used for these gruesome purposes. Nor would any have cause to suspect these covert and criminal intentions with Cornell University as a front. Not until an investigative report by *The New York Times* in 1977 was the scope and scale of the Human Ecology Fund revealed even in part. But by then the CIA had purposely shredded the majority of the paperwork pertaining to the development of MK-Ultra through the fund, forever concealing the extent of this program.

Washington had turned America down a dark road that Dickey would follow as far as she could. ❖

Jennifer Casolo — the Mata Hari of San Salvador

By Greg Walker (ret)
USA Special Forces

“The military had picked up Jennifer Casolo, a 28-year-old American woman accused of being responsible for funneling several million dollars to the guerrillas. They called the base and wanted me to come over to the national police headquarters. They didn’t want the [U.S.] embassy in on this. [Paul] Fanshaw and I, along with seven Salvadoran officers, drove over in the middle of the night. The police had her locked up in a room and they wanted me to read the documents they had gotten from her a few hours earlier. I read them until 0500, and realizing their importance, made copies and kept them for myself.” – Captain Harry Clafin, Senior U.S. adviser, Airborne Battalion (ESAF) / USMC Force Recon

“Asked about the guilt of U.S. citizen Jennifer Casolo, who was released by a judge “because of lack of evidence,” the high-ranking military officer [Colonel Ponce] said the Armed Forces [was] simply following orders issued by civilian authorities. “During the investigations conducted to determine the guilt or innocence of Casolo, the National Police gathered all of the evidence and sent it to the court, which afterward ordered the release of Casolo,” Ponce added. – FBIS Concatenated Daily Reports, 1990, Document 12 of 45

“Senator [Edward M.] Kennedy threatened to cut off aid to El Salvador if Casolo wasn’t set free. So, she was released back to the United States. One of his aides picked her up in a private aircraft [Kenney’s].” – Captain Harry Clafin, “El Salvador: The Push to Victory”, SOF, August 12, 2021

“Interview with a captured ERP urban commando, March 1990, who clearly identified the [American] woman as being a member of the logistics command group of the ERP urban commandos [Jennifer Casolo].” – “Guerrilla Logistics/Support/Sanctuary”, Strategy and Tactics of the Salvadoran FMLN Guerillas, Jose Angel Moroni Bracamonte and David E. Spencer



“The accusations are totally false. We are innocent and we believe the truth will come out...And it doesn’t matter if the truth doesn’t come out because we ourselves know that we are innocent.” – Jennifer Jean Casolo, Tropic Times, Dec. 6, 1989

Just a young woman from Thomaston, Conn.

Well educated, an idealist, and raised in the Catholic faith Jennifer Casolo traveled to El Salvador as a representative of a Texas-based religious organization. Christian Education Seminars, opposed U.S. military aid to El Salvador. In her role Casolo arranged tours for U.S. lawmakers, religious leaders and activists, and fellow Americans who she felt could become



Jennifer Casolo (right) took responsibility for documents found in the living area of her rented house in San Salvador during the FMLN 1989 final offensive. Standing in her backyard area she refused to accept responsibility for the assault rifles, munitions, explosives, and grenades recovered by GOV troops. Jose Federico Vasquez Hernandez (left) was later identified as an ERP urban guerilla, was also her boyfriend. (Raid video, CEAT)

important influencers and allies. According to the Latin America Data Base, Casolo was a summa cum laude of Brandeis University (Class of 1983) who was an adept translator and accomplished guide in El Salvador. Attractive, upbeat, and easy to have a good relationship with Casolo developed relationships and contacts with politicians on both the Right and Left. She routinely met with Salvadoran peasant groups and senior officers with the Salvadoran military. Staff members with Christian Educational Seminars described Casolo as “a touch naïve” and “idealistic but not ideological”. She was welcomed at the U.S. embassy in San Salvador and soon became both well-liked and trusted.

However, her idealism was soon worn down and then out as both time and the war continued unabated. Journalist Tom Bates (Soldier of Fortune magazine) wrote an in-depth article in the publication’s May 1990 issue (“Church Merc Unmasked”) offering in part after reading Casolo’s diary entries and personal correspondence as seized during the raid on her home. “...one sees the thoughts of a young woman caught on the horns of a dilemma – whether to uphold the conventional norms of behavior dictated by her religious upbringing or to take, in her words, a more ‘radical’ approach in trying to combat what she sees as rampant social injustice in El Salvador...After living in El Salvador for several years her thinking, as expressed in her personal documents, became more polarized, her activism more militant...she makes no secret of her strong opposition to U.S. foreign policy in the region, and of her sympathies with the FMLN, who, she writes, ‘represent the poor...the millions of silenced cries of oppression and screams of repression.’”

It was this trajectory that soon saw her adopt the role of a female revolutionary. Again, from her own writings – Defining the term “radical” Casolo offered a radical is “one who wants to see the revolution triumph”. Going further, “...my thoughts are too radical...my fundamental responses would touch our lifestyles, our values...my last 1 ½ years has taught me the value of risk taking...it is time to take a stand...please be selective about repeating anything I write.”



Contrary to her post arrest comments Casolo, as evidenced in the C.E.A.T. video made of the raid, was clearly composed and articulate in both English and Spanish during the raid. At one point she states, “My mother doesn’t even know where El Salvador is!” (Raid video, CEAT)

Casolo likewise shared her newfound revolutionary identity with “Larry”, with whom she’d had a close relationship back home in Connecticut. It had become more and more difficult for the young woman to visit her friends and family back in the United States. Harder to reconcile both her privileged upbringing and education with the stark contrast of her life living and working in El Salvador. Her writings reflect this dilemma. Most of all she’d come to hate putting on the public face those back home were familiar and comfortable with when in fact her views and actions back in El Salvador were just the opposite.

“I had not trusted those of you whom I love; to listen to me and still accept me if not my ideas. On on the political/spiritual level, I had revealed to myself how little I was really willing to risk. I have vowed to myself to make every effort next time I’m home to be true to myself and to the people here...to take a risk.” – Jennifer Casolo, Letter to “Larry”, San Salvador, El Salvador

Another aspect of Casolo never revealed in full was her money raising role for the FMLN.

She raised millions during her four years in El Salvador, and continued to in the states after Senator Ted Kennedy strong-armed her release. El Salvador was the first armed conflict in our hemisphere to see a sophisticated and efficient war chest funded for the guerrillas in the US. It became the model for such ventures and continues to this day on behalf of many “bad actors” causes and states to include fund raising and “humanitarian aid” for Gaza.

Going to war with the ERP (Ejercito Revolucionario Del Pueblo) in 1989

“On November 11, 1989, nearly 3000 guerrillas from the ERP, FPL, FAL, RN and PRTC (the five armies under the banner of the Marxist-inspired FMLN) launched an all-out assault on El Salvador’s capitol city, San Salvador. The offensive, planned and prepared for months

in advance, to include well stocked caches of weapons, explosives, munitions, and rocket launchers to include American made LAW rockets. Urban logistics coordinators from the ERP, in specific, obtained safe houses in which to place the caches and to provide respite from the fighting for the guerrillas. On November 26, 1989, five such safe houses were raided by the Salvadoran National Police.”

Joaquin Villalobos—ERP’s main leader and founder was Joaquin Villalobos. Villalobos’s role in the ERP was as a military strategist and playing a crucial role in negotiations during the end the civil war.

Rafael Arce Zablah (Alvarez)—Zablah was another ERP leader and key activist who gathered support from local Catholic priests . These communities became an important part of the war by serving as a base for the ERP. The ERP wanted to be the center of the El Salvadoran revolution while gaining support from the discontented and to cause a violent uprising or insurrection by performing military attacks. The campesinos were one of the ERP’s main support groups, along with the Catholic Church.

Prior to the November 11, 1989, offensive, the ERP was on the defensive carrying out the attrition strategy they had adopted in 1986. The organization had gone from their Rafael Arce Zablah Brigade (BRAZ) with its two battalions in the east, one in Morazan/San Miguel and the other in Usulután/La Unión to a more distributed organization based on platoons and squads.

They could concentrate on occasional attacks based on the principle of coming together for an operation and then immediately dispersing back to their squad and platoon formations, something they called “concentration and deconcentration.”

Negotiations had been concluded in 1987 or 1988 for a large shipment of new Soviet-Bloc weapons to replace the worn-out Western made weapons from Viet Nam and other Marxist nations which had previously been supplied by the west. The ERP was slowly introducing



Jennifer Casolo’s van was found parked outside her house the night of the raid. “Tico”, a former ERP urban guerrilla who, along with Casolo, conducted soft recons of selected targets such as the Sheraton Hotel complex, and pre-positioned weapons and munitions for ERP fighters throughout the city, identified Casolo as an ERP logistician after his capture in 1990. Becoming a police officer after the war he is now in exile in North America due to the political oppression in today’s El Salvador. (Raid video, CEAT)



The Salvadoran National Police recorded the raid on Jennifer Casolo’s house. U.S. embassy officials under pressure from the U.S. State Department and Senator Ted Kennedy attempted to seize Casolo’s personal papers and photos as found in the weapons cache and recorded in the video taken by C.E.A.T. Unknown to Casolo at the time of the raid, one of those present and masked was a CIA paramilitary who witnessed the entire operation. Whenever Casolo would ask him, “Are you an American?” he would reply, “Nyet!” (Author collection)

these onto the battlefield under the lie that they had been sold by the Contras to FMLN, after the US Congress had cut off their funding. A large number were also being shipped in and stored for the upcoming offensive. These mostly came in semi-trucks, packed in secret compartments in Nicaragua that would drive through Honduras and then into El Salvador. Only a very small circle of highly trusted members of the ERP high command knew anything about these shipments and they were not yet distributed to the troops.

The ERP was also pushing to establish a significant presence in the main cities. The ERP now sought to establish numerous urban commando cells. These were formed and began to carry out low level operations in the San Salvador area. This effort coincided with the revival of mass organizations that in the new more democratic environment, fostered by the United States, began to carry out numerous social protests in the capital area. The ERP strengthened its presence on the slopes of Guazapa volcano and San Salvador volcano to administer this growing urban commando/social protest presence. The command structure for the 1989 offensive was in this region. The ERP did not revive their guerrilla units in western El Salvador, but rather established logistical hubs there where aid and logistics came in from the United States, Mexico and Guatemala. Pro-ERP college students in the United States, particularly in California would buy used vehicles and build secret compartments which they would fill with military caliber ammunition that was freely available on the US market. These vehicles would travel through Mexico along routes where the Mexican officials were either sympathetic to the

cause, or paid off. Once they arrived in El Salvador and their cargos were removed, these vehicles could either be incorporated in the war fronts or sold on the thriving used car market in El Salvador.

In the United States, the ERP also carried out significant fund-raising activity through NGOs such as the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES). Donors were told their money was going to support war refugees, but most of these donations were handed directly to the guerrillas. Jennifer Casolo was tied to and involved with CISPES during her efforts on behalf of the FMLN and ERP in El Salvador.

While most of the major weapons, ammunition, explosives, and other supplies came to the ERP from the Eastern Bloc and Cuba via Nicaragua, this did not include a lot of cash, so these donations were important and Jennifer Casolo became an expert fund raiser for the FMLN/ERP. Starting in late 1988, the ERP began to create the infrastructure they would need to participate in the 1989 offensive. They developed a series of routes into the capital both south from Guazapa and the San Salvador volcano as well from the east, into the Zacatecoluca area and up through the foothills from the south. Trails were blazed, camps were built and weapons and ammunition were pre-positioned. A large number of safehouses were acquired in San Salvador to include Casolo's rented home and arms caches deposited there as well. Some lesser cities also received a similar treatment like San Miguel. The plan was to invade the periphery of the capital, fortify their positions to force the government to attack them, provoke the uprising, arm the people and with luck either take power or come to a stalemate that would force the government to negotiate.

“Among Casolo's papers were a series of love letters and maybe journal entries. She was totally in love with this guy who was clearly a guerrilla. I got some stuff, but I was mostly interested in her activities in support of the FMLN, rather than her personal romantic life.” – U.S. intelligence analyst to author, January 11, 2024

Casolo had developed a relationship with a young man who was a guerrilla—he was killed in a firefight with government forces and she is described as having had a tough time once she learned of his death. So distraught was the young woman that she nearly left El Salvador—but the FMLN / ERP who were her handlers convinced her to stay. They set her up with a new boyfriend as part of their effort. Her fund raising by deception soliciting money for food, clothing, shoes, and so on from stateside churches and NGOs but turning the donations over to the FMLN appears to be one very good reason the FMLN wanted her released / deported. Seen as a victim and not an ERP combatant Casolo could still be a productive voice in the United States. Also, the FMLN demanded the documents seized to include her bookkeeping records be returned to her. The U.S. embassy in San Salvador



The ERP pressured the Sandinistas to provide them MANPADS (shoulder fired missiles), but they refused because they feared that it would be used as an excuse by the United States to launch an invasion. Here, Salvadoran troops hold surface to air missiles found in the wreckage of a small plane piloted by a Sandinista pilot (killed in the crash) in 1989. All the weapons and munitions recovered were traced back to Nicaragua which was the major supply hub for the FMLN during the war – Author collection



Salvadoran soldiers discovered carefully constructed cache locations in Casolo's backyard. Beneath wood planking were found steel and blue plastic barrels filled with weapons and munitions. Casolo, in her role as an ERP logistician, was deduced to have allowed urban guerrillas access to her home. (Raid video, CEAT)

likewise received intense pressure from the U.S. State Department to secure the documents and the video, much of this emanating from Senator Kennedy's staff. The material if made public would have been a disaster for her as well as a huge victory for the Salvadoran government in terms of favorable propaganda/press. In addition, Casolo's true role would have undermined Kennedy's years long

effort to see military aid to El Salvador stopped and his proposition that a negotiated settlement between the FMLN and the Salvadoran government take place.

“Face Off” with Ted Kennedy 1990 — <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/emksen-au0008-014-012>

Note: Sound recording of the radio program “Face Off.” Senator Edward M. “Ted” Kennedy of Massachusetts and Senator Alan K. “Al” Simpson of Wyoming debate whether the United States should stop providing military aid to the government of El Salvador. The episode aired on Monday, February 19, 1990, on the Mutual Broadcasting System.

“She was a real piece of work.”

“I went to the police station and read all the material that was taken and talked to Jennifer for a short time while she was in custody. All she wanted to do is get put in the American embassy and out of Police hands. After the Embassy figured out they could not keep her arrest covered up they had a display put out for the news media. I had met Jennifer several times on different bases. I still think she was running recon for the FMLN as to how many troops were out on weekends by passing out flyers and showing



Harry Claflin is a USMC (Force Recon) veteran. Claflin, commissioned as a captain in the Salvadoran military, spent nine years in-country as a U.S. military adviser with its most elite units. Claflin recalls seeing Jennifer Casolo as she was boarding Senator Ted Kennedy’s private jet. “She saw me and flipped me the bird,” he recalls. “She was a real piece of work.”

TV stories on God. By passing out flyers she could have a pretty good count of who was out on patrols and how many were left on base. By wearing a face mask and talking to her in very broken Spanish she never figured out who I was. What happened at El Paraiso can be laid on her. She should have been charged with helping the FMLN set up the camp for attack. I will always blame this tragedy on her...when I talked with her at the national police station she knew she was fucked.” – Harry Claflin, U.S. adviser ESAF Airborne Battalion / USMC Force Recon

The first American combat adviser killed in combat

Relatives of SSG Gregory A. Fronius, a 28-year-old Green Beret sergeant, were told he was slain during a guerrilla attack on the Salvadoran brigade’s headquarters at El Paraiso. They were informed Fronius had died in his barracks while asleep when a mortar shell struck. In fact, Fronius had bolted from the barracks to rally Salvadoran soldiers for a counterattack. Fronius, fighting alone from an elevated position, bought time for Salvadoran officers to secure the command bunker when several guerrilla sappers (trained by the North Vietnamese in Nicaragua) shot him multiple times. Fronius, slipping down a stairwell into the courtyard below, was mortally wounded, as his autopsy report was obtained years later in a FOIA request of the Army showed. Upon reaching his body the guerrillas realized he was still breathing. Enraged to find an American adviser had thwarted their plans to attack the bunker, they placed a shape charge beneath his body and detonated it.

Upon returning from San Salvador, his team leader, Major Gus Taylor, helped collect the young Green Beret’s remains. “We recovered about 17 pounds of Greg,” he told this author over the course of several interviews. The rest was scattered...we had to pick pieces of him out of the overhead trees.”

Taylor and another member of his mobile training team would set out with selected Salvadoran snipers from the base after he had met with the then U.S. MILGRP commander. For 30 days the men hunted down and shot any guerrilla or guerrillas they encountered. Taylor, deeply affected by the loss of Fronius, would later provide crucial photographs and information to the Veterans of Special



SFC Greg Fronius received a posthumous Silver Star for his courageous actions during an FMLN attack on the 4th Brigade base at El Paraiso. Severely wounded, guerrilla sappers placed an explosive charge beneath his body and then detonated it. Jennifer Casolo visited 4th BDE prior to the attack and some attribute Fronius’ death to her intelligence gathering effort on behalf of the guerrillas.

Operations – El Salvador while they were being interviewed by CBS’s Ed Bradley in 1995. Greg’s brother, Stephen, was also interviewed. He also met privately with Taylor.

In June 1998, at the largest awards and decorations ceremony held by the 7th Special Forces Group (A) at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, SFC Fronius’ 12-year-old son stepped forward to receive his father’s posthumous — and initially denied by the Army — Silver Star. He was the first American combat adviser to be killed in combat in El Salvador.

Read Gus Taylor’s account of Gus Fronius’ death on page 18.

“Guardian of weapons”

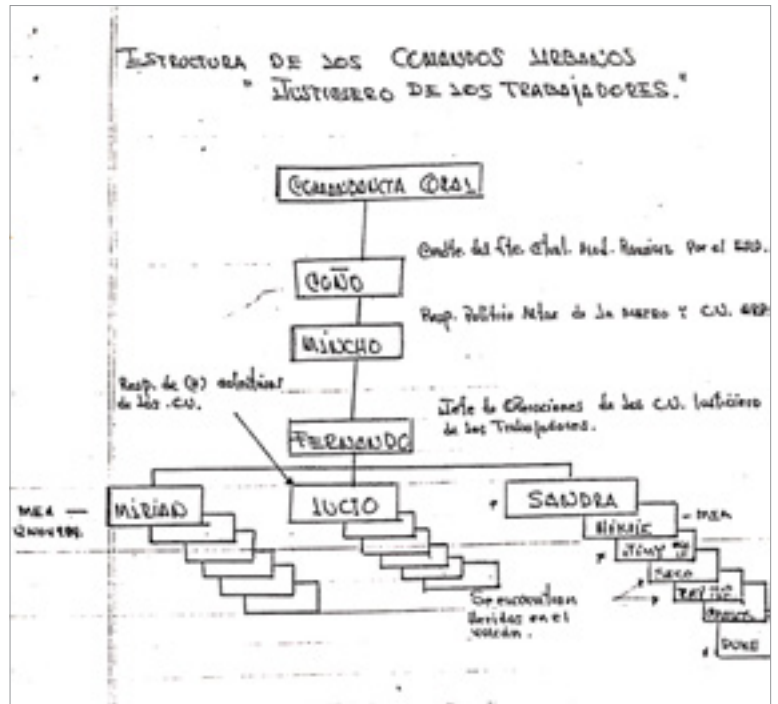
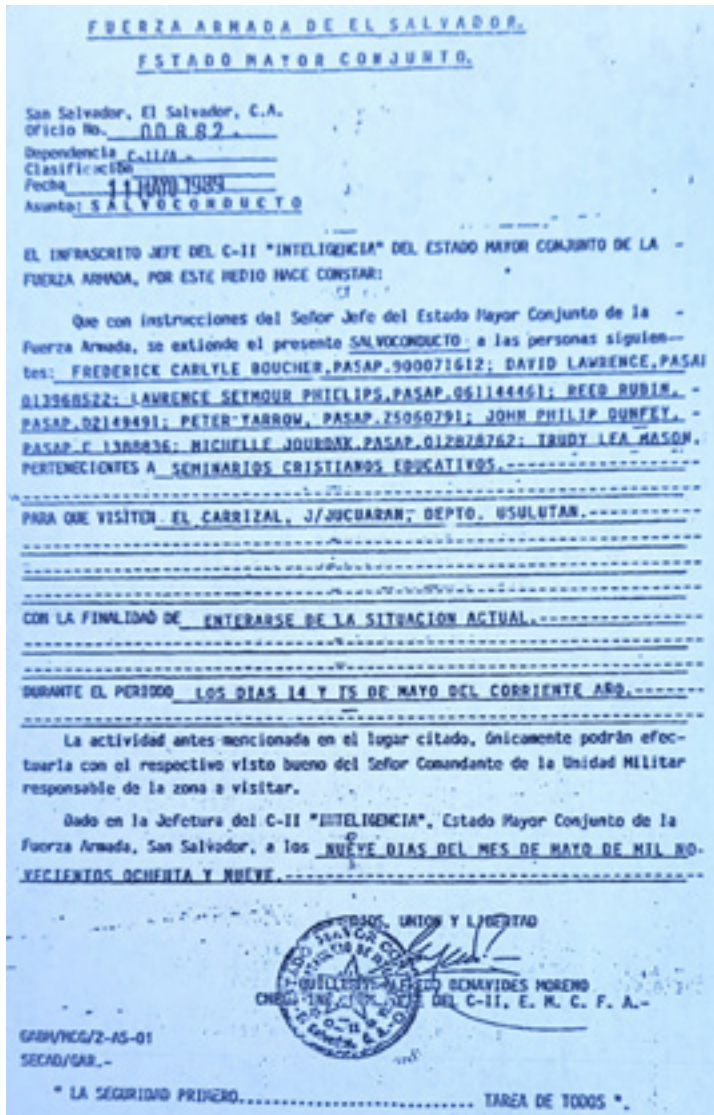
“In a sign of that pique, Colonel Ponce said on Thursday that he would advise against releasing and expelling Ms. Casolo if she is convicted. In a previous interview, he had indicated a willingness to release her.” — “Salvador Says Rebel Now Ties American to Arms”, New York Times, December 9, 1989

Several weeks before Casolo was arrested a female ERP guerrilla, “Sandra”, was taken into custody. Her 33-page statement to Salvadoran police included specific names of those her urban guerrilla cell was working with in San Salvador. Sandra was specific. Casolo was

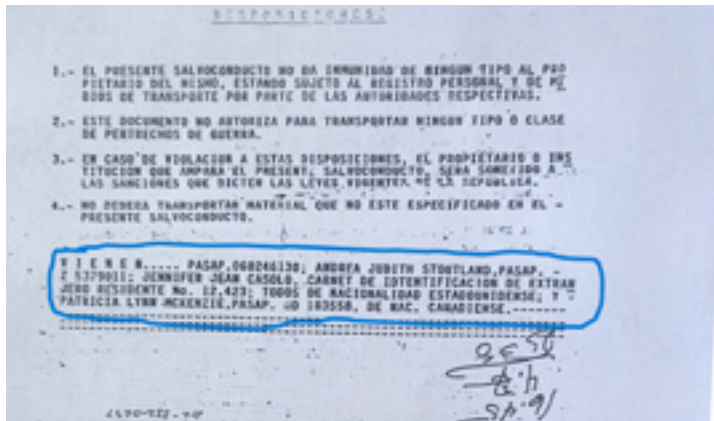
described as the “guardian of weapons” for the ERP. Because the young church worker had cultivated a very cozy relationship with Colonel Rene Ponce, whose position with the Salvadoran military authorized him to issue travel passes to trusted individuals. Among Casolo’s papers were several such passes. One such pass allowed Casolo to travel to Jucuaran in the department of La Union. Jucuaran was a known stronghold for the ERP where weapons and munitions from Nicaragua were received and stored.

“Tico”, a significant leader in the ERP, shared with a U.S. intelligence analyst years later that he was responsible for bringing weapons for the 1989 offensive into San Salvador from the arsenals in Jucuaran. To do so Casolo would obtain a travel pass to the town from Colonel Ponce who believed she needed it to take a group of church and NGO representatives there. In reality, that was a cover story to go to Jucuaran with Tico, link up with her ERP logistician counterpart, and then bring the weapons back to San Salvador in her van to be then pre-positioned for the coming fight. According to Tico her home was a central distribution hub from which weapons would then be distributed to other ERP units in the city as well as their safe houses.

“Sandra”, another ERP guerrilla, drew a wire diagram of her cell’s Command & Control structure after she was arrested. Her cell was one of those Casolo stored and then distributed weapons and munitions to.



Above, “Sandra”, captured several weeks before Jennifer Casolo was arrested, produced this diagram of the ERP command structure to include naming herself and those in her cell. She identified Casolo as being the “guardian of weapons” for the ERP in San Salvador. (Author collection)



At left, Casolo’s safe passage pass (front and back sides) issued in May 1989 for the claimed purpose of Christian education seminars. “...the FPL and ERP, organizations with the greatest number of people, resources, and experience, had warehouse size caches located at strategic points such as El Tigre Hill, Usulután and Jacuaran, La Union. These were used by the ERP.” – Strategy and Tactics of the Salvadoran FMLN Guerrillas, Bracamonte / Spencer, 1995

11.- RUTH ESPERANZA AGUILAR MARROQUIN. (s) "MARINA ó "SANDRA", fue capturada el día 09/01/1989 por elementos de esta misma Institución, en momentos que juntamente con otro individuo hufa después de haber colocado un artefacto explosivo al motor de un bus de la ruta 42 en esta ciudad capital. -- Esta manifestó en su declaración, que es miembro activo de la agrupación terrorista EJERCITO REVOLUCIONARIO DEL PUEBLO (ERP) y que la encargada de los aspectos logísticos del Comando Justiciero de los Trabajadores, era la norteamericana JENNIFER JEAN CASOLO, quien pertenece también al ERP y que era en el interior de la Universidad Nacional donde la norteamericana contactaba con los demás miembros de la organización; asimismo manifiesta que la Casolo se encargaba más que todo en el alojamiento y traslado de armamento y pertrechos bélicos; que en varias ocasiones llegó a recoger armas a la casa de JENNIFER, ubicada en la Colonia Miravalle de esta misma ciudad.

"Sandra" was actually captured several weeks before Casolo was arrested. She would identify the American woman as the ERP's weapons logistician in San Salvador and provide a detailed organizational diagram of the ERP to include her cell. "Sandra", or Ruth Esperanza Aguilar Marroquin, her real name, confirmed she'd picked up weapons for the offensive from Casolo at her home in San Salvador.

Recovered from atop one of the sealed blue plastic barrels from her weapons cache were documents from her wallet/purse, her U.S. passport, copies of her safe conduct passes, and more. Summaries from ten other ERP guerrillas likewise confirmed her as transporting and storing / distributing weapons for the offensive.

Casolo was looking 30 years in a Salvadoran prison and she knew it. Her only hope was to appeal to her family and friends in the United States to exploit her American citizen privilege in escaping Salvadoran justice. "She knew people in high places in El Salvador and in the U.S.," recalls Harry Claflin. "She grew up next to the Kennedys in Massachusetts and used her influence to get what she wanted. Kennedy sent a plane down to get her. I was at Ilopango when they came down to get her. Kennedy told the Salvadoran government if they did not let her go he was going to cut all aid to the country."

Where Casolo, after several weeks in a women's' prison at the Ilopango military airport, skated free and went home to continue her claims of innocence, those others captured were not so fortunate. Had Casolo walked her talk and stayed to stand trial in El Salvador it is as likely as not that Kennedy would have kept his word. Had that been the case there is no telling how much longer the war would have continued...and who might have triumphed in the end.

Targeting American Special Forces

"On November 11, 1989, twenty armed guerrillas stormed the Sheraton Hotel in downtown San Salvador and held more than 100 people hostage, including several U.S. Green Berets in the city to do a training mission and Secretary General of the Organization of American States, Joao Baena Soares. Release of the hostages was negotiated by the government, the Roman Catholic Church, the Salvadoran Red Cross and the FMLN. Several days later the violence continued with the killing of Padre Ellacuria and several other Jesuits at the Central American University." – El Salvador, the Sheraton Hotel Siege and the Jesuit Murders – November 1989, ADST

As the 1989 final offensive began it was clear Jennifer Casolo was "all in", as one U.S. intelligence analyst describes her. She'd used her position as a peaceful church lay worker to garner millions of dollars in donations for the FMLN and was considered a significant and influ-



"In 1988, the FMLN decided to completely change and update its arsenal...By 1989, this included AK-47 rifles, Dragunov sniper rifles, RPK and PKM machine guns, RPG-18 and RPG-7 individual anti-tank weapons...". The Casolo cache included AK-47s, thousands of rounds of ammunition, hand-grenades, and plastic explosives / detonators. (Strategy and Tactics of the Salvadoran FMLN Guerrillas, Bracamonte / Spencer, 1995)

ential proponent for non-violence. In her role as the ERP's weapons logistician in San Salvador her impressive salesmanship within the U.S. embassy and Salvadoran High Command had provided her with invaluable credentials and safe passage passes, both which she used to move guerrillas, weapons, munitions, and more from the outlying guerrilla base camps and caches into San Salvador. Her intelligence gathering missions to the various Salvadoran bases, under the guise of Christian education, provided the FMLN with critical information about manpower, the layouts of each base, and the morale of the troops. In 1987, one such recon resulted in the combat-related death of an American "Green Beret", SFC Greg Fronius.

The Sheraton Hotel complex had long housed VIP and U.S. military personnel. It had also been the site of past killings. In 1989, security around the hotel was tight. But with her safe conduct pass and a familiar face at the Sheraton (Casolo stayed there for when she felt unsafe) she had no problem when "Tico" accompanied her to recon what was an ERP target for the offensive.

The North Tower was where most in-country Special Forces advisors stayed when in the city and this, too, was well known. The attack on the Sheraton included either capturing or killing any U.S. advisor who may have been staying there and in this case there were several. Barricaded and well-armed the Green Berets held out until the guerrillas were forced to depart.

Casolo had long since crossed the line when it came to putting her fellow countrymen and women in Harm's Way. She'd lost the zeal she'd originally brought to El Salvador as a church worker; she'd lost faith in her government due to its ongoing and increasing support of the war effort; she'd lost faith in the Salvadoran government and its military to ever cease its abuses; she'd lost a lover and her new boyfriend, also a guerrilla, was facing the same fate. In addition, the young ERP logistician had made many close friends among the ERP

and FPL. This included Maria Serrano (FPL) who had lost a daughter to the Army's brutality and was fighting in the mountains. Casolo, again using a safe passage pass, had visited Serrano at her base camp and introduced her to visitors she'd brought with her.

American embassy guards, aviators and crew members, a Navy SEAL and a "Green Beret" had already been targeted and killed by the FMLN. For Casolo, they were not supposed to be there doing what they were anyway. She was no longer "Jennifer from America". She was an ERP fighter and a superb organizer, coordinator, fund raiser, and intelligence gatherer. There could be no victory without risk and she was willing to risk it all in 1989.

"She and a former guerrilla friend of mine who later demobilized and became a policeman drove around prior to the offensive reconnoitering objectives and pre-positioning weapons. They were using her van and access as cover. She was all in, no doubt," recalls the U.S. intelligence analyst who has studied the Casolo case.

The Raid



On November 26, 1989, the National Police conducted a six-hour search of Jennifer Casolo's home in San Salvador. "Somebody hates me or somebody is trying to frame me," she told police. Casolo (right) was arrested along with Maria Guadalupe Castro Torres who she offered was simply visiting. Guadalupe was from Guazapa. War materials seized from her garden included 103 60mm mortar rounds, 405 detonators, 213 blocks of TNT, 150 feet of slow-burning fuse, 3 crates of AK-47 rifles, 12,510 rounds of AK-47 ammo, 9,110 rounds of M-16 ammo, and 325 rounds of G-3 ammo. In addition, there were hand grenades and instructional materials. (Raid video, CEAT)

Admit nothing, Deny everything, Make counter accusations

"In Peru, [Lori] Berenson met members of the Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA), a group accused of committing terrorist attacks in Peru including kidnapping, bank robberies, extortion, hostage taking, and assassinations. Berenson initially denied knowing that they were MRTA members. After acknowledging that her associates were members she maintained that she did not know the group was planning to conduct an attack on Peru's Congress or planning any other act of violence." – https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lori_Berenson

"Ana Montes was US Intelligence's 'Queen of Cuba'. The Defense Intelligence Agency's leading Central America analyst; go-to voice on Cuban intentions and capabilities; eldest daughter of a family dedicated to US Government service. She was also a Cuban spy her entire professional life, until arrested 10 days after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Now, after almost 21 years in prison, Montes resides in Puerto Rico, an unrepentant critic of US policy towards Cuba." – <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/last-of-the-true-believers-or-harbinger-ana-montes-and-the-future-of-espionage-against-the-west/>

Lori Berenson, an American, joined CISPES and was active in support of the FMLN before becoming involved with MRTA in Peru. For her crimes there as a terrorist she was sentenced to 20 years in prison. Ana Montes, an American, would serve a similar sentence in a U.S. prison for her role as a spy for Cuban Intelligence. Neither had the political leverage back home that Jennifer Casolo benefited from. Her several weeks in a Salvadoran women's prison, constantly monitored by the U.S. embassy on behalf of Senators Chris Dodd and Ted Kennedy, pale in comparison to what Berenson and Montes experienced upon arrest, conviction, and sentencing.

Visit <https://www.specialforces78.com/jennifer-casolo-statement-to-salvadoran-national-police/> to read the handwritten statement Jennifer Casolo provided to the National Police after her arrest. Never before published the statement, signed by Casolo, was an effort to claim her innocence of all charges. Unfortunately for her, a senior Salvadoran officer sent the majority of what was recovered from her living area and backyard to the United States in a diplomatic pouch. Once opened and read the material was a treasure trove of information, donor lists, and hard intelligence the Salvadoran and U.S. intelligence analysts put to good use.

—Greg Walker, author

SECCION DE IDENTIFICACION DE LA POLICIA NACIONAL

Apellidos y nombres Jennifer Casolo Torres

Tipo Mujer

Servicio de Trama Conducta para Adm. Color Luzca

Tarjeta Clasificada por Adm. Celos Cubini

Archivada por SS 78 Malaya Sexo Mujer

Fecha 10-3-61

Nombre Jennifer Casolo Torres

Nació en San Salvador El Salvador

Fecha Civil 10-3-61

Profesión Activista

Domicilio Carretera Interamericana San Salvador

OTRO CON EL QUE SE IDENTIFICA

Upon her arrest Casolo was fingerprinted and her mug shot taken by the National Police. (CEAT)

Casolo returned home and began a 9-city public relations tour. Her celebrity and cover story of being persecuted for merely promoting church activities received national attention and raised yet more funds for the FMLN.

During this tour, Casolo gave this 52-minute radio interview with Studs Terkel. It offers a rare insight into her thought processes and motivations—and is insightful as to her conversion to Marxism and her ultimate role as an ERP urban guerrilla organizer and logistician. – <https://studsterkel.wfmt.com/programs/discussing-life-el-salvador-development-worker-jennifer-casolo>.

Today Jennifer Casolo “is a geographer based in the Maya Ch’orti territory (Guatemala-Honduran borderlands). Working in and/or on Central America since 1985, she is serving presently as Rector of the Ch’orti- Maya Pluriversity, a post-doctoral researcher with the Institute of Development Policy with the University of Antwerp, an associate researcher with Nittlapan Institute, Central American University, Managua, Nicaragua.” – <https://www.resilience.org/resilience-author/jennifer-j-casolo/>

“There were a lot of them and almost all women. Lori Berenson who ended up in jail in Peru for helping the MRTA was helping the FPL at the end of the war. All of these young ladies were radicalized by East Coast professors. Ana Montes as well, ended up spying for the Cubans inside DIA. Apparently was recruited before she joined the agency and then the DIA. Makes you wonder how many more are out there that we don’t know about.” – U.S. Intelligence Analyst



Dedication

Lieutenant Colonel (ret) Lucius “Gus” Taylor and I served together in Central America. We later became good friends and it was Gus who provided the critical photos and documentation that ultimately resulted in SFC Greg Fronius, KIA, being awarded a posthumous Silver Star.

After Fronius was killed at El Paraiso (1987) it was then Major Taylor, his mission commander, who mounted a U.S. MilGrp authorized

month-long operation to track down and eliminate the guerrillas who participated in the attack and killing of his teammate. With another SF advisor / sniper and a small team of Salvadoran snipers Taylor roamed Chalatenango Province, hitting the enemy wherever they were found. He shared portions of that operation with me in 1995 when I visited with him in Panama while supporting SOC-SOUTH at Task Force Black.

Taylor served twenty years in the Army, and more than twenty years at NSWC Crane. As a Chief Engineer, Taylor serves in a division with around 200-people devoted to weapon systems engineering for the US Navy, US Marine Corps, and US Special Operations Command. Until recently, he served frequently in Afghanistan, Europe, Africa, and other deployed locations.

Gus recently passed away. He is remembered, honored, and missed by his fellow Green Berets.

RIP, Warrior, RIP. ❖

No Fallen Comrade Left Behind

In past March, LTC (ret) Lucius “Gus” Taylor shared the below account of the death of SFC Greg Fronius, one of his teammates, on his Facebook page. Taylor identifies Ana Montes as one of two American citizens who acted as intelligence gathers for the FMLN in El Salvador and who he assigns responsibility for the attack on El Paraiso that saw SFC Greg Fronius killed in action. The other was Jennifer Casolo –

In the summer of 1998, at the largest awards and decorations ceremony since the Vietnam war, the 7th Special Forces Group presented combat awards and decorations to the veterans of our war in El Salvador. Greg Fronius’ son stepped forward to accept his father’s posthumous Silver Star during the event.

A warrior’s recollection

“For the last 36 years this day, March 31st, has haunted me. There are a lot of imaginative stories about SFC Greg Fronius and me that night in March 1987 at the El Paraiso compound, HQ of El Salvador’s 4th Brigade. Here is the truth as I witnessed it, and while I still remember it clearly.



“Greg showed up around halfway through my one-year tour in El Sal, replacing Baldemar “Ram” Ramirez around the first of the year, in January 1987. Creepy even for someone like me, Greg told me upon his arrival he had taken out a \$1M life insurance policy, because he was sure he would not leave El Salvador alive.”

“In early March, Ana Montes, then a senior official at DIA, visited our compound. She is a traitor and the principal murderer of Greg Fronius. She was in prison for treason until recently. She now lives comfortably in Puerto Rico. On about Friday, March 27, 1987, our two U.S. Intel guys, flew back to Panama on a supply run. I never quite got my head around their coincidental and timely absence from the assault on the El Paraiso compound that would occur just

days later. The last week in March, we had the perimeter lightly manned with one Infantry Company on refit and reinforced with about thirty lightly wounded Return-to Duty soldiers.

“We experienced a lot of enemy action in the following months. However, during March 1987, Chalatenango Province, which was largely under FMLN control, was unusually quiet. At our compound in El Paraiso, the place was mostly empty. Of the 3,600-man Infantry Brigade, we had only a few hundred back in the compound, mostly hospitalized wounded. The compound at El Paraiso had about five kilometers of perimeter fence. And not just any fence. The first barrier was Cyclone wire with tangle-foot barbed wire taped at the bottom and concertina coils at the top. That barrier was then followed by ten meters of tripwire mines and other landmines. Finally, the inner fence was identical to the outer, with Cyclone wire with tangle-foot barbed-taped at the bottom and concertina coils at the top.

“At the time and during several weeks prior, Greg and I were re-establishing the El Salvadoran national sniper capability, training 36 selected sniper candidates in a formal curriculum we had developed from the original sniper POI was used by C-3/7 SFG(A) on Empire Range in Panama to train the original 150 El Sal Snipers in 1984.

Note: The first 150 snipers professionally selected and trained by ODA 13, C-Co, 3/7th Special Forces Group, was conducted at Empire Range in Panama. It was a five-week course that included classes and ranges covering the broad spectrum of sniper operations. M21 sniper systems with ART scopes were selected for the students as the M21 was the dominant sniper system at 3/7 during this period. An article on the course was published in Gung-Ho magazine in 1987.

“The rest of the 4th Brigade was deployed out into the mountains. About 1500 hours on Monday, 30 March, 1987, USMILGP El Salvador notified me that my wife, Becky, was going into labor in Panama. My MILGP Commander, Colonel John Ellerson, sent a Huey up to El Paraiso to pick me up at about 1700 hours. The Huey took me back to San Salvador. I was to fly out on the Channel Flight from Ilopango Air Base back to Howard AFB Panama the next day.

“The next morning, at about 4:00AM, Tuesday, 31 March 1987, USMILGP Ops Advisor LTC Gil Tijerina called me at the Commo House, a safe house in San Salvador where I was staying to await the Channel Flight. He told me El Paraiso had been overrun at about 0300 on that morning, and that Greg was KIA. I told him I needed to get back up there, and he replied that I should go to the San Salvador Soccer Stadium for pick-up by a Huey. I got to the stadium around 5:30AM. I was met by SFC Thornton, an SF Medic, LTC Lou Rodriguez, and an Air Force Major whose name I have purged from memory for what he would do later. I’ll refer to him hereinafter as “Major Douche.”

Note: The US Intelligence Community, led by the after action reports made Major Douche and a guy named (omitted) covered their collective asses in ways so reprehensible it begs the imagination. They claimed the IC had warned us of an impending attack. True, but worthless. The IC warned us of

impending attacks about every week during my tour there. If they were so convinced of the attack at the end of March 1987, why did they leave Greg in there? That question was never answered.

“LTC Rodriguez was a formidable Warrior, a Bay-of-Pigs POW, and a distinguished Vietnam Vet. SFC Thornton was well known among 3/7 medics as a true professional. Maj Douche was working not for MILGP, but for the Defense Attaché. As we strapped into our seats in the Huey, LTC Rodriguez, SFC Thornton, and I loaded up our CAR-15’s. Maj Douche, armed with a wimpy-assed MP-5, asked if we had another CAR-15 he could borrow. We just smiled.

“High winds kept us from taking off until around 0600 hours. We lifted off as part of a large helo formation, just behind several gunships coming up from Ilopango Air Base. When we arrived on-station at El Paraiso compound, our MILGP Huey held back about 500m south of the compound while the Huey gunships repeatedly strafed the compound with HV 40mm and .50 cal mini-gun fire, driving the guerillas out of the compound to the north. With aerial firing still going hot north of the compound, our USMILGP Huey landed on the south El Paraiso LZ. LTC Lou Rodrigues, SFC Thornton, and I moved to the center of the compound. Maj Douche, with a clipboard, continued out to the perimeter to interview perimeter guard survivors.

“The office that Greg and I worked from was destroyed by explosions and fire. I recovered the burned cash and crypto from my office safe. Our shoeshine boy, Hector, survived the attack. He took me and SFC Thornton to Greg’s remains, on a covered stretcher. When I pulled back the cover, Greg was smiling. Hector then took us to a small set of concrete steps where Greg had died. The steps were cracked by explosive force. Hector told me that when the attack started, Greg ran out of his room and was quickly wounded in the left arm. Greg bandaged his own arm. He then ran past a deep underground bunker, ignoring shouts by the El Salvadorans to come into the safety of the bunker. Instead, Greg single-handedly maneuvered on an assault force moving from the northwest toward the Comandancia. Greg singlehandedly faced off the enemy assault force from the cover of the stairs and put down a heavy base of fire with his CAR-15, delaying them for long enough that COL Rubio and most of his Brigade Staff could take cover or escape. However, Greg was mortally wounded by small arms fire in the exchange.

“For some reason, while at the shattered stairs, I looked upward to the tree cover above the site and imagined that I saw cuts on the branches that suggested the fins of a mortar round passing through the tree and landing on Greg. That was to be one of the worst interpretations I ever made in my life. At that point, I imagined that Greg had been fighting on the steps, when hit by a mortar round, and that is what I reported.

“What happened was far, far different. I would learn much later the FMLN had a subgroup called the FES, Fuerzas Especiales Salvadoreñas. The FES had been training and rehearsing for this attack for over 2 years, to include sending their indirect fires team to Cuba for mortar gunnery and their assault team to Vietnam for training by Russian Spetsnaz. They used seven giant, 6-man

carry Claymores to breach the perimeter defenses. We only knew this because one of the seven did not go off, and we recovered it, still standing on its timber tripod. The device that we recovered was about six' high X 3' wide by eight" deep. It had six carry handles on the sides, about 200 lbs of cut-up ¼ rebar in pieces, each about three" long, backed by conveyor-belt rubber and a bottom layer of about two" of Semtex plastic explosive. Not exactly a charge you would expect to see in a remote Central American guerrilla war.

"Many years later, I would learn that so great was the anger and frustration of the FES assault force that when they closed with Fronius, gravely wounded by multiple 5.56 rounds, on the steps, they placed a heavy explosive charge underneath of him. Greg was killed by small arms fire, and his dead (or dying) body destroyed by the explosive device. His courage had kept the FES sappers from completing their mission which was to attack the now secured command bunker and kill all those inside.

Note: Upon breaching the perimeter and occupying the ESAF compound, the guerrillas entered the base hospital and bayoneted the wounded Salvadoran soldiers there.

"Major Douche went out to the perimeter and questioned the soldiers about what had happened. As I mentioned earlier, we had very, very few soldiers on the perimeter, many of them recovering wounded, with many more in the hospital. For some reason, Douche focused on questions about the commissioned officers, and whether they were present on the perimeter. Of course, any Army guy knows that the Sergeant of the Guard is the Main Mug for guard forces, and O's are generally not expected or wanted around for guard duty, but Douche emphasized questions about the absence of commissioned Salvadoran officers on the perimeter. This is a crucial point regarding what would transpire in the coming days, when the Intelligence Community (IC) would conduct a second attack on the brave men at El Paraiso.

"As SFC Thornton and I carried Greg's remains on a stretcher to the LZ, we halted for a moment as the 4th Brigade Commander, COL Rubio, addressed his surviving men, most of whom were lightly wounded and covered with dirt, blood, and brain matter. He told them, in his elegant Spanish, "The Enemy has screwed us. Now we will be screwed by our own. For you officers and NCOs, get cleaned up, and get into your best clean uniforms. The next attack will come from our own higher command." While I deeply respected COL Rubio, this would be a poor decision, which would a few hours later only reinforce the notion that the 4th Brigade officers and NCOs were absent from the fight.

"Nothing was further from the truth.

"SFC Thornton and I put Greg's stretcher on the MILGP Huey and flew his remains back to Ilopango. One of the MILGP staff was waiting there with an American flag. We put the flag-draped stretcher on the C-130 and flew Greg aback to Howard AFB Panama. When we got there, I stayed only a few days. I climbed back on the C-130 early the following week. When I got back to San Salvador, the USMILGP Commander, COL Ellerson, called me to his office. He said, "You are not going back to El Paraiso."

"I said, "Sir, you are now going to sit there in your chair and decide whether we win in El Salvador or not. If the ESAF and the enemy see that the Americans have one combat casualty, and then turn tail and run, this war is over." I then outlined what I had planned.

"Afterward COL Ellerson asked, 'How will you survive. We estimate that 4th Brigade has about 15% Infiltrators.'

"I told him, 'I will go to the safest of all places for us. I'll take the surviving snipers we trained up into the mountains. We will hunt down the FES. I'll be totally safe.'

"COL Ellerson, with a bravery most will not understand, said, 'Go down to the soccer field and catch your Huey.'

"So, we hunted the FES down. That is another story."

LTC (ret) Lucius Taylor
USA Special Forces

Postscript

I served with Gus Taylor at 3/7 in Panama. We later became good friends. What occurred at the 4th Brigade in March 1987 haunted Gus for decades. The other U.S. advisers at El Paraiso had gone to San Salvador for a brief respite in the training cycle. Taylor had planned to stay back with Greg. The call letting him know he was about to become a father changed that—and he would later tell me that Greg urged him to get back to Panama and that Fronius would be fine.

When CBS *60 Minutes* brought a number of us to Washington, DC, for three days of interviews regarding the reality of the war in El Salvador, Gus contacted me. We met in the hotel lobby, off in a corner, and he shared what had happened. Taylor provided photos of Greg's recovered remains beneath an American flag. He described looking up into one of the trees and seeing, then collecting bits of flesh that had been blown up into the surrounding foliage when the FES detonated their satchel charge beneath Greg's body. In all, only 17 pounds of his remains were recovered for autopsy and burial.

Greg's older brother, Steve Fronius, was there to be interviewed by Ed Bradley and that evening he and Gus met for the first time. They sat alone and talked. Gus later told me it was one of the most difficult moments of his life. Steve consoled him during their meeting and thanked him for taking care of his younger brother.

By a stroke of good fortune, I submitted a FOIA for Greg's autopsy and in record time it was provided, en toto. The thick document countered the USGOV lie about Greg having been struck by a mortar while asleep in his bunk. Autopsy diagrams showed multiple small arms fire wounds and the devastation inflicted on his body by the explosive device. Further, no fewer than three General Officers signed off on no mention of combat being made. The posthumous Silver Star that Taylor had submitted for Fronius was downgraded to a peacetime Meritorious Service Medal. In a final insult the Army attempted to recover a \$260 bill from the Fronius family for additional charges in transporting his remains and casket home.



Gus (left) flying out to Fire Base Chamkani in eastern Afghanistan, April, 2010. (Credit: Gus Taylor Facebook page)

“Green Beret”. So enraged by his single-handed defense of the staircase leading down to the base’s command center the sappers used one of the charges meant for the center to end Greg’s life.

Gus and I linked up again in September 1995. He had retired and was living in Panama. I was assigned for three weeks to work at SOC-SOUTH in support of Task Force BLACK. During a dive trip at Fort Sherman Taylor described, in part, the 30-day operation he, SFC Thornton, and a handful of Salvadoran snipers undertook against the FES.

For Gus it was a mission. A retribution. And a reckoning. Taylor never shared with me how many guerrillas they hunted down and killed. But the message he promised Colonel Ellerson at its onset was delivered to the FES and to the FMLN in spades.

In 1993, I met and interviewed Gilberto Osorio in San Francisco, California, where he was living. Osorio, a Salvadoran and American citizen, had fought with the PRTC in El Salvador for nearly eleven years. He rose to the rank of commander and was the Operations Chief for the PRTC. Trained in Cuba as a demolitions expert it was Osorio who built the remote control detonated bomb that killed Colonel Domingo Monterosa in October 1984.

Osorio possessed first-hand information on the training of the FES for the attack on El Paraiso, to include being told by one FES sapper that Fronius was still alive when they found him. His red hair and U.S. uniform clearly identified him as an American adviser/

Gus passed peacefully on June 11, 2024.

“On Tuesday, June 11, 2024, we lost Lucius Augustus Taylor, IV who was better known simply as Gus. That short name might have been the only simple thing about this man who had more facets than any jewel he ever set—and that’s saying something as Gus was a jeweler and gemologist. He was also, among other things: a scholar warrior who craved and worked for peace; treasure hunter and adventurer; mystic and scientist; thinker, maker, doer; father, husband, brother, and friend.”

All of us who were privileged to know and serve with him cannot express the true depths of our shared grief. He was the best of us. “De Oppresso Liber!” ❖



ABOUT THE AUTHOR —

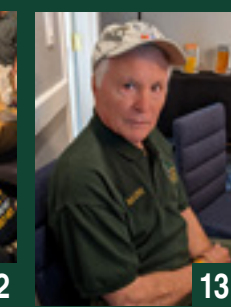
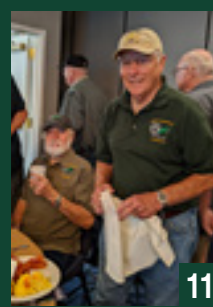
Greg Walker is a Special Forces veteran with service in both El Salvador and Iraq. He is the co-founder of Veterans of Special Operations – El Salvador (VSO-ES), the organization responsible for seeing the U.S. military campaign in that country authorized with an Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal by the Congress in 1996. Walker has been active in ongoing official efforts to achieve justice for the victims of the El Mozote massacre (1981) and the assassination of four Dutch journalists in El Salvador (1982). After his retirement in 2005, Walker continued to serve the Special Operations community as a DoD trained case manager and advocate with the SOCOM Care Coalition (2009-2013). Today he lives and writes along with his service pup, Tommy, in Sisters, Oregon. ❖

SFA Chapter 78 June 2024 Chapter Meeting

Photos by Rick Carter and Debra Holm

Guest Speaker, MS (Ret.) Chris Spence

- 1 2** Horse Soldier MSG (Ret.) Chris Spence, June's guest speaker, tells the story of the first deployment to Afghanistan in response to the 9/11 attack. Chris was a member of a small elite SF team now known as the "horse soldiers." Chris' amazing PowerPoint presentation includes the iconic photos (including this month's cover photo) he took of the members on their horses on patrol.
- 3** VP James McLanahan presents Chris Spence with a chapter challenge coin.
- 4** Members of the US Army Recruiting Command Los Angeles Battalion, CPT Matthew Juntz, Battalion Commander LTC Johann Hindert, and LT Church.
- 5** Chapter member Mark Griffin along with his wife, Amy, daughter, Emma, and family friend, Eva.
- 6** Geri Long and Len Fein. Geri donated books that had belonged to Bruce Long, her late husband and former Chapter 78 president, to chapter members.
- 7** Richard Simonian presents Roberto Cardenas with his personal SF Original Chapter Coin in appreciation of Roberto's support of the Chapter's MOH Luncheon.
- 8** James McLanahan presents Len Fein with a requested shirt and magnet from his recent trip to Venezuela.
- 9** Jim Cragg provides updates from his American Legion post.
- 10** Robert Casillas, Ham Salley, and Jim Lockhart.
- 11** James Carter and Mike Jameson.
- 12** Jim Duffy **13** Mark Miller
- 14** AVAG members Mary Cruz and Doreen Matsumoto with free gifts.
- 15** Art Dolick
- 16** Ramon Rodriguez and Gary Macnamara
- 16** Richard Simonian, Chris Spence, and Niamatullah "Nimo" Aslami, Project Manager of Afghan Refugee Housing



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