

DISTINGUISHED MEMBER OF THE SPECIAL FORCES REGIMENT



**MAJOR GENERAL
MATTHEW L. HARRELL**
U.S. Army, Retired

Inducted May 24, 2022



Major General Matthew Harrell officially retired as the Deputy Commanding General, U.S. Army Special Operations Command on July 1, 2008. MG Harrell's was commissioned a Second Lieutenant on Dec. 7, 1973 upon graduation from East Tennessee State University. His initial assignment was to the 2nd Battalion, 508th Infantry, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, North Carolina, where he served as a Rifle Platoon Leader and Anti-Tank Platoon Leader.

In January 1977, upon completion the Special Forces Qualification Course, he was assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne), Fort Gulick, Panama. He served as Commander of a Special Forces Operational Detachment-Alpha, SCUBA Team, and Commander of the first CINC INEXTREMIS Assault Team. Maj. Gen. Harrell returned to the 82nd Airborne Division in September of 1980, assuming command of Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 505th Infantry Regiment in February 1981, and deployed as a member of the first multinational force to the Sinai Peninsula in the Spring of 1981. Maj. Gen. Harrell was assigned as the G3 Air, 82nd Airborne Division and deployed to Grenada for Operation URGENT FURY. In April 1984, he was assigned as the Operations Officer, 2nd Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group (A), Fort Devens, Massachusetts.

In December 1985, he was assigned to 1st Special Forces Operational Detachment-Delta at Fort Bragg, as a troop commander. While in the unit, he participated in Operation JUST CAUSE. His Soldiers performed the first successful hostage rescue by rescuing Kurt Muse, a U.S. citizen who had been held captive in Modelo Prison by Gen. Manuel Noreiga's forces prior to the commencement of the United States invasion of Panama. Maj. Gen. Harrell was the only officer to actually enter the Modelo Prison during the rescue operation.

In March 1991, he was assigned to the Joint Special Operations Command as the Army Special Operations Action Officer. He participated in Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM. In April 1992, he assumed command of Squadron C, 1st Special Forces Operational Detachment-Delta and deployed to Columbia, where he led forces in operations against drug lord Pablo Escobar, in support to the Government of Columbia. This operation later culminated in Escobar's death at the hand of Columbian authorities. His next combat deployment was to Somalia for operations in support of UNOSOM II. In Somalia, he was the Ground Force Commander for combat operations, which was depicted in the book and subsequent movie known as Blackhawk Down. On Oct. 9, 1993, he was severely wounded by enemy mortar fire and evacuated to the United States, where he began a long recovery process. He was assigned as the Deputy Commander, Special Forces Operational Detachment-Delta in June 1995.

Maj. Gen. Harrell commanded 1st Special Forces Operational Detachment-Delta from July 1998 to July 2000 and participated in numerous combat operations with Special Forces Operation Detachment-Delta. In July 2000, he assumed duties as Director, Joint Security Directorate, United States Central Command. As the Joint Security Director, he was responsible for all United States Security Operations within the 26 country Central Command area of operations, one of the most dangerous operational areas in the world. These responsibilities included the following mission requirements: the personal security detail that guarded the Central Command Commander, security forces guarding United States Embassies, the security for every AmerSOR, and inspection and updates of every security plan in the AOR. The Joint Security Directorate was responsible for ensuring that United States Soldiers and civilians were safe from attack. In response to the attack on the USS Cole, he deployed to Aden, Yemen, where he was responsible for all Central Command Security Operations and support to the United States Ambassador to Yemen in the aftermath of the tragic terrorist attack. His actions provided a safety for the surviving crew-members and investigators who arrived to conduct the post-explosion investigation.

In October 2001, Major General Harrell formed the United States Central Command Joint Inter-Agency Task Force. This specially formed task force combined the efforts of international and national agencies including the following: Secret Service, Federal Bureau of Investigation, National Intelligence Agency, Defense Intelligence Agency, Central Intelligence Agency and the NYPD-Interagency Task Force, which coordinated these agencies in support of operations in the Central Command Area of Responsibility. He deployed the Joint Inter-Agency to Bagram, Afghanistan, as the Commander of Task Force Bowie on Nov, 25, 2001, and served as the Assistant Division Commander of the 10th Mountain Division during Operation ANACONDA, which was one of the largest military operations ever conducted in the Shai-Khowt Valley, long a Taliban and Al-Qaeda strong-hold. Operation ANACONDA accounted for more enemy losses in a few short weeks than had occurred in the previous decade.

Maj. Gen. Harrell assumed command of Special Operations Command Central in July 2002. During Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, he commanded the largest special operations force assembled since World War II, consisting of more than 20,000 personnel, who were responsible for combat operations to prevent SCUD missile launches from Western Iraq and stability operations in Northern Iraq. Under Harrell's command, Special Forces teams were inserted into Iraq prior to the main invasion force. Due to Special Forces Operations, key Iraqi units were unable to move south to attack invading Coalition Forces.

In April 2005, he was assigned as the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations/Commander, deployable Joint Task Force, North Atlantic Treaty Organization Response Force, Brunssum, Netherlands, where he was responsible for NATO forces taking operational control of Afghanistan. He also led the Deployable Joint Task Force on its first ever operational deployment to the austere environment of the Cape Verde Islands off the West Coast of Africa, where ground, special operations, naval and air forces honed their combat capabilities.

Maj. Gen. Harrell is a graduate of the Airborne Course, Ranger Course, Special Forces Underwater Operations Course, Military Free Fall Course, Pathfinder School, Military Free Fall Jumpmaster Course, Special Forces Qualification Course, Special Operations Training Course, the Armed Forces Staff College, and the United States Army War College.

He is currently a member of the Executive Board for the Task Force Dagger Foundation. He has been on the Executive Board since 2015, and is responsible for raising hundreds of thousands of dollars in support of the foundation's missions of supporting our Special Operations wounded, ill and injured and their families.

His awards and decorations include the Defense Superior Service Medal, the Bronze Star Medal with V-device and two oak-leaf clusters, Purple Heart Medal, Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal with oak-leaf cluster, Air Medal, Army Commendation Medal with two oak-leaf clusters, Joint Service Achievement Medal, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal with two oak-leaf clusters as well as numerous service and campaign medals. He has also earned the Combat Infantryman Badge, Master Parachutist Badge, Master Military Free Fall Parachutist Badge, Pathfinder Badge, SCUBA Diver Badge, Special Forces Tab and Ranger Tab.