

DISTINGUISHED MEMBER OF THE SPECIAL FORCES REGIMENT



**MASTER SERGEANT
STEVE HOLLAND**
U.S. Army, Retired

Inducted April 23, 2026



Steve Holland was born on Jan. 26, 1960, in Brunswick, Georgia. After serving 30 years in the U.S. Army, with a remarkable 24 consecutive years of dedicated service within the 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), Holland retired at the rank of master sergeant. His career is widely regarded as one of the most impactful in modernization and advancement in the regiment. His work directly strengthened the lethality, survivability, and operational capabilities of Special Forces Soldiers throughout the Global War on Terror and beyond.

Holland entered the regiment in 1983 after serving in the 82nd Airborne Division. From 1984 until 2008, he served continuously within the 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), a duration believed to be the longest uninterrupted tenure in an active-duty role within a Special Forces Group.

Over the course of his assignments, he served as a communications sergeant, an intelligence sergeant, and later as the noncommissioned officer in charge of both the 5th SFG (A) Sniper School and the Fort Campbell Sniper School. His technical skills and leadership earned him national recognition, including the prestigious National Defense Industrial Association USMC Gunnery Sergeant Carlos Hathcock Award for excellence in the sniper community.

In 1997, Holland transitioned into what would become his defining contribution to the Regiment: Special Forces' force modernization. That year, he established the first S-8 Modernization Office at the group level, pioneering the model from which modernization structures across the regiment would eventually evolve. Serving as the group modernization noncommissioned officer in charge for more than a decade, he became the critical link between operational teams and emerging technologies.

Holland was a key Special Forces representative to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict Technical Support Working Group. In this role, he worked closely with interagency and Department of Defense partners to identify emerging threats and rapidly develop capabilities to counter them. His work contributed to research, development, test, and evaluation funding for numerous cutting edge systems adopted by Special Forces, other U.S. special operations elements, and even allied forces. His influence helped bring forward essential capabilities such as stand off thermal explosive detectors, low-visibility surveillance systems, and portable protective construction technologies used to harden forward operating bases.

Among his many contributions to weapons development and precision engagement, Holland played an essential role in the evolution of the SOPMOD M4A1 Weapons System. He championed early development efforts to create multi caliber upper receivers to allow operational detachment alphas to use 7.62x39mm ammunition in unconventional warfare environments. While this specific concept was not fully adopted, it demonstrated his ability to anticipate battlefield requirements years ahead of institutional processes. His contributions to the creation of the Mk12 Special Purpose Rifle were so significant that the weapon became commonly referred to as "The Holland," a direct acknowledgment of his role in its development.

Holland was instrumental in advancing ammunition performance. Working alongside the U.S. Army Marksmanship Unit, he contributed to the development and transition of the 77 grain Mk262 round into a program of record, improving the lethality of 5.56mm platforms at extended ranges. His work was also central to the development and fielding of the 6.8mm Special Purpose Cartridge, which became a capability used not only by U.S. special operations forces but by elite units such as the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, the U.S. Marshals Service, Canadian Special Operations Forces, and the Saudi Royal Guard.

Perhaps one of Holland's most forward looking insights came more than a decade before the U.S. Army formally recognized it: The increasing sophistication of adversary ballistic protection and the inadequacy of existing U.S. 5.56mm ammunition against these modern armor systems. His early advocacy and rigorous analysis foreshadowed the Army's eventual shift to improved calibers and ammunition designs.

Holland's deep commitment to operational effectiveness extended into mobility, canine, and unmanned systems programs. He became a foundational voice in introducing multi purpose working dog capabilities to operational detachment alphas. He also recognized early the need for operational detachment alphas to possess their own organic unmanned aerial systems, accelerating the development of small-unit drone capabilities. Additionally, his integration of the M134 Minigun onto Special Forces mobility platforms provided an extraordinary force multiplier, materially enhancing the survival and success of special operations forces in close and urban combat.

Even in retirement, Holland continued to support modernization efforts. He played a crucial advisory role in the development of the GMV 1.1 Flyer/USSOCOM M1288 mobility platform. His contributions helped ensure the vehicle was purpose-built for the real-world needs of Special Forces Soldiers.

Throughout his career and beyond, Master Sgt. Holland's defining trait has always been his unwavering passion for the Special Forces Soldier and the operational detachment alpha teams. His anticipatory vision, tireless work ethic, and deep understanding of the operational environment made him one of the most impactful contributors to Special Forces capabilities in the modern era.