

DISTINGUISHED MEMBER OF THE SPECIAL FORCES REGIMENT



**SERGEANT MAJOR
ROBERT CHAREST**
U.S. Army, Retired

Inducted April 2012



In 1961, after volunteering for and completing Special Forces Branch Training in December of 1962 as a Commo sergeant, his first assignment was with 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) on Okinawa. Sent as an advisor in July 1963, he was assigned to A-432 in the camp at Boun Beng of II Corps for off-island training with the Jari Montagnards. Charest then transferred to 10th SFG(A) in Bad Toelz Germany, serving with B Company ODA-19 from 1964 through 1967. Sent on top-secret mission to Libya, he first made two solo trips into Libya liaising with the U.S. Embassy. His team then went in disguised as Civilian Communications Contractors to survey the many Libyan military installations from Tripoli to Benghazi. In 1967, Charest was sent in as a paid informant of King Idris of Libya to spy on "The Black Boots," an underground movement within the military led by a young Muammar Muhammad al-Gaddafi. The group was plotting the overthrow of Idris. Although he briefed officials in Stuttgart of the plot, the coup of Idris was successful. In 1968, Charest returned to Vietnam, assigned to B-56 Project (SIGMA), Military Assistance Command Vietnam – Studies and Operations Group (MACVSOG). During one of a Hatchet Team mission, he was wounded a fourth time. His actions on the mission were written up for a Silver Star, but he would not receive it until 2021, 54 years later. In 1968, upon leaving Vietnam and then attending the Defense Language Institute for German, he joined Detachment A (Det- A) Team One Scuba Team, Berlin, Germany. Upon completing a four year tour, he returned to Southeast Asia in Thailand, assigned to ODA-33, 46th Special Forces Company (Airborne). It was here he was awarded the Soldiers Medal for actions taken while involved in an ammo transport operation. His quick action spared the civilians and town of Ban Sa Amphoe Yang Tolat from injury and destruction when the truck carrying the ammo caught fire. When 46th Special Forces Company closed, Charest returned to Det A, staying from 1973 to 1978. CSM Charest retired in 1981 from 10th SFG(A) in Fort Devens, Massachusetts.

He worked with Vinnell Corporation in Saudi Arabia until a grenade accident forced his return stateside. After attaining his Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of New Hampshire in 1985, he accepted a position as a Senior Instructor/Advisor with the Commo Committee at the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (USAJFKSWCS). He later worked for FEMA/MERS, first as a Senior Operations Officer, then as a GM-13 Security Manager, until he retired in 1992.

Throughout his military and civilian careers, Robert Charest has remained active with Special Forces. He was served as President of Chapter LXXII in Merrimack, NH for five years. He has also served on the Board of Officers for the Veterans of Special Forces (VSF) and is a life member of Special Operations Association. A proud member of Detachment A Berlin, he started an alumni organization and has hosted several reunions. An avid supporter of the JFK Special Warfare Museum, he has been instrumental in procuring materials for a Det A exhibit. CSM Charest is still involved with scuba diving, skydiving and holds a 4th Degree Black Belt in Tae Kwon Do.

Awards and Decorations: Soldiers Medal; Silver Star; Bronze Star with "V" for Valor; 4 Purple Hearts; Special Forces Diver badge; Master Parachutist badge; Combat Infantry Badge; German, Thai, Vietnamese and Chinese Jump Wings; HALO wings: Air Medal; Meritorious Service Medal; Army Commendation Medal (3 Awards).