

# DISTINGUISHED MEMBER OF THE SPECIAL FORCES REGIMENT



**FIRST LIEUTENANT  
PHILLIP GONZALES**  
*U.S. Army, Retired*

Inducted 2021



1st. Lt.(R) Phillip Gonzales was born on Jan. 30, 1948 in Stockton, Calif. into a historic lineage of military service. His great-grandmother rode with Pancho Villa in the Spanish American War, his grandfather served in the Navy during WWII, two of his cousins were on the infamous Bataan Death March, and his father served in Korea.

In 1968, he enlisted in the Army Security Agency (ASA) and trained as a high speed Morse Interceptor (05D). He completed the US Army Airborne School in 1969 and was assigned to the 403rd Special Operations Detachment, 5th Special Forces Group Vietnam.

He completed two tours with 5th Special Forces in Vietnam, from 1969 to 1971, was assigned to the 3rd Mobile Strike Force as well as various "A teams" scattered from the Northern Highlands to the Mekong Delta. He received his Special Forces flash (tab) with 8th Special Forces in 1972. He retired as a "Mustang" 1st. Lt. in 1996. While serving in Special Forces, he held the MOS of 91B4S (Senior Medical Sergeant), 18F (Intelligence Sergeant), and 18E (Communications Sergeant).

His Special Forces qualifications were put to use over the next fifty years, both in and out of the military, primarily in training guerrilla armies but also in counter-narcotic and medical operations throughout the war zones in Burma, Cambodia, Colombia, Sarajevo, Salvador, Panama, with the Nicaraguan Contras, and most recently, four years as a medical officer in Iraq and Afghanistan.

During his twenty years in Colombia, he developed medical and security area studies as a contractor to the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), counternarcotic, aerial eradication program, and flew search and rescue missions as their chief medical officer.

Through private donations and Fulbright grants, he directed twenty volunteer surgical teams, providing free reconstructive surgeries to more than 400 children and adults with "cleft lip and palate" birth defects and developed an outreach program in Honduras and Colombia, to bring disabled children from the Amazon jungle to Shriner's Hospital for Crippled Children in the United States.

In 1998 concerned about the ramification of illegal deforestation in the Amazon basin, he refurbished an aging, wooden, missionary trawler, which he named "The Amazon Queen", to navigate remote regions of the Amazon. Over the next eight years, accompanied by his Colombian wife and young daughter, he explored more than 10,000 nautical miles of the Colombian, Peruvian and Brazilian Amazon River basin providing medical aid, rescuing lost explorers, and transporting film crews for the purpose of documenting the environmental impact on disappearing tribal cultures.

He holds a Master's of Science in Health Science-Anesthesia, a Bachelor of Science in Nursing and has served as an Advanced Medical Instructor with the Joint Special Operation Medical Training Center (JSOMTC) for the past eight years.

1st. Lt.(R) Gonzales's awards include, Bronze Star Medal (1 OLC), Army Commendation Medal "V" (1 OLC), Combat Infantryman's Badge, Parachute badge, Jungle Expert Badge, Scuba badge, Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry, and various foreign jump wings.