

DISTINGUISHED MEMBER OF THE SPECIAL FORCES REGIMENT



**LIEUTENANT GENERAL
WILLIAM P. YARBOROUGH**



William P. Yarborough was born on May 12, 1912 in Washington. A 1936 graduate of West Point, in 1940, he volunteered for the first airborne battalion at Fort Benning, GA. It was here that he designed and received a patent for the U.S. Army Parachutist Badge. He also designed the paratrooper the jump boot and uniform.

In World War II, Yarborough was the logistics advisor for Operation Torch, the first airborne operation of the war detailed in his book *Bail Out Over North Africa*. He also served with the First Airborne Command under BG Robert T. Frederick. He always credited both COL Darby of the Rangers and Frederick as mentors in the art of unconventional warfare. After the German surrender, Yarborough, a veteran of nine campaigns, was assigned as the Provost Marshal of the US Forces in Austria where he was responsible for organizing the "international Patrol," later dramatized in the film "The Third Man." He then went on to attend the Armed Forces Information School in Pennsylvania, the British War College in England, and the U.S. Army War College at Carlisle Barracks, PA, before being assigned as Deputy Commander of the US Military Assistance Command – Cambodia in 1956. In 1959, he returned to Germany, commanding the US Army 66th Counter-intelligence Corps Group, serving as a liaison between the British, French, German, Italian, Belgium, German and Swiss counterespionage, intelligence and police agencies.

In January 1961, he was appointed commander/commandant of the US Army Special Warfare Center/School for Special Warfare at Fort Bragg, NC where he utilized the experiences from World War II, Cambodia and Germany into legitimizing special operations during a time of possible annihilation. Although most famous for arranging President Kennedy's visit in 1961 to Fort Bragg and the subsequent approval of the green beret for wear, his innovations in all arenas of Special Forces training and operations are still felt today. Yarborough was instrumental in raising the professional tone of the School for Special Warfare to that of a university, inviting national figures in anthropology, history, science, psychology and politics to speak, review training programs and doctrine, and write monographs. He instituted an extensive "lessons learned" program not only in the training program of instruction, but also Special Forces Group training. Innovative for that time, the program was designed to analyze the various insurgent conflicts in China, Malaysia and Algeria as well as "real time" operations from the Republic of Vietnam, incorporating the salient points with little lag time. The Military Training Assistance Advisor program (1962 – 1970) was a direct result of this thought process. He encouraged enrollment of foreign officers and NCOs, believing that this interaction was essential for future successes in U.S. Counterinsurgency, Unconventional Warfare and Military Advisor operations. Civil Affairs, at the time, an orphan unit within the Army structure, was embraced by Yarborough, who, based on his experiences as Provost Marshall for the occupation government in Vienna, felt essential in the battle to "winning of hearts and minds," fighting to absorb both the organization and school into the SOF community. Although this did not happen until after Yarborough's tenure was completed, Civil Affairs was ultimately absorbed within the fabric of the Special Operations community in 1970.

On the operational side of the house, his tenure saw an explosion of Special Forces Groups including 1st, 3rd, 5th, 8th and the National Guard/Reserve units later to be known as 11th, 12th, 19th and 20th. By the end of his tenure, more Mobile Training Teams had been utilized than in any time in the Special Forces history. He had positioned detachments, companies and groups where they would be most effective: Germany, Panama, Okinawa, Korea, Thailand and Vietnam. He also integrated Special Forces support in national events such as the Apollo Space program to assist in splash touchdowns. It was also during his tenure that many of the traditions of Special Forces were initiated including the Special Forces Prayer, the Ballad of the Green Beret, the Special Forces Creed and the Gabriel Demonstration Area.

After Fort Bragg, he went on to hold several high positions including the Senior Member, UN Command Military Armistice Commission, Panmunjom, Korea where he served as chief spokesman and negotiator for the UN Command; the Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Special Operations; the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, the Army General Staff; Commanding General, I Corps in Korea; and, the Chief of Staff and Deputy Commander in Chief, US Army Pacific. He retired from the Army in 1971. After his retirement, he stayed active, holding positions on many military panels, writing articles for military journals and his book, as well as lecturing on Special Warfare and international policy. He also mentored several future leaders of special operations including LTG Samuel V. Wilson, MG Sidney Shachnow, MG Kenneth Bowra, and LTC Ian D.W. Sutherland, author of the *History of Special Forces 1952 -1982*.