

## Background

Although the military had used Special Operation units prior to 1962, the war in Vietnam proved to be a turning point for the establishment and evolution of Special Operation Forces in the U.S. military. All military branches incorporated aspects of unconventional warfare into their operations to fit mission needs. Special Operations advisors and support units began working in Vietnam prior to 1965. The use of Special Forces units became the backbone of the American war effort in Southeast Asia as the war escalated between 1965 and 1969. Special Forces units were also some of the last to leave Vietnam in the 1970s.

The expansion of Special Operations during the war was the result of political and organizational support in the United States. President John F. Kennedy was a strong proponent of Special Operations Forces. The topography and decentralized nature of the conflict in Vietnam also stimulated the development of Special Operations. Conventional warfare was considerably less effective in Vietnam than in previous wars. Also, the integration of new technology, such as rotary wing aircraft, facilitated the effective use of unconventional warfare.



**Coronado Island, Patrol Boat River Training 1967**

Source: <https://www.vetfriends.com/militarypics/>

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**Demolition Training, JFK Special Warfare Center**

Source: Fort Bragg Museum

## Vietnam War: Special Operation Forces and Warfare Training on U.S. Military Installations Vietnam Historic Context Subtheme

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**Ranger Training, Fort Benning**

Source: <http://www.fortbenningphotos.com/>



## Purpose

This project contributes to the overall, broad Vietnam War context by addressing Special Operations Forces and warfare training. More specifically, this study addresses the formation and training of Special Operations Forces during the Vietnam War and provides a framework for identifying and evaluating associated historic properties on Department of Defense (DoD) installations.

The report provides cultural resource managers and professionals with a standardized approach to identify property types, determine historical significance of associated properties, and assess integrity, thereby greatly increasing efficiency and cost savings in compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act and management of historic properties .



**Vietnam Bunker, Training Range C 72; Eglin AFB**

Source: Elgin Air Force Base, Environmental Operations Division Office, Vietnam Bunkers and Trenches photographs

## Methodology

The project methodology included a literature review, investigation of primary and secondary sources for context, site visits to select installations, and report development. Researchers accessed primary and secondary sources at the National Archives and Records Administration, military libraries and museums, university libraries, and online sources. DoD installation staff provided additional information and documentation.

## Resources Types

Types of resources associated with this historic context include facilities and structures that were constructed, underwent a major expansion, or were adapted and heavily used during 1962–1975 to support the Vietnam War and were directly related to:

- Providing support for Special Operations and Elite forces— U.S. Army Rangers and Green Berets, U.S. Navy Sea, Air, and Land (SEALs), U.S. Marine Corps Force Reconnaissance Company (Force Recon), and U.S. Air Force Special Operations Force.
- Providing venues for Special Forces training included language schools; counterinsurgency (COIN); psychological operations (PSYOPS); riverine operations; jump school/parachuting/High Altitude, Low Opening (HALO) parachute insertions; reconnaissance operations; Intelligence; communications, engineering and demolition; underwater operations and SCUBA diving; land navigation; Civil Action Program; and Long-Range Reconnaissance Patrolling (LRRP).

## Examples of Facilities Include:

- Buildings and indoor training areas that accommodated classrooms, laboratories, simulators, and special equipment.
- Outdoor training areas including clearings or hardscapes for landing zones, forested areas, water bodies either natural or man-made with associated structures, beaches, climbing and repelling walls, mock villages, jump loading and landing areas, structures for demolition, tunnel systems, underwater operations and diving, natural areas for land navigation courses, and weapons ranges.
- Support buildings and structures including segregated housing, mess halls, libraries, and unit headquarters.
- Prototype structures constructed for field testing, i.e., hardened aircraft shelter, docks, etc.).



**Original PSYWAR School Library, Fort Bragg, WWII temporary building**

Source: Fort Bragg Museum