

# DISTINGUISHED MEMBER OF THE SPECIAL FORCES REGIMENT



**COLONEL  
AARON BANK**



Aaron Bank was born on November 23, 1902 in New York City. Entering the United States Army in 1939, he graduated from Officer Candidate School and then proceeded to Fort Polk, LA. where he was to be assigned as a transportation officer working with the railroads. Not wanting to be kept from the fight, he, being fluent in Russian, German and French, volunteered for duty with the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). After undergoing training in England, LT Bank was assigned to command the Jedburgh Team "Packard." The team was to marry up with the French resistance forces to soften the Germans, thereby allowing the 7th Infantry Division to advance from the French Riviera up to the Rhone Valley. Later, he was personally chosen to lead Operation Cross, a mission designed to capture top German leaders, especially Hitler in Bavaria and the Austrian Alps. Training and commanding former German prisoners-of-war, he accepted the mission knowing that if they got caught, since they would be in German uniforms, they would be executed. This mission, however, was scrubbed. During the remainder of World War II, Colonel Bank worked in French Indo-China to repatriate prisoners-of-war as a part of an Operative Group (OG) with OSS Detachment 202

After World War II, Colonel Bank commanded the Regional Counter-Intelligence Corps in Bavaria, Germany, and then served as the executive officer of the 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team in Korea. In 1951, Major General Robert McClure chose Colonel Bank as Chief of the Special Operations Branch of the Psychological Warfare Staff in the Pentagon. Working with General McClure and Colonel Russell Volckmann, the triumvirate had to convince the Army hierarchy to inculcate Special Warfare, especially unconventional warfare, into the Army's repertoire. During the Korean War, the use of psychological warfare had afforded the Allies many successes. Additionally, the 8th Army had instituted a small cell called the United Nations Partisan Forces - Korea to utilize rehabilitated North Korean prisoners of war for intelligence gathering purposes. The small shrug of acceptance garnered from these two activities plus the earlier accolades earned by the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the First Special Service Force (FSSF), Merrill's Marauders (5307th Composite Unit (Provisional) and the Ranger Battalions provided McClure and his staff fodder to push the inclusion through.

The Psychological Warfare Center and School was moved from Fort Riley, KS to Fort Bragg, NC in 1952. Under its umbrella, the 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne), composed of eight enlisted, one warrant officer and two officers, was stood up with Colonel Bank as its commander. Later that year, the 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne), much augmented with personnel, was split in half. The 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne), still under the command of Colonel Bank, took up station in Bad Toelz, Germany to counter the Soviet threat, while the other half was reconstituted as the 77th Special Forces Group (Airborne), remaining at Fort Bragg.

In 1955, Colonel Bank assumed duties as Chief of Plans and Operations, G3, 7th United States Army Europe. Following that assignment he transferred stateside where he served in the Pentagon until he retired in 1958.

Colonel Bank authored two books on his experiences: From OSS to Green Beret and Iron Cross.

Colonel Bank passed on 1 April 2004 at the age of 101. He is survived by his wife, Catherine, and two daughters, Linda Ballantine and Alexandra "Sandy" Elliott.

Included in his numerous awards and decorations are the Soldier's Medal; Bronze Star with "V" Device; French Croix de Guerre and the British "Mention in Dispatches." Other medals include the European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal and the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal; Army of Occupation; Korea Service; United Nations Service Medal; World War II Victory Medal; and the American Defense Service Medal. He also holds the Combat Infantry Badge and Master Jump Wings.