

DISTINGUISHED MEMBER OF THE SPECIAL FORCES REGIMENT

COLONEL
JAMES KRAUS

Inducted February 2011



In 1956, Colonel Jim Kraus began his Special Forces career as an enlisted Soldier with the original 77th Special Forces Group, Fort Bragg, N.C. There he trained in Special Forces basic skills, qualified as a demolition specialist and formed the strong character that he would demonstrate leading Special Forces Soldiers.

In 1959, following a promotion to sergeant, Kraus transferred from the 77th Special Forces Group to the 1st Special Forces Group, Okinawa, which led to the first of his three combat tours in the Republic of Vietnam. While assigned to Operational Team 14 on Okinawa, he attended Indonesian language school. In 1960, he deployed to the Seven Mountains area of Vietnam as one of the first combat advisers to a Vietnam Ranger unit. Following a promotion to staff sergeant in 1961, Kraus cross trained as a radio operator, and was selected to deploy to the country of Laos on his first covert mission with the Operation White Star. Under the leadership of Lieutenant Colonel Arthur "Bull" Simons, Kraus helped train Laotian soldiers to resist the Pathet Lao guerrillas.

In 1964, as a member of the 3rd Special Forces Group at Fort Bragg, N.C., he volunteered for Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Ga. He completed OCS in 1965 and is now a member of their Hall of Fame. In 1966, as a second lieutenant, Kraus was assigned to the 7th Special Forces Group as a team executive officer, with a follow-on combat tour to Vietnam as a team leader for A-429, with the 5th Special Forces Group, where he served with distinction.

Upon return from combat, Kraus became an instructor at the Mountain Ranger Camp in Georgia. He then entered Army Aviator training and earned his wings as a Cobra pilot. In 1969, he returned to Vietnam for his third combat tour, serving as a Cobra pilot in support of Special Forces in the Can Tho area.

Following civilian and military schooling, Kraus returned to the 1st SF Group in Okinawa, in 1973, where he served as a team leader and later as the assistant operations officer for the group. Under the leadership of the group operations officer, Captain Dick Meadows, Kraus honed his instincts about Special Forces and their employment.

The 1st SF Group was deactivated in 1974, which led to a conventional light Infantry tour for Kraus. During this time, he added Russian to his tool kit while completing advanced military and civilian schooling. His follow-on assignment was to Headquarters, Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Heidelberg, Germany, and later as a battalion commander for the 3rd Battalion, 10th SF Group, Fort Devens, Mass.

In 1982, then Lieutenant Colonel Kraus assumed command of the 3rd Battalion, 10th SF Group at Fort Devens. In 1982, terrorism erupted on the world scene with multiple airline hijackings and terrorism and instability in the country of Lebanon. The United States responded to the actions in Lebanon, and Kraus' 3rd Battalion was selected to deploy elements of the unit over a period of two years for a variety of missions.

In 1985, Kraus was named the operations officer, Office of the Chief of Staff, Headquarters, Washington D.C., directly responsible to the Secretary of the Army and Chief of Staff of the Army for the oversight of all Army sensitive special operations, special plans and other compartmented programs with other government agencies.

In 1989, Kraus returned to the operational force, assuming command of the 5th SF Group, Fort Campbell, Ky. During Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm, he commanded the Army Special Operations Task Force executing a wide range of unconventional missions behind Iraqi lines and assisting foreign allies with their front-line operations against the Iraqis. He also trained, organized and accompanied into battle six Kuwaiti brigades which became the basis of the Kuwaiti Army.

Following the war, Kraus returned to Washington, D.C., as the Chief, Special Operations Division, Joint Chiefs of Staff. In 1994, Kraus retired, relocating to the State of Montana, Kraus became the driving force behind the reactivation of a Special Forces Association Chapter 28, of which he became president of in 2002. In the tradition of the true Special Forces Soldier, Kraus led the chapter into training and developing Special Forces leaders for the future through the ROTC system in Montana and Idaho by funding leadership awards and scholarships. Leading by example as always, Kraus gives lectures on leadership at several of the institutions on a regular basis and cares for many of the old Soldiers from the 1st Special Service Force who still live in Montana. In 2009, he was awarded the Order of Saint Philip Neri Gold Medal.