

# DISTINGUISHED MEMBER OF THE SPECIAL FORCES REGIMENT



**Colonel David E. McCracken**  
**U.S. Army, Retired**

Inducted June 7, 2019



Colonel David E. McCracken spent his early years in Western Pennsylvania before he was accepted to, and graduated from, the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1974. He subsequently commissioned into the U.S. Army as an Infantry Lieutenant. Once Col. McCracken completed Airborne and Ranger training, he was assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

In 1977, Col. McCracken completed Special Forces training and was assigned as a detachment commander in Panama. Col. McCracken's follow-on assignment was as a company commander at Fort Bragg, before eventual assignment to Joint Staff Operations in Washington, D.C. During his time in Special Forces, Col. McCracken was instrumental in his role as the Headquarters Department of the Army principal staff officer within the Operations Directorate for establishment of the Special Forces Office Branch on April 9, 1987. He also served as the Headquarters Principal Staff Officer for the establishment of the United States Special Operations Command on April 16, 1987.

Col. McCracken's numerous assignments in the Special Forces Regiment include leading Company C, 3rd Bn., 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) on multiple combat missions during Operation Just Cause. On Dec. 20, 1989, Col. McCracken earned the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal with Arrowhead for serving in the heliborne assault of the Radio Nacional in the Controlaria General Building, which disabled a command and control node. Col. McCracken supervised assessment and selection of more than 2,400 candidates. He served in Training Group as the commander of Co. A, and eventually commander of 1st Bn. Col. McCracken revised and implemented all six, 24-week programs of instruction, ultimately training and qualifying more than 2,010 new Special Forces Soldiers from 1990-1993.

Col. McCracken then became the Special Forces Office Branch Chief responsible for the accession of more than 250 officers into the Special Forces Branch, and was responsible for the professional development of 2,100 officers from the rank of Captain through Lieutenant Colonel. He prioritized Joint duty at special operations commands and other joint headquarters, resulting in significantly more promotions to colonel based upon Joint Specialty Officer experience. Col. McCracken also commanded 3rd Special Forces Group(A) and established the Africa Crisis Response Initiative, training more than 3,500 peacekeepers to a UN-validated standard. He led the Special Operations Division of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and implemented the Joint Combined Exchange Training Authorization Document, which complied with law regarding human rights vetting authorizing deployment of every Special Forces unit worldwide to conduct joint and combined training. Upon his retirement in 2003, he joined the Federal Civil Service in the Department of Defense, serving in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict. He retired from civil service in 2012. Other awards earned during his 40 year career include: Defense Superior Service Medals, Legion of Merit, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal with Arrowhead, Combat Infantryman Badge, Meritorious Civilian Service Medal and Certificate of Appreciation from the Department of State-African Affairs.