

THE CODE OF CONDUCT

ARTICLE I

I AM AN AMERICAN, FIGHTING IN THE FORCES WHICH GUARD MY COUNTRY AND OUR WAY OF LIFE.

I AM PREPARED TO GIVE MY LIFE IN THEIR DEFENSE.

ARTICLE II

I WILL NEVER SURRENDER OF MY OWN FREE WILL.

IF IN COMMAND, I WILL NEVER SURRENDER THE MEMBERS OF MY COMMAND WHILE THEY STILL HAVE THE MEANS TO RESIST.

ARTICLE III

IF I AM CAPTURED I WILL CONTINUE TO RESIST BY ALL MEANS AVAILABLE. I WILL MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO ESCAPE AND TO AID OTHERS TO ESCAPE. I WILL ACCEPT NEITHER PAROLE NOR SPECIAL FAVORS FROM THE ENEMY.

ARTICLE IV

IF I BECOME A PRISONER OF WAR, I WILL KEEP FAITH WITH MY FELLOW PRISONERS. I WILL GIVE NO INFORMATION OR TAKE PART IN ANY ACTION WHICH MIGHT BE HARMFUL TO MY COMRADES. IF I AM SENIOR, I WILL TAKE COMMAND. IF NOT, I WILL OBEY THE LAWFUL ORDERS OF THOSE APPOINTED OVER ME AND WILL BACK THEM UP IN EVERY WAY.

ARTICLE V

WHEN QUESTIONED, SHOULD I BECOME A PRISONER OF WAR, I AM REQUIRED TO GIVE NAME, RANK, SERVICE NUMBER, AND DATE OF BIRTH. I WILL EVADE ANSWERING FURTHER QUESTIONS TO THE UTMOST OF MY ABILITY. I WILL MAKE NO ORAL OR WRITTEN STATEMENTS DISLOYAL TO MY COUNTRY AND ITS ALLIES OR HARMFUL TO THEIR CAUSE.

ARTICLE VI

I WILL NEVER FORGET THAT I AM AN AMERICAN, FIGHTING FOR FREEDOM, RESPONSIBLE FOR MY ACTIONS, AND DEDICATED TO THE PRINCIPLES WHICH MADE MY COUNTRY FREE. I WILL TRUST IN MY GOD AND IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



—SERE—

Doing More and Giving Back

SERE school. Those words can send chills down your spine, conjure up unforgettable memories or bring a shifty grin to the face of anyone who knows what those two words imply.

BY MAJOR ERIC L. JENSEN

If you ever attended the U.S. Army Special Operations Command's Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape course, then you are one of the brave few who volunteered for one of the Army's most rewarding schools: A school you will never forget. Company C, 1st Battalion, 1st Special Warfare Training Group (Airborne) at the U.S. Army's John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School is charged with running USASOC's SERE course and upholds the honorable lineage and reputation of professionalism that Col. Nick Rowe began in 1982. The company's mission is to train Army Special Operations Forces Soldiers in Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape to prepare them to succeed across the full spectrum of captivity to "Survive and Return with Honor." Today's course teaches 65 lessons plans. No small feat, considering the course is only 19 days long. As a result, SERE cadre knows, teaches and does more for the ARSOF Regiment than ever before. For that reason, it is a safe bet that SERE school as you know it has changed. In fact, it has changed quite a lot in the past 10 years alone. Company C accomplishes much more than just teaching Soldiers how to build a friction fire. It graduates a better trained resistor, returns a highly skilled and sought-after subject-matter-expert instructor to the operational force, and sends tailored mobile training teams to train ARSOF units preparing to deploy.



absolutely save their life or the life of the Soldier next to them." Lane has spent nearly 20 years as an instructor at USASOC's SERE course and is responsible for the lion's share of SERE's captivity scenario in the Resistance Training Laboratory. Throughout that time he has witnessed multiple changes to the course and many of SERE's lesson plans are new or updated to reflect the contemporary operational environment and the range of obstacles faced by today's special operations soldiers.

"Years ago we focused on just hammering home the Code of Conduct, and we didn't have the purposeful mindset of teaching resistance like we do today," says Lane. "Now these students graduate with the confidence to survive because they possess and demonstrate the knowledge to do so."

The Code of Conduct is a set of guiding principles for the behavior of a captive Soldier and has remained a primary focus of the course regardless of the many other changes. Of these changes, one of the most significant affected SERE's entire curriculum. In 2007, the SERE course changed from training that focused on a single type of captivity (war time) to training the full spectrum of captivity.

Now all graduates benefit from Peacetime Governmental Detention, Hostage Detention and War-Time Captivity training scenarios. This is important because our graduates deploy worldwide in support of ARSOF objectives in a wide range of threat environments and can encounter various types of threats and enemy exploitation. Giving the ARSOF warrior the basic skills to defeat exploitation by training in various captivity scenarios can greatly improve their combat effectiveness regardless of the landscape. Whether detained by the host-nation police force or the hostage of a violent extremist, the SERE graduate has the knowledge to survive and return with honor.

A BETTER PRODUCT FOR THE OPERATIONAL FORCE

Students at SERE school are flooded with a wealth of vital information, presented in a manner that is impactful and retainable. "It is extremely relevant information," says Bob Lane (a retired sergeant major and one of the most senior instructors of the course), "This stuff can



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In tandem with this curriculum change, students are now deliberately taught to develop situational awareness while captive. They accomplish this by determining: “who my captor is,” “what is my captor willing to do” and “what is my action plan to diminish captor goals?” This mindset is a significant shift from a student just making it through a 19-day “suckfest” to the purposeful learning and practice of real skills that they can apply in any isolating event. By teaching the full spectrum of captivity and developing situational awareness Soldiers have a broader understanding of captivity environments. It also forces them to think critically, exercise situational awareness and perform the appropriate actions to survive or resist a wide variety of captor exploits. Students learn the skills in a classroom setting first, then practice and observe other students practicing these resistance skills through a variety of captivity scenarios. These practice scenarios expose students to an array of enemy exploits and allow students to exercise situational awareness demonstrated by their appropriate responses given during the scenario. For example, a student responds very differently in a hostage detention scenario than if they were detained by host-nation police. Students are required to produce appropriate responses based on the scenario or situation in which they find themselves. This is not an easy task, as often times the correct response may seem counterintuitive, and any physical or environmental pressures applied can cause the surest of students to stumble. However, as the students practice and observe the mistakes of their peers in real time, they begin to develop the fundamental skills required for success.

Another important change took place in the Evasion and Escape portions of the course. The Evasion Detachment is responsible for training students in Personnel Recovery, and all aspects of evasion or escape planning. In 2008, the Evasion Detachment began to expressly train

— C CO., 1ST BN, 1ST SWTG (A) —
C/1/1 SWTG (A) trains ARSOF Soldiers in Survival, Resistance, Evasion and Escape to prepare them to succeed across the full spectrum of captivity to “Survive and Return with Honor.”

- » 19 Day Course
- » 90 Students/Class (Maximum)
- » 17 Classes Per Year
- » Primarily ARSOF Personnel

using the concept of Escape Mindedness. Escape mindedness is established by Article III of the Code of Conduct⁰¹ as a duty to make every effort to escape and is planned prior to, executed during and sustained after captivity. It may seem like common sense to escape your captors, but how do you successfully plan for it? This simple question caused a ripple effect of change in the detachment and the course as a whole. Instructors now steer students to refocus what they do towards a purposeful and successful escape mindset. As a result, this detachment’s field training program evolved from an ad hoc training scenario to today’s Evasion FTX (located on Camp Mackall and West Fort Bragg) that spans three days, three counties and tests all of their new skillsets. From blocks of instruction on locks and restraints to a new Escape Training Laboratory scenario, and from wilderness survival to wartime captivity, students are reminded that escape planning and preparation is central to their survival. Students now must plan and prepare to escape captors before they are captured, and later execute an approved plan of escape. This dramatically improved the

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SERE students learn skills in a classroom setting first, then practice and observe other students utilizing their resistance skills in a variety of captivity scenarios.
U.S. ARMY PHOTOS BY STAFF SERGEANT RUSSELL L. KLICKA

students' understanding and execution of successful evasion and escape planning.

With the majority of current conflicts being conducted in large cities, the need for urban evasion training has developed. This was another significant addition to the course. Today's ARSOF warrior conducts operations in urban areas more frequently than in recent history. A recent article in *Foreign Policy* noted that 75 percent of the world's population is expected to live in large cities by the year 2050 and as a result, conflicts will become more urban than ever before.⁰² Accordingly, SERE training must adjust to adequately prepare Soldiers to meet an evolving threat and to accomplish the mission. To this end, SERE school incorporated urban evasion classes that focus on planning considerations, disguises, navigation and movement techniques and practical exercises. This is part of the school's larger concerted effort to more closely align course instruction with current and future operating environments. An eventual goal for the company is to develop the Evasion FTX to include an urban evasion exercise through built-up areas and incorporated into the

mental tactics, techniques and procedures to successfully navigate an unconventional assisted recovery mechanism and are evaluated on their ability to incorporate that knowledge during the three-day Evasion FTX. These changes and other additions to the school place USASOC's SERE course at the tip of the spear in training ARSOF Soldiers to persevere through isolating events, while producing a highly competent resistor for the force. Quality SERE training is only as good as the instructor who provides it.

SOUGHT-AFTER EXPERTS FOR THE OPERATIONAL FORCE

Another area of strong focus is training the actual SERE cadre and their professional development. One of the command team's goals is to return highly skilled and highly sought-after instructors back to the ARSOF Regiment and operational force. Each instructor arrives to the company with the obligation to complete a three-year tour of duty at USJFKSWCS. Upon arrival instructors are assigned to one of the company's four

SURVIVAL

- » Shelters
- » Fire Building
- » Navigation
- » Food/Water Procurement
- » Primitive Tools

EVASION

- » Personnel Recovery
- » Evasion Plan of Action
- » Special Purpose Infiltration Extraction System (SPIES)
- » Tracker Awareness (Counter Tracking)

RESISTANCE

- » Code of Conduct / Geneva Convention
- » Legal Aspects of Captivity
- » Organization / Chain of Command
- » Resistance Lab Training

ESCAPE

- » Barriers Negotiation
- » Urban Evasion & Considerations
- » Escape Planning and Implementation

— CAPTIVITY SCENARIOS: Peace Time Government Detention | Hostage Detention | Armed Conflict (Wartime) —

course's overarching scenario. This will be the most effective way to comprehensively test students on their newly taught skills.

In concert with these additions, Evasion Detachment now instructs students on Non-Conventional Assisted Recovery and Unconventional Assisted Recovery mechanisms. Both are:

"...forms of personnel recovery conducted by an entity, group of entities or organizations that are trained and directed to contact, authenticate, support, move and exfiltrate U.S. military and other designated personnel from enemy-held or hostile areas to friendly control through established infrastructure or procedures. NAR includes unconventional assisted recovery."⁰³

These additions are important not only because they expose and prepare students to recognize and enter real-world recovery mechanisms, but also align with a course emphasis to train students to return with honor, as mentioned previously. It is also mandated by the Joint Personnel Recovery Agency⁰⁴ for inclusion in all SERE Level-C training. Students now learn the funda-



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01 SERE instructors guide students during Special Patrol Insertion/Extraction System (SPIES) training.

02 All SERE cadre are graduates of the SERE course and are highly trained. Civilian instructors are retired military with a wealth of knowledge and experience to pass on to students.

U.S. ARMY PHOTOS BY THOMAS K. FITZGERALD

detachments: Survival, Evasion, Resistance Academics or Resistance Training Lab. Once assigned to a detachment, new instructors begin their respective Basic Instructor Training Program. Each training program is tailored specifically to one of the four detachments and follows a unique training regimen meant to create a basic instructor prepared to teach at a minimal level. A basic instructor's training program varies greatly depending on the detachment and can take as long as six months to complete based on the detachment and the new instructor's performance during their training. However, most new SERE instructors can expect to begin teaching students within two months.

Over time, an instructor can progress to higher levels of proficiency and eventually attain the Advanced Instructor status, signifying the greatest level of expertise in that particular detachment. Some portions of the course's program of instruction require advanced training in order to prepare cadre to become subject-matter experts in their material and to provide critical enhancements to the quality of instruction. While

assigned to the company, cadre attends various civilian and military training venues required to progress within their respective Instructor Training Program and become SME's. Some of these venues include specialized escape or resistance schools taught exclusively by JPRA, tracking and counter-tracking, survival skills in a variety of climates and wilderness medicine. During a cadre member's tenure at the company, he attends mandatory professional development schools and has the opportunity to attend other specialty schools that progress and enhance an instructor's career. On average, a SERE instructor attends 8-10 schools or SERE-specific training events while assigned to the company. This keeps instructors competitive in their military career, and returns highly skilled Soldiers to the operational force with minimal baggage to interfere with their potential to deploy.

Equally important, Company C also provides sought-after experts to the operational force through Mobile Training Teams. The company offers the ARSOF Regiment instant access to its SME's and institutional knowledge through the employment of MTT's to a unit's training location. In 2014, Company C recognized a pattern of increasing demand for SERE-related training. In response, the company began utilizing the MTT with greater frequency, and in doing so, also supported ARSOF 2022 Priority #3 Operationalize the CONUS Base. Since then, the company has provided training support to nearly every SOF group in the ARSOF Regiment and access to its SME's at locations such as the Regimental Pre-Mission Training Facility at Fort Bliss, Texas, the Toro Negro National Forest in Puerto Rico and the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, Louisiana.

Skills learned during the SERE course are perishable and should be built into periodic detachment-level training to maintain proficiency. SERE MTT's train and refresh Soldiers on these perishable SERE skills; but distinct from the course, this training can be customized to suit the unit's needs or tailored to the unit's area of responsibility. In Fiscal Year 2015, the company conducted more than 30 MTT's and trained more than 500 Soldiers across the ARSOF Enterprise. By mid-2016, the company had already topped those numbers. In all cases, command teams and trainees alike instantly recognized the value of SERE refresher training and the need to maintain proficiency. Though training the operational force is critical, providing training to the civilian sector also has several benefits.

GIVING BACK

While cadre recognize the obvious usefulness of knowledge and experience in training SERE students, they also believe in the value of giving that knowledge back for a worthy cause. Like many members of the ARSOF Regiment, we give back to our various communities, both military and civilian, in many different ways. For years, the Survival Detachment has volunteered their personal time to support a number of admirable causes and events. For

example, 2016 marked the fifth anniversary of the Survival Detachment's voluntary participation in the Children of the Fallen Project. This event allows children who have recently lost a parent in combat to interact with others who have endured a similar loss. The event takes place in a truly unique setting on Camp Mackall, with extraordinary members of the Special Forces Regiment that few ever get to meet or experience. SERE Survival instructors supported and mentored 28 children and their surviving parents during that event, and not only did these children learn survival skills for the outdoors, but coping skills for life as well. Another example is the detachment's annual involvement with Gold Star Teen Adventures Organization. This organization provides outdoor adventure opportunities to Gold Star children of service members from the U.S. military's special-operations communities who also lost their lives in the line of duty. In 2015, the detachment provided survival training for 18 Gold Star teens consisting of reptile handling & identification, field expedient shelters, primitive traps, fire building techniques and primitive archery along with several other classes. The event culminated with archery and rabbit stick competitions, followed by a presentation of awards and certificates.

In 2014, the Survival Detachment completed a Coastal Survival Training Event near Fort Fisher, North Carolina. While preparing and during the conduct of the training, Survival cadre built lasting connections and relationships with prominent members of various state and local agencies, and businesses in the community. These relationships included the curator of the North Carolina Aquarium and North Carolina Park Ranger Service at Fort Fisher, the Cape Fear Serpentarium and the North Carolina Wildlife Resource Commission. As a result of these connections and to further bond these informal relationships, Survival cadre volunteered to complete a community service project by removing litter from a five mile stretch of beach along the Fort Fisher State Recreation Area. Additionally, and at the request of the Aquarium's curator, the cadre donated primitive devices made during their coastal survival training event to the North Carolina Aquarium. These devices included various primitive tools, traps and fishing utensils built from debris found in the local coastal area. Some of these devices can now be found on display throughout the Aquarium. Also in 2014, the Survival Detachment undertook a reforestation project at the Little Muddy Training Area on Camp Mackall. Detachment members researched and coordinated with the North Carolina Forest Service and Fort Bragg Forestry Offices to implement a full spectrum solution for the project. This solution included specialty equipment, soil and species analysis, species introduction procedures and a coordinated burn schedule as part of the seedling protection plan and long-term success of the reforestation project.

Ultimately, the detachment planted 350 bare root seedlings provided by the North Carolina Forest Service that mitigate training impacts on the local environment and foster good relationships with outside regulating agencies. These examples knowingly focus on one of the four detachments in the company and yet are only a glimpse of just a few of the many vignettes that exemplify SERE cadre's selflessness and willingness to give back. In their own way, each of the company's four detachments actively support and give back to the ARSOF Regiment, its military families and supportive communities.

CONCLUSION

Today, the company trains about 1,500 Soldiers annually. Although the throughput has nearly doubled since 2001 and the SERE course has undergone many changes over the years, two things remain the same: the quality of instruction and professionalism of its cadre. SERE instructors take special pride in their work, as experts in their field, and in honoring the legacy, preserving the reputation and building upon previous successes. SERE instructors consistently welcome the opportunity to give back to the Special Operations Regiment regardless of ongoing changes and fluctuations in workload or operational tempo; a true testament to their character. **SW**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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NOTES 01. Article III of the Code of Conduct for Members of the United States Armed Forces states, "If I am captured I will continue to resist by all means available. I will make every effort to escape and aid others to escape. I will accept neither parole nor special favors from the enemy." (IAW Executive Order 10631). 02. Kilcullen, David. *The Future of War?: Expect to see urban, connected, irregular 'zombie' conflicts*. 14 February 2014. 20 April 2016. <<http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/02/05/the-future-of-war-expect-to-see-urban-connected-irregular-zombie-conflicts/>>. 03. DoDI 2310.6. Dept of Defense Instruction. Washington D.C.: Department of Defense, 13 OCT 2000. 04. JPRA is the Department of Defense's (DoD) office of primary responsibility for DoD-wide personnel recovery (PR) matters and provides Joint PR training standards, assesses and evaluates all SERE-related training within DoD.