

Maj. Richard James “Dick” Meadows

Maj. Richard James “Dick” Meadows was a pivotal figure in the creation of modern-day Special Forces.¹ Enlisting in 1946, at age fifteen, Meadows served with the 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team during the Korean War. In 1953, then Staff Sgt. Meadows joined the early Special Forces’ 77th and later 10th Special Forces Groups (SFG).²

In the early 1960s, as an American exchange officer, he served with the British 22nd Special Air Service (SAS) in the United Kingdom and Oman. Afterwards, Sgt. 1st Class Meadows participated in Operation White Star in Laos as part of 7th SFG and subsequently assisted in the activation of the 8th SFG in Panama that was intended to counter aggressive communist insurgent activities in Latin America.³ He was assigned to the Military Assistance Command-Vietnam Studies and Observation Group in 1965, an innocuous cover name for an organization conducting clandestine missions throughout Southeast Asia. In the estimation of his superiors, Meadows’s contributions to several successful high-priority missions conducted by that group rated a battlefield commission directly to the rank of captain in 1967.⁴

After Meadows’s second Vietnam tour and service in the Ranger Department at Fort Benning (now Fort Moore), he served as the assault group commander (the team was code named Blueboy) under Col. Arthur D. “Bull Simons” for the Son Tay prison camp raid in 1970.⁵ The Son Tay prison raid operation’s objective was to recover American POWs held in North Vietnam near its capital of Hanoi.

Meadows retired in June 1977 but continued to serve the military as a civilian who was crucial to the founding of 1st Special Forces Operational



Maj. Richard J. “Dick” Meadows (Photo courtesy of the U.S. Army)

Detachment-Delta—later known popularly as Delta Force—a unit specializing in counterterrorism.⁶ In 1980, as a civilian, Meadows served covertly in Tehran, Iran, during Operation Eagle Claw, which was better known as the attempted Iran hostage rescue mission.

Meadows died on 29 July 1995 and was interred in the Barrancas National Cemetery, Pensacola Naval Air Station, Florida. His awards and honors include the Distinguished Service Cross, Silver Star, Bronze Star for Valor, and the Presidential Citizens Medal, among many others. He was inducted into the Ranger Hall of Fame in 1996 and also received the U.S. Special Operations Command “Bull” Simons Award. In 1997, a statue, dedicated in Meadows’s memory and commissioned by Ross Perot, was placed on the U.S. Army Special Operations Command Memorial Field on Fort Bragg (now Fort Liberty).⁷ ■

Notes

1. Wikipedia, s.v. “Richard J. Meadows,” last updated 30 August 2024, 09:46, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_J._Meadows.

2. Ibid.

3. “MAJ Richard J. ‘Dick’ Meadows,” U.S. Army Special Operations (USASOC) History Office, accessed 29 October 2024, <https://arsof-history.org/icons/meadows.html>.

4. Ibid.

5. Wikipedia, “Richard J. Meadows,”; USASOC History Office, “MAJ Richard J. ‘Dick’ Meadows.”

6. Wikipedia, “Richard J. Meadows.”

7. USASOC History Office, “MAJ Richard J. ‘Dick’ Meadows.”