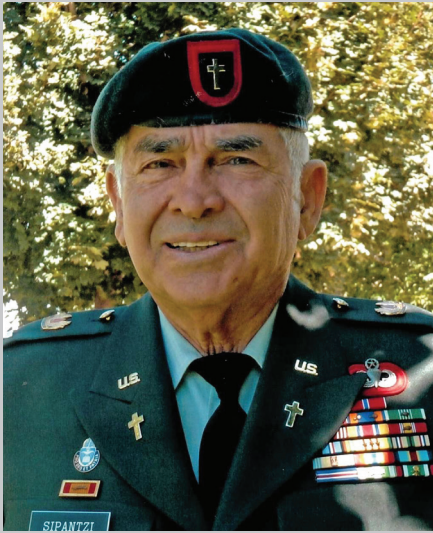


## DISTINGUISHED MEMBER OF THE SPECIAL FORCES REGIMENT



**COLONEL (CHAPLAIN)  
VAHAN SIPANTZI**  
*U.S. Army, Retired*

Inducted November 5, 2020



As a young non-commissioned officer in the U.S. army, Vahan Sipantzi was among the first Soldiers to volunteer for service in the U.S. Army Special Forces. One of the "originals," he served under Col. Aaron Bank, "the father of Special Forces." Then, Sgt. Sipantzi trained the first class to undergo formal SF training.

During his illustrious career, he served in both general purpose and special operations units and commands. As a Special Forces Soldier, he served in the 1st, 7th, 10th, 12th, 17th and 77th Special Forces Groups as an NCO and later as Executive Officer, Commander and Chaplain. In 1967, he served as a unit chaplain in the 101st Airborne Division in Vietnam, where he saw not only to the spiritual needs of his Soldiers, but also took the lead in assisting them in building and supporting orphanages.

As Command Chaplain of the 351st Civil Affairs Command, he brought his Special Forces training and background to the Army Reserve Civil Affairs community at a time when they were being integrated into Army Special Operations. He later deployed to Iraq as Unit Chaplain of the 422 CA Company assigned to, and in direct support of, the 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized) in Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm. While there, he was instrumental in establishing two refugee camps in his area and was a key player in the rescue and repatriation of an Iraqi professor married to an American who had recently returned to the United States with their children.

Chaplain Sipantzi's service in Special Forces units was also noteworthy. While serving multiple tours with 3rd Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) in Panama, El Salvador, Honduras, Bolivia and Peru, he not only provided religious counseling service to his SF brothers, but also participated in numerous Medial Civic Action Programs, building relationships with local missionary groups and religious leaders, which enhanced the unit's success.

After more than 40 years of selfless service, he returned from the Army in 1993. His commitment to the Special Forces Motto – "De Oppresso libre," never wavered. He continued to serve those in need around the world. During his retirement, he has responded to crisis in Haiti, Nigeria, Chile, Mexico and even here at home in Mississippi following Hurricane Katrina.

Chaplain Sipantzi uses his farm's output to provide fruit and vegetables to a local church and food bank serving the needy, donating more than 12,000 pounds of apples and more than 12,000 pounds of vegetables to a local food bank. Chaplain Sipantzi is the embodiment of Special Forces.