

DISTINGUISHED MEMBER OF THE SPECIAL FORCES REGIMENT



**CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 4
ROBERT E. PENNINGTON**
U.S. Army, Retired

Inducted November 5, 2020



Chief Warrant Officer 4 Robert E. Pennington, retired, served in the U.S. Army for over 30 years, 26 of those years in the Special Forces Regiment. He joined the Army in 1985 and graduated from the Special Forces Qualification Course in 1990 as a weapons sergeant and went on to serve with 5th Special Forces Group at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. He then went on to deploy in support of Operation DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM as part of the Coalition Forces to liberate Kuwait from Iraqi forces. He was assigned to ODA-576, Company A, 3rd Battalion serving on a Coalition Support Team, liaising with the 20th Saudi Arabian Mechanized Infantry along with the 6th Kuwaiti Tank Company. He advised and trained his Coalition partners on small unit tactics, indirect fire and marksmanship. When ground combat operations started, Pennington's element spearheaded the assault with his coalition partners while under heavy attack.

From 1993 to 1996, Pennington was assigned to ODA-566 (Special Project's Team) and deployed into the Middle East and Africa on five classified Joint Chiefs of Staff-directed missions serving as the detachment's noncommissioned officer in charge (NCOIC) of intelligence collection packets. These packets were used by Joint Special Operations Command and Central Command for their operational use. From 1996-1999, he was assigned to Operational Test and Evaluation Command, Joint Combat Search and Rescue (JCSAR), Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada, as the NCOIC for Special Operations Forces participating in joint rescue exercises, evaluating tactics, techniques, and procedures for personnel recovery operations.

In 1999, Pennington graduated from the Warrant Officer Candidate School and then completed the Special Forces Warrant Officer Basic Course at Fort Bragg, now named Fort Liberty, North Carolina. He spent the next 11 years assigned to Company C, 3rd Battalion, 5th Special Forces Group.

In October 2001, Pennington's ODA participated in the initial infiltration into northern Afghanistan, in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. As the first detachment on the ground in Afghanistan, he and the men of ODA-595 conducted horse mounted combat operations by advising offensive Foreign Internal Defense, Terminal Guidance Operations and unconventional warfare under direct and imminent threat from hundreds of Taliban mounted and dismounted forces. Identified to former President George W. Bush as the "Horse Soldiers," Pennington and ODA-595 with Northern Alliance forces, were credited for the liberation of over 50 cities and villages, destroying over 200 enemy vehicles and bunkers, and killing or capturing over 5,000 Taliban fighters during their campaign. After redeploying, he advised Defense Advanced Research Project Agency on its simulated wartime depiction for the Battle of Mazar E Sharif, Afghanistan for which he played a key role as the Assistant Detachment Commander on ODA-595. This system approved by U.S. Army Special Operations Command and U.S. Central Command, is still used today to enhance joint interagency development for future leaders throughout the Department of Defense. In 2004, Pennington was reassigned to ODA-593 and served as the detachment commander, deploying into Iraq in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM II. From 2005 to 2010, Pennington deployed in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM III, V, and VII, serving as a company operations warrant and then company executive officer. During his time with 5th Special Forces Group, he deployed into countries of the Middle East, Northeast and Horn of Africa, and Southwestern Asia.

In 2010, Pennington was assigned to Special Forces Doctrine and Training Division, U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, Fort Bragg, North Carolina, where he served as the team chief/analyst and subject matter expert for advanced special operations techniques, preparation of the environment and unconventional warfare manuals. In the fall of 2012, Pennington was reassigned to 1st Battalion, 1st Special Warfare Training Group (Airborne) (SWTG (A)), Camp Mackall, where he served as the senior warrant officer advisor/operations warrant. In October 2014, Pennington was then selected by the 1st SWTG (A) group commander to stand up and command a company within 4th Battalion solely to train conventional forces in foreign weapons employment and range operations in order to support security force assistance operations throughout the Africa Command and Southern Command areas of responsibilities.

After retirement, Pennington conducted numerous interviews and briefs, delivering words and information to military and civilian audiences about the unique capabilities of Special Forces in the conduct of war and peacetime operations. He has been a consultant on films, several books and manuscripts and monographs for the Joint Special Operations University. Pennington participates in several fundraisers for charity organizations that support Special Forces personnel and their families. Among the many awards he has received are the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal with Valor Device and two Oak Leaf Clusters, Defense Meritorious Service Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, Meritorious Service Medal with two Oak Leaf Clusters, as well as Commendation, Achievement, service/campaign medals, the Combat Infantryman's Badge 2nd Award, Master Parachutist Badge, Air Assault Badge, Special Forces Tab and several Foreign Parachutist Badges. Pennington has been inducted into the Georgia Military Veteran's Hall of Fame.