



2022

—
ANNUAL
REPORT

A WORD FROM OUR FOUNDER

Dear Friend,
SOAA has grown and expanded its impact significantly over the last year, and I sincerely thank you for your incredible support of our organization and the men and women in the Special Operations Community. Your support, whether financial, through social media, or event attendance, has given Special Operators a voice and platform for their stories to be heard in Washington DC and around the world.

In fact, we experienced so much growth that we brought on several staff members including an Executive Director, David Cook. David served for a decade on active duty and currently serves in the Army Reserves as a Psychological Operator and has a wealth of experience on Capitol Hill through serving on Rep. Issa's Staff and as a Senior Policy Advisor to the US House of Representatives. We are thrilled to have David on our team.

This growth has allowed us to accomplish more than we thought possible. Not only did we accomplish the missions we had planned for the year, but as you can imagine, we shifted focus to the war in Ukraine. We have two rotating teams present on ground constantly. Across the teams, we have taken fifteen trips to the front lines. Our missions have centered around non-standard logistics and last-mile delivery, training and advising on de-mining and Tactical Combat Casualty Care, and oversight and accountability. We firmly believe that our nation's leaders need to hear the ground truth from Operators who have dirt under their fingernails in order to best inform matters of our own national security, as well as to equip Ukraine with the medical training and humanitarian aid needed to be victorious against their Russian invaders. This is not just a war in a far-off place. This is a war between democracy and tyranny and it impacts all of us.

The work of supporting our SOF Community is ever-changing, as foreign conflicts, policy, and our nation's priorities are in constant flux. We must take on new challenges with precision, while not letting up on the tenants we hold most dear. With your continued support, we will continue to fight for our Ukrainian and Afghan Allies, healthcare needs for our SOF brothers and sisters, suicide prevention, equal treatment for women in SOF, and all the SOF-impacting challenges that lie ahead. I encourage you to read the following pages to review the missions you have helped us face head-on this past year, and dream with me about the possibilities 2023 holds for SOAA.



Daniel Elkins with Mayor of Kyiv, and former world champion boxer, Vitali Klitschko


Daniel Elkins

Founder, Green Beret, SOF Combat Veteran

OUR NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



I am proud to lead SOAA through 2023 and beyond. As the only Veteran Service Organization whose singular focus is Special Operations Forces (SOF), our purpose is to advocate for past, present, and future SOF members and their families.

In less than eight months, two decades of counter-terror missions ended and near-peer conflict began. We have witnessed geopolitical arbitrage - trading one mission for another. SOF is uniquely suited to handle these challenges, and we will be there to support them every step of the way.

The chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan left many of us confused, angry, and sad - thinking back on who and what we left behind - that didn't stop us. We continued our mission, helping our Afghan allies escape the grasp of the Taliban and ensuring their settlement in the United States.

With barely enough time to digest what happened in Afghanistan, President Putin invaded Ukraine. The blatant violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and the ensuing global response made it clear that the collective right to freedom and democracy will not lay down without a fight. The Ukrainian people are fighting for all of us, for all democracies. We must give the Ukrainian people every ounce of support possible.

I see these events as a metaphor matching SOAA's priorities. SOAA is an advocate for past, present, and future SOF and their families. More than twenty years of counter-terror operations may have abruptly ended, but we cannot lose sight of the past and the hidden injuries that come with it. Looking ahead, we face uncertain times in an unstable world. SOF is uniquely suited to thrive among instability, but we know this comes with a high cost. It is SOAA's mission to continue to listen, anticipate, and advocate for each unmet need that Special Operators and their families continually face.

I am grateful to have the opportunity to serve as Executive Director at SOAA and look forward to forging new relationships throughout the coming year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Cook'.

David Cook
Executive Director

UKRAINE AID STATS



- 15 trips into Ukraine
- 15-20,000 lbs of medical equipment delivered
- 100 students trained in Train-the-Trainer Program
- 1000+ trained in basic de-mining and EOC skills
- 1000+ of landmines and UXO disabled
- 1000 Ukrainian soldiers trained in TCCC
(Tactical Combat Casualty Care)
- 100 tons of humanitarian aid supplies delivered
- 5000 provided with counseling and support

2022 TOP PRIORITIES

HEALTHCARE FOR SOF ACTIVE-DUTY AND VETERANS

SOF members are diagnosed with rare cancers, post-traumatic stress disorder, trauma, and depression at much higher rates than conventional military members, and their risk of suicide is 33% higher. To address these concerning statistics, we fought and won the PACT Act, the Camp Lejeune Justice Act while ushering in the introduction of the Breakthrough Therapies Act and the Right to Try Clarification Act. Additionally, we formed a strategic partnership with Patients Rising to create Veterans Patients Rising, which will fully launch in 2023 and will advocate for veterans and their families to receive the right treatment at the right time.

There has long been a double-standard for women operators, Cultural Support Teams (CST), which prevented women SOF veterans from receiving disability ratings and the VA care they have earned and deserve. We introduced the Jax Act, working closely with women operators and Congressman Darrell Issa to allow CST members to be reviewed through the VA process following years of not receiving entitlements.

ENTITLEMENTS FOR WOMEN IN SOF

SUPPORT FOR AFGHAN AND UKRAINIAN ALLIES

We must keep our promises to our Afghan and Ukrainian Allies. We have continued our work by providing a network of safe-houses to save the lives of our Afghan allies who are being hunted by the Taliban, to include supporting efforts to make sure those we have served alongside can obtain Special Immigrant Visas. Stateside, we worked with partners like ReactDC to hold hiring events for refugees, and we hosted 93 Ukrainian families for a respite from their war-torn country in Greece in November.

SOF members take on the most rigorous training and experiences in the military. Despite their advanced skills and abilities, operators often face difficulties transitioning into the civilian sector, whether due to lack of translation and recognition of skills or the toll countless combat missions have taken. We partner with The Honor Foundation, Talent War Group and Indiana Wesleyan University to improve the transition process and accelerate degree completion. In addition we proudly support the Guard and Reserve GI Bill Parity Act this Congress, and are confident of its full passage in the 118th.

EDUCATIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL SUPPORT FOR SOF MEMBERS

ENGAGEMENT NUMBERS

A snapshot of SOAA's accomplishments in 2022

42,668

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

1,000,000+

SOCIAL MEDIA REACH

31

MEDIA APPEARANCES

300+

LEGISLATIVE ENGAGEMENTS

6835

NEW STAKEHOLDERS

11,345

NEW CONTRIBUTORS



MISSIONS ACCOMPLISHED

1 **Afghanistan Humanitarian Efforts**

2022 held laser-focus on supporting our Afghan Allies and refugees. In addition to maintaining the safe house network and continuing to raise funds for the humanitarian crisis, we championed the Senate Resolution Honoring Veteran Volunteer Organizations, the Afghan Special Operations Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) Expansion in the Afghan Adjustment Act, the Afghan SOF Enlistment Champion and accompanying language, a letter to President Biden fighting for the release and SIV recognition for Lt. Abdul Wasi Safi held at the Mexican border, and an Afghan SOF Parolee Survey.

2 **SOF Suicide Prevention**

We cannot allow SOF veteran suicide rates to continue climbing. Securing legal pathways for SOF veterans to access safe and effective Psychedelic-Assisted Therapies remains a top priority in our campaign to end veteran death by suicide. SOAA has Champions and Legislation ready for 2023 to provide legal access, fund and implement VA trials and research, and resolve conflicting DEA and DOJ policy, so that SOF veterans have access to world-class treatments that work.

3 **Education Benefits and Accelerated Degree Pathways for SOF**

SOAA has partnered with Indiana Wesleyan University to create degree pathways that take full advantage of military training and experiences, so that SOF members have the ability to start as seniors and complete their bachelor's program in a year or less. To make education more accessible, we are fighting Guard and Reserve GI Bill Parity, 85/15 and 90/10 Rule reform, and MHA Parity for those attending school online.

4 **Ground Truth: Foreign Policy and National Security**

Policymakers and the general population must hear the truth from operators who are downrange serving. To that end, we lead coalitions of Veteran's Service Organizations to call upon policy makers on the Hill to take action on critical issues like the investigation into the botched withdrawal from Afghanistan, saving our Afghan allies from certain death at the hands of the Taliban, and ensuring access to vital healthcare for all veterans and their families. Further, we were invited as subject matter experts on multiple news networks, including FOXNews and CNN to educate on these topics.

5 **Women in SOF**

Women in the SOF community face unique challenges and are often denied equal treatment and benefits to those of their male counterparts. This year, not only have we been busy raising awareness of this unequal treatment, but we are actively fighting for the passage of the Jax Act of 2023. Our sisters from Cultural Support Teams fought, bled, and made the ultimate sacrifice during their service to our country. The Jax act will finally address the inequity and restore honor to SOF women veterans.



WEBSITE FOR CSTs



We continue our critical work to ensure equal treatment for our sisters who serve in Cultural Support Teams (CSTs). Our board member, Jaclyn "Jax" Scott, a former CST Operator, has developed a website to generate awareness around SOAA's efforts on CST legislation.

The intent of the website is to provide an easy avenue for more CSTs to share their stories and unique challenges either in person or on Capitol Hill. On the site, they can choose to fill out a simple form that takes just a few minutes to share their experiences with us.

Jax understands that in order for change to take place, these often untold and painful stories must be heard. During her various combat missions, she sustained Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI), developed Post Traumatic Stress (PTS), endured Military Sexual Trauma (MST), and continues to experience significant pain throughout her body. With all those wounds, one would think she would have been diagnosed with a high percentage of service-connected disability, but the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has given her a 0% rating. She has fought the VA since 2016 to have her injuries recognized, all while battling financial strife, substance abuse, and even homelessness. The VA repeatedly turned its back on her.



"Why?" you may ask. CSTs have not historically been "assigned" to Special Operations Command during deployments, but instead "attached". This small distinction in designation allows the VA to deny treatment and disability ratings. Unfortunately, Jax's story is all too common. Gender and technicalities are discrediting their service in SOF.

Our sisters fight beside us in SOF, so it is critical we use SOAA's influence to eradicate this rampant unequal treatment. The harrowing stories of CSTs must be heard in order to raise awareness and drive legislation, like the Jax Act of 2023. Visit the site to learn more:

<https://culturalsupportteam.org/>.

THE YEAR AHEAD

1

Women in SOF

The fight will continue for our sisters from Cultural Support Teams. Their service must be recognized, so they may receive VA treatment for their combat-inflicted wounds. The Jax Act of 2023 will address the inequity and restore the honor that has been systematically denied to SOF women veterans.

2

Afghan Special Ops SIV-Expansion

SOAA will champion and ensure that Afghan Special Operations SIV-Expansion language is introduced focused on the needs of Afghan SOF. It will be accompanied by Military Enlistment Pathways to Citizenship to ensure our Afghan SOF allies and their families have a means to safety and citizenship in the United States of America.

3

Support for Ukraine

It is our moral obligation and in the interest of our National Security and Defense to come to the aid of our partner forces and international allies. SOAA will continue to support Ukraine, providing medical training and resources to Ukrainian defense forces.

4

Life-saving Treatment Access for SOF

Securing legal pathways for SOF veterans to access safe and effective Psychedelic-Assisted Therapies remains a top priority for SOAA in our campaign to end veteran death by suicide. SOAA has champions and legislation ready to provide legal access, fund and implement VA trials and research, and resolve conflicting DEA and DOJ policy, so that SOF Veterans have access to world-class treatments that work.

5

Veterans Patients Rising

SOAA is partnering with Patient Rising to tackle systemic problems inherent in our current healthcare system so that SOF Veterans have access to the right treatments for the right person at the right time.



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Thank you! We could not have accomplished so much for the SOF Community this year without your partnership and support.

Will you join us in 2023?

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