



## National Police Week Closing Ceremony

412 SFS, EDWARDS AFB, CA

FRIDAY MAY 17<sup>TH</sup> 2024

By

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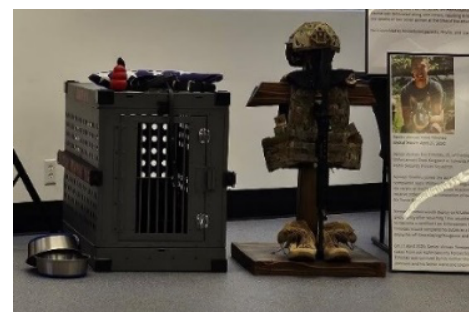
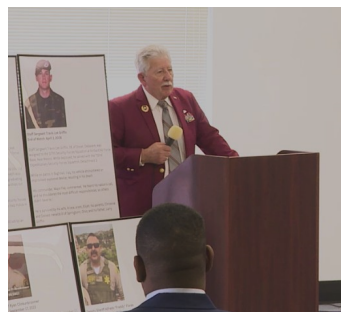


As nearly all of us who have ever worn the Security Forces Shield know, since 1962, May 15th has been designated as Peace Officers Memorial Day. The day is set aside to honor Federal, State, and Municipal officers who have been killed or injured in the line of duty. The week in which that day falls is designated National Police Week. Our present-day Air Force Defenders, like their civilian counterparts, take this week to recognize and honor our own fallen heroes. Edwards AFB's 412<sup>th</sup> SFS was right in step for the occasion.

Lt Col Patrick Gordon, the unit commander and his cops crafted a very fitting closing ceremony on Friday, May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024, which was supported by wing leadership, squadron members and family, and local enforcement representatives. The base Chapel Annex was filled to capacity to include honored guests from the Jones Family, whose son sadly passed away in May 2020, in a swimming accident while assigned to their squadron.



You may ask: why is DeCubellis involved in this event? Seems eloquent guest speakers were in short supply throughout the Southland, so Lt Col Gordon reached out to AFSFA's president John Probst, who in turn contacted me. With a little arm-twisting, they convinced me to drive 3 hours to make the presentation at the Edwards event. Then I talked Mike Kennedy into joining me! If you'll continue reading, you'll see my reason went beyond having company and a navigator!



Photos and biographies of the fallen were displayed at the head of the room and, as each name was solemnly read, the assembled men and women rendered one pushup in their honor. The Los Angeles County Sheriff's bagpiper's music was a somber and touching contribution to the solemnity of this day of remembrance.



I discovered as I did homework to craft some meaningful comments, that VSPA brother Mike Kennedy had some linkage to the area and what we were commemorating. Prior to his Bien Hoa tour, he'd been assigned to nearby George AFB. While Mike was in transit in 1969, his flight chief and mentor was gunned down in a domestic dispute.

Mike later found out that TSgt Isiah Roberts' name was not included on the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial in Washington DC, and so he took up the cause. After nearly two years of research and diligent negotiations with various officials, Kennedy accomplished his mission. TSgt Roberts, the 95th SFS's TSgt Butler (murdered in a traffic stop), and VSPA's Capitol Police Officer JJ Chestnut (lost on Jul 28, 1998 in a shooting on post in the US Capital Building) were all honored in May 1999. Mike attended the "Candlelight Vigil" where each name was read, in Washington DC with TSgt Roberts' widow and her children. Like VSPA's Motto: "We Take Care of Our Own."

Touching on other matters of our career field's history and heritage, I told the participants how proud we are of today's Defenders, noting they will face many challenges--- some constants and many new ones. In some ways, the "attitudes" foisted upon today's Defenders and their fellow LEOs are not a lot different from what we Vietnam veterans dealt with upon returning home from an unpopular war. Our on-going initiative to memorialize "Knife-13" was touched upon. The first of two monuments going up at the Security Forces Museum on JB Lackland will honor those 18 cops and 5 aircrew lost while supporting the recovery of the SS Mayaguez off the coast of Cambodia in 1975.

I encouraged them to be supportive of each other, to be professional at all times, and to realize that most of the public they serve appreciate and value their service and sacrifices. Mike Kennedy and I thanked them for the opportunity to join them in their closing ceremony.

In closing I left them with: "memorials are built, names are read, and words are spoken for one reason: to honor the fallen and what they stood for. It's been said that as long as the names of our fallen are spoken, they will not be forgotten."

Following the end of the ceremony, Lt Col Gordon gave us a tour of his squadron and we watched a Guardmount and had some interesting discussions and swapped coins. It was well worth the trip!



**National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial**

