

HISTORY
OF THE
United States Air Force Special Tactics and Rescue Specialists
(USAF STARS)

July 1996 – October 2002

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Preface

This study examines how the Special Tactics and Rescue Specialists (STARS) team evolved from an ad hoc team to a semi-permanent command team. It also examines some of the issues that caused the team to be created and finally some of the reasons that the team was disbanded.

The STARS were a combination of both pararescuemen and combat control specialists assigned to the Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) headquartered at Hurlburt Field, Florida. The team of specialists provided parachute jump demonstrations promoting the trained skills learned from being a member of the United States Air Force.

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Introduction

The Air Force parachute demonstration team in Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) began operating as an ad hoc team in 1996. Known as the United States Air Force (USAF) Special Tactics and Rescue Specialist (STARS) the team performed at various functions in an effort to recruit combat control and pararescue personnel. Although the team operated without an allocated budget, dedicated airlift support, or permanently assigned "STARS only" team members for almost 6 years, the team disbanded in 2002.

The STARS program evolved in 1996 from a verbal request for Air Force specific parachute canopies by participants of a parachute demonstration team in the local community in the state of Washington. The team consisted of members of the 22d Special Tactics Squadron (STS) stationed at McChord Air Force Base (AFB), Washington. These members, Chief Master Sergeant (CMSgt) James D. Charvet, Technical Sergeants (TSgt) David A. Thomas, Stacey A. Poland, and Staff Sergeant (SSgt) Peter K. Muschke, conducted demonstration parachute jumps using standard gray parachutes.¹



Background on Parachute Teams

The STARS, or AFSOC parachute demonstration

Figure 1. MSgt Stacey Poland landing

team, joined an elite alumni of active special operations parachute teams: the Army's Black Daggers, the Navy's Leap Frogs, and the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) parachute team. The STARS mirrored the 1960s era United States Air Force Europe (USAFE) command parachute team, the Blue Masters. The Blue Masters team consisted of combat control team (CCT) members from the 5th Aerial Port

¹ Intvw (U), W.T. Wesley, AFSOC/HO, with MSgt Stacey Poland, AFSOC/DOCT, 25 Jun 03, SD 1; Bio (U), MSgt Stacey Poland, Apr 02, SD 2.

Squadron. As early as 1964, commandos were jumping in public venues. That same year commando parachutists won top honors in the Southern Conference Championships, the Gulf Coast Parachute Association, and they even competed in the All-Service Invitational at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Four commandos, Captains (Capt) John J. Garrity and Craig D. Elliot, Master Sergeant (MSgt) James A. Howell, and SSgt Morton J. Freedman garnered most of the top honors. Other active United States military parachute teams included the United States (U.S.) Army's West Point parachute team "Black Knights," the U.S. Army's Golden Knights, and the U.S. Air Force Academy's Wings of Blue.²

Laying the Foundation

During attendance at a local demonstration jump at McChord AFB, Washington, CMSgt Wayne G. Norrad, 720th Special Tactics Group (STG) Combat Control and Pararescue Recruiting Liaison, received the request from Sergeant Poland about getting Air Force specific canopies for these demonstration jumps. The gray operational parachutes used for the demonstrations did not clearly identify the jumpers as being Air Force versus Army paratroopers.³

² Hist (S/NOFORN/Decl: X1/2/3/4/5/6/7/8), History of the 720th Special Tactics Group, 1 January-31 December 2002, pp 39-44, info used (U), SD 3; Fact Sheet (U), "USAF STARS Parachute Demonstration Team," n.d., SD 4; MFR (U), 720 STG/HO, "Formation of STARS Team," 7 Jan 03, SD 5; Paper (U), USSOCOM website, "Team Main Page," 21 Jun 04, SD 6; Paper (U), Wings of Blue website, "Wings of Blue," 10 Jul 03, SD 7; Paper (U), The Black Daggers website, "Black Daggers Fact Sheet," n.d., SD 8; Paper (U), West Point website, "Parachute Team Homepage," 21 Jun 04, SD 9; Paper (U), United States Navy Parachute Team Web Site, "Leap Frogs Home," 15 Jul 04, SD 10, Fax (U), HQ USAFE/HO to MSgt Lori St Amant, [USAFE "BLUE MASTERS"] 13 Jan 03, SD 11; Paper (U), Golden Knights website "US Army Parachute Team," 28 Jun 04, SD 12; Hist (U), USAF Special Air Warfare Center, 1 Jul-31 Dec 64, SD 13.

³ See note 1; TSgt Ray Johnson, "Chute for the STARS Special tactics teams drop in to assist recruiting," Airman, Aug 98, SD 14.

Chief Norrad, during a visit to the Recruiting Service, proposed the idea of specific parachute canopies to Colonel Mead, Vice Commander of Air Force Recruiting Service



Figure 2. CMSgt Wayne Norrad, USAF, Retired

and Mr. Tim Talbert, Chief of Advertising. Mr. Talbert suggested that Chief Norrad contact the Air Force 50th Anniversary Committee. Chief Norrad called the Committee's project officer Major (Maj) Audrey Bahler and then followed up with a memo for record. The major requested a letter with 720 STG commander concurrence and suggested AFSOC commander's support would help expedite approval of Headquarters (HQ) USAF Assistant Vice Chief of Staff. The AFSOC Commander, Major General (Maj Gen) James L.

Hobson, Jr., sent a letter to HQ USAF Assistant

Vice Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General (Lt Gen)

Lloyd W. Newton, on 28 June 1996 proposing

"AIM HIGH – AIR FORCE" canopies, and on 22 July 1996 General Newton enthusiastically replied supporting the idea. In the letter, it spelled out that only up to \$24 thousand was available to fund the parachutes and it suggested that AFSOC provide the other half of the required \$48 thousand. The Air Force Financial Management Board provided guidance on the procedures to purchase the parachutes emphasizing because the parachutes required did not meet standard or combat configured specifications, there would be no central management of the parachutes purchased with operations and maintenance (O&M) funds.⁴

⁴ SSS w/o atch (U), 720 STG/CCR, "Combat Control and Pararescue Parachute Demonstration Systems," 28 Jun 96, SD 15; Ltr (U), 720 STG to Maj Bahler, "Combat Control & Pararescue Parachute Jump Demonstrations," 17 Jun 96, SD 16; Ltr (U), AFSOC/CC to HQ USAF/CVA, "Combat Control and Pararescue Parachute Demonstration Systems," 28 Jun 96, SD 17; Ltr (U), HQ USAF/CVA to AFSOC/CC, "Combat Control and Pararescue Demo Parachute Systems (Your Ltr, 28 June 1996)," 22 Jul 96, SD 18; Ltr (U), SAF/FMBO to AF/CVAX, ["AIM HIGH-AIR FORCE" Logo Parachutes for AFSOC

The Air Force provided the \$24 thousand and the 720 STG prepared to cover the team's operational expenses. However, further communications with the parachute vendor, North American Aerodynamics, determined that \$48 thousand did not cover everything that was needed and the price moved up to \$70 thousand. On 15 August 1996, Colonel (Col) Craig F. Brotchie, 720 STG Commander, faxed Mr. Talbert a letter requesting additional funding to cover the cost of the parachutes and necessary equipment. An attachment to the letter gave details of the additional expenses. Since Mr. Talbert provided no additional funding, the 720 STG commander ended up paying for the remainder of the STARS budget out of their O&M funds. Total cost to completely outfit the team properly cost an estimated \$70 thousand.⁵

First Team Meeting

The STARS-forming members held a meeting 7-9 August 1996 to discuss the establishment of the AFSOC team. At that meeting, the attendees defined the pre-qualifications for team members. Basic requirements included a minimum of 200 free-falls with landings consistently in a 25-meter radius of the target. Requirements for performing stadium jumps remained more stringent. The United States Parachute Association stadium jump criteria of 350 jumps and 10 successive landings within a 10-meter radius became the standard. After 16 jumps, the jumpers' commander could certify them.⁶

Attendees at the meeting discussed the concept of operations to include number of teams, number of jumpers, demographics of jumpers, rank structure, and availability of team members. Meeting participants made decisions on jump suits, hats, and other

Demonstration Team,] n.d., SD 19; Ltr (U), AF/JAG to AF/CVAX, "Air Force Stars Jump Team," 22 Jan 97, SD 20.

⁵ AF Fm 3535 w/3 atch (U), 720 STG/CCR to AFRS/RSO, "Funding Support for AIM-HIGH Parachute Team," 15 Aug 96, SD 21.

⁶ Ltr w/4 atch (U), 720 STG/CCR to 720 STG/CC, "Minutes of STARS Parachute Team Meeting," 12 Aug 96, SD 22; AF Fm 797 (U), "Job Qualification Standard Continuation/Command Jobs," May 87, SD 23.

clothing items in addition to flags, medical kits, and communications gear including head sets, microphones, etc. Individuals received assigned duties for the team set up such as preparing pre-coordination and jumpmaster checklists, making arrangements for safety assessments, compiling administrative data, and preparation of media information.⁷

The meeting minutes stated that STARS represented a command team and combat controllers (CCT) and pararescuemen (PJ) assigned to special tactics units in the continental United States depicted the primary members. The minutes further stated in the absence of primary members, augmentees from CCTs or PJs at other commands, Air National Guard, and Reserve could substitute. Although an option remained to utilize overseas assigned CCT or PJs, cost of travel and unit high ops tempo played a major reason this never occurred. At that point, the team was distinctly being called an AFSOC parachute demonstration team by the forming members and the agencies that they were dealing with.⁸

Team Setup

The original concept was to have three teams within STARS, a red team at the 21 STS, a white team at 22 STS, and a blue team at 23 STS. The 21st, 22^d, and 23^d were at Pope AFB, North Carolina, McChord AFB, Washington, and Hurlburt Field, Florida, respectively. That arrangement proved to be an irritant to the individual units. Since the requirement still existed for the team members to perform real world missions in addition to meeting their STARS jump schedules, this was resolved by reassigning four jumpers to Hurlburt Field as a jump team. When these four primary jumpers were not available, solicited qualified augmentees from units with combat controllers (CCT) and

⁷ Atch 4 to Ltr (U), 720 STG/CC to AFSOC/DOS, "Airlift Support for USAF STARS Parachute Demonstration Team," 8 Aug 96, SD 22; Paper (U), "USAF STARS Meeting," ca Aug 96, SD 24.

⁸ See note above; Msg (U), 720 STG to AIG 652 *et al.*, "USAF Parachute Demonstration Team," 022000 Aug 96, SD 25; Ltr (U), 720 STG/CC to USAF/XOOS, "USAF STARS Parachute Team Affiliation," 14 Feb 97, SD 26.

pararescuemen (PJs) that were qualified to jump with the STARS filled in. A contractor, Mr. Wayne Norrad, (USAF retired 1 January 1997), continued to serve as the 720th Recruiting Liaison and managed the team.⁹

The first request for a jump demonstration came from Headquarters Air Force in recognition of (prisoner of war/missing in action) POW-MIA Day. Mr. Norrad contacted Major Bahler concerning funding assistance and in July 1996, Lieutenant Colonel (Lt Col) Al Green from her office requested the AFSOC team provide jumps into a National Football League (NFL) game in honor of POW-MIA Day. Mr. Norrad replied to the request stating that jumps into football stadiums were difficult and required highly maneuverable parachutes. With only six of those types of chutes available from one of the units, Mr. Norrad agreed to jumping into one or two of the seven stadiums sponsoring NFL games provided all of the needed preparations fell into place.¹⁰

Team Preparation

On 17 September 1996, 12 members started training at Pope AFB, North Carolina, and Raeford Skydiving Center, Raeford, NC, in preparation for their inaugural demonstration jumps scheduled for 22 September 1996. On 18-19 September 1996 jump training commenced and they completed five jumps the first day, five more the second day, and some members completed six. All jumps were geared towards training the members for the upcoming stadium jumps.¹¹

Preparation time proved critical for the first jump. The initial request came mid July for a mid September 1996 performance. Since the jumps into stadiums required highly

⁹ SSS w/1 atch, (U), 720 STG/RPI, "USAF STARS Parachute Team Stand-Down," 7 Jan 99, SD 27; E-mail (U), Norrad (720STG/BMC) to StAmant (720STG/HO), "STARS Questions," 6 Dec 02, SD 28; E-mail w/1 atch, (U), Norrad (720STG/XPF) to Wesley (AFSOC/HO), "RE: Bio," 22 Jun 04, SD 29.

¹⁰ E-mail (U), Green (AF/CVAX) to Sikes (AFSOC/PA), "AFSOC PJs," 11 Jul 96, SD 30; E-mail (U), Norrad (720 STG) to Green (AF/CVA), "AFSOC Jump Demo Team," 12 Jul 96, SD 31.

¹¹ Ltr (U), 720 STG/CCR to 720 STG/CC, "Trip Report, USAF STARS First Performance," 30 Sep 96, SD 32.

maneuverable parachutes and only six were available at one of the STS units, the funding had to be approved, procurement of the correct chutes had to be obtained, drop aircraft had to be found along with the required coordination with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) prior to the jump date. Mr. Norrad managed to accomplish all of the required tasks in addition to training with the teams before the initial demonstration.¹²

First Jump

On 22 September 1996, one three-member team, MSgt Dave Schnoor, SSgt J.D. Steagald, and Senior Airman (SrA) Mike West, performed at the Carolina Panthers NFL game in Charlotte, North Carolina. Likewise, four-member team, CMSgt Wayne Norrad, CMSgt James Charvat, TSgt Stacey Poland, and SSgt David Thomas, performed at Foxboro Stadium, for a New England Patriots game at Foxboro, Massachusetts.¹³

¹² E-mail (U), Norrad (720 STG) to Green (AF/CVA), "AFSOC Jump Demo Team," 12 Jul 96, SD 31.

¹³ Hist (S/NOFORN/Decl: X1/2/3/4/5/6/7/8), History of the 720th Special Tactics Group, 1 January-31 December 2002, pp 39-44, info used (U), SD 3.



Figure 3. STARS Jump Brochure. STARS team members seated in helicopter (left to right): MSgt Dave Schnoor, SSgt J.D. Steagald, SrA Mike West

Airlift Support

Without a STARS budget Mr. Norrad coordinated with AFSOC guard units and local agencies to provide aircraft for the jumps at the performances. Due to the locations of the various performances, both federal and state civil rules and regulations applied for use and times for air space needed for the team demonstrations. Support aircraft for the parachute team came from primarily AFSOC. A table of the various aircraft, assigned unit, and location follows.

Table 1		
Performance Aircraft		
Aircraft	Resource	Location of Resource
C-130	911 th Airlift Wing	Pittsburgh PA
C-130	182d Airlift Wing	Peoria IL (ANG)
UH-60	ANG	Los Alamitos CA
C-130	11 th Airlift Wing	Pittsburgh PA
C-130	152d Airlift Wing	Reno NV
CASA 212	6 th Special Operations Sq	Hurlburt Fld FL
C-130	130 th	Virginia (ANG)
Source: Listing (U), Mr. Norrad, [STARS Performances,] n.d., SD 33 .		

Funding

The Air Force did not formally budget for the STARS program so the funding had to come “out of hide” from whatever source that could provide it. This put a financial strain on those that took from their budgets to help support recruiting. Special Tactics and Rescue Specialist (STARS) demonstrations shut down in 1999 due mainly to the unresolved funding issue. Although AFSOC and Air Force Recruiting Service (AFRS) reprogrammed funds in fiscal year 1997/1998 (FY97/98) to support STARS, the program did not meet the Air Force funding line for FY99. At this time, the 26-month long program shut down. In FY00 when Secretary of the Air Force (SECAF) F. Whitten Peters provided \$200 thousand from Air Force funds to the STARS, the program came back to life. As needed, the 720 STG provided additional funds, once again, “out of hide” to support the recruitment effort. The team attempted to form with only a few permanently assigned personnel. Both the pararescuemen and combat controllers who participated in the jumps were augmentees from their full-time jobs. A team normally consisted of five jumpers, a drop zone controller, and the team coordinator/narrator. The uniqueness of the STARS members rested in the fact they could be performing a freefall demonstration one day and the next day they would be heading off to execute a

real-world mission. Without having personnel assigned to manpower billets, the operation of the team rested with active duty operations personnel.¹⁴

Before the first stand-down in 1999, teams performed 57 jump demonstrations in front of approximately 3 million spectators, not including television (TV) media coverage. While the first of the two stand-downs occurred due to financial constraints, the second stand-down in 2002 was the primary result of real world job demands on the CCT and PJ career fields. Although the Air Force agreed to provide \$150,000, Mr. Norrad petitioned and received approval for the Air Force Recruiting Service and Air Education and Training Command to supply the remainder of funds needed to reincarnate the team, this did not formalize prior to 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks.¹⁵

Colonel Craig D. Rith who took command of the 720 STG in July 2002 decided to stand-down the program and received the AFSOC Commander Lieutenant General (Lt Gen) Paul V. Hester's official approval on 13 December 2002. The General expressed his desire to restart the program when the current operations tempo "is reduced and an approved program is resourced."¹⁶

The STARS team performed for the last time at Dover Speedway, Dover, Delaware, on 22 September 2002. This performance occurred exactly 6 years from the team's first jump in 1996.¹⁷

¹⁴ *Ibid*; SSS w/1 atch, (U), 720 STG/RPI, "USAF STARS Parachute Team Stand-Down," 7 Jan 99, SD 27; Msg (U), 720 STG/DOFP to HQ AFSOC/DO, *et al*, "USAF STARS Parachute Team Stand-Down," 080936Z Jan 99, SD 34; Background Paper (U), "USAF STARS Parachute Demonstration Team," 31 Jul 00, SD 35; TSgt Ginger Schreitmueller, "Air Force 'STARS' take to the skies," Journal of Aerospace and Defense Industry News, 12 May 00, SD 36.

¹⁵ Hist (S/NOFORN/Decl: X1/2/3/4/5/6/7/8), History of the 720th Special Tactics Group, 1 January-31 December 2002, pp 39-44, info used (U), SD 3

¹⁶ *Ibid*.

¹⁷ *Ibid*.

Recruitment Validation

From 2000 to 2002, the demonstration teams performed at numerous venues and entertained thousands of people. Primarily this jump team began to target enlisted members for the two enlisted specialty career fields: special tactics and pararescue. During both periods when the team was conducting performances, they had performed 198 times at 144 events. When looking at the number of total performances, most people have a simple question: "How were the results on recruitment validated?"¹⁸

Discussion on the recruitment results arose during numerous informal interviews and the formal interview with Sergeant Poland regarding the STARS. Additionally, recruitment results became an item of interest in a message from HQ USAF Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans and Operations to the vice commanders of Air Combat Command, Air Education and Training Command, Pacific Air Forces, AFSOC, Air Force Reserve Command, and the HQ of the National Guard Bureau. Major Pihana and SMSgt Miller at HQ USAF worked with the commands in an effort to resolve the funding shortfall the STARS experienced and future issues such as funding, manpower requirements, and ways to measure the success of the STARS demonstration team investment.¹⁹

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Intvw (U), W.T. Wesley, AFSOC/HO, with MSgt Stacey Poland, AFSOC/DOCT, 25 Jun 03, SD 1; Msg (U), HQ AFSOC/HO to HQ USAF/XO, *et al*, "USAF STARS Parachute Demonstration Team Support," 122030Z Mar 98, SD 37.

Local school, college, or hospital visits did not incur much, if any, additional costs but did produce face-to-face interaction with the desired audience. In the future, it might also be a good consideration to target different sporting events, such as track, football, basketball, and swimming events to find athletes more capable of passing the rigorous training requirements of the CCT and PJ career fields. The impact of this recruiting tool could also be greater for the Air Force if the team was reflective of the entire Air Force, with a diverse group of members. It would also attract more minorities into Special Forces according to the 1999, Rand Special Operations Forces report.²⁰



Figure 4. STARS team member SSgt Braddock at Three Rivers Regatta

Air Force specific advertising has been declining for years because of cuts in the recruiting budget and rising

advertising costs. This along with a smaller group of recruiters and less money available to them to get out and spend time among the target population is making it harder to get the Air Force recruiting message out. Research has shown that hands-on activities, such as base visits or seeing the Air Force Thunderbirds in action have the greatest influence on the target groups' interest in the Air Force. Eventually

²⁰ Paper (U), RAND Corp, "Barriers to Minority Participation in Special Operations Forces", 1999, pp 85-93, SD 38.

these events may need to be used to target hard-to-get high-caliber minorities or to attract special skilled persons for critical career fields.²¹



Figure 5. STARS and recruiters at 2002 Chicago Air Show

Measuring the success of the STARS program in relation to the increased number of recruits received from observing their performances is not possible. The success of the STARS program cannot be measured, especially when you consider the fact that small children may witness one of these demonstrations and then signup for the service 10 to 15 years later? To measure the impact of the STARS a number of different options would be possible. Directly polling the students currently enrolled in the pipeline of the CCT and PJ career fields would indicate how many of them were influenced by the demonstrations. A survey or poll of all CCT and PJs that have joined the service since STARS evolved would determine if they saw a STARS demonstration before joining.

²¹ Study (U), Major Martin W. Pellum, USAF, "Air Force Recruiting, Consideration for Increasing the Proportion of Black and Hispanic Persons in the Enlisted Force," Mar 96, pg 50.

These two polls could immediately indicate if there had been a significant impact into the recruitment of these two career fields. Services and Air Force survey could include a question asking if the member had seen a STARS demonstration before joining the service further indicating the impact on general Air Force recruitment numbers.²²

STARS and the Recruiter

In May 2002, a recruiter from the marketing division at the recruiting squadron in Nashville set up a fundraiser that took place in Nashville, TN. The event raised money for charity and included a celebrity softball game. During that time, the STARS jumped for the Tennessee Titans game. Sergeant Poland and Mr. Norrad, during their interviews, referenced the recruiter that worked the demonstration jump into a program he had setup at his local area. Sergeant Poland said:

The recruiter holds a competition, instead of just having a regular PT test, he will bring in radio stations and sets it all up for a big event once a year. It involves the whole town. Kids come in from all over, they take the test and get prizes and shirts.

Sergeant Poland and Mr. Norrad both stated this recruiter had signed up airmen to come into the CCT and/or PJ pipelines. This validates the individual recruiters impact on the process and illustrates how a STARS team could be used to support these recruiters. The team also purchased a video camera to provide a link with ground monitors or screens providing the spectators on the ground a view from the jumper's perspective further enhancing the experience.²³

During the interviews, discussions included how the different local recruiters handled the performances. Some recruiters would tentatively agree to setup visits with the local

²² *Ibid*; Msg (U), HQ AFSOC/CC to HQ USAF/XO, *et al*, "USAF Special Tactics and Rescue Specialists (STARS) Parachute Team Support," 122030Z MAR 98, SD 37.

²³ Intvw (U), W.T. Wesley, AFSOC/HO, with MSgt Stacey Poland, AFSOC/DOCT, 25 Jun 03, SD 1; Intvw (U), W.T. Wesley, AFSOC/HO, with CMSgt Wayne Norrad, USAF, Ret., 720 STG/XPF, 19 Jul 04, SD 42.

school and then once the team got there, they would indicate that the schedule would not permit the visit, or the principal cancelled due to a conflict. Numerous reasons were given why the school visit would not occur. As exposing possible recruits to the jump and the jumpers was one of the prime reasons for the demonstration jump, failing to visit the school, or local target audience, limited the impact of the jump. The local recruiter plays a pivotal role in setting the stage for these performances.²⁴

Comparison to Wings of Blue

The Wings of Blue, another Air Force parachute demonstration team, typically targeted college bound teenager audiences. The team consisted primarily of Air Force Academy cadets and a few full time members. The Wings of Blue demonstration support booklet spelled out the needs for their public appearances in a full page of detailed requirements. Having the rules of engagement concerning publicity spelled out in sufficient detail helped the team maximize the recruitment effort. One other significant difference between the STARS and the Wings of Blue was that the Wings of Blue, in their Support Booklet, laid out in writing that the event organizer must pay for the airfares to and from the event, including the advance party. Requested event costs also included numerous other items such as lodging, meals, transportation, etc., while the team was there. In contrast, the STARS used Air Force money to fly back and forth to the events. Consequently, around 40 percent of the STARS budget went towards funding temporary duty. The STARS did ask a \$2,500 jump fee to offset the cost, along with the organizer providing lodging, meals, local ground transportation, etc., but this did not always occur.²⁵

²⁴ See note above.

²⁵ Paper (U), United States Nave Parachute Team Web Site, "Leap Frogs Home," 15 Jul 04, SD 10; Booklet (U), 34 OG/CC, "34th Operations Group Demo Support Booklet," 1 Oct 02, SD 39; E-mail w/1 atch, (U) Norrad (720STG/BMC) to Wesley (AFSOC/HO), "RE: Costs," 17 Jun 03, SD 40.

Lessons Learned

The STARS, if stood up again by AFSOC, should consider processing procedures to limit the cost to the Air Force, possibly modeling the STARS program after the Wings of Blue program or the Navy Parachute Team. By ensuring that the program is setup in a similar fashion to these existing programs, the STARS could have a fixed budget instead of having the cost spiraling upwards each year, as it was. With a known set of costs per year, it would help facilitate the Air Force making sound decisions concerning recruiting dollars (see Table 2).²⁶

Fiscal Year	Funding (thousands)
FY97	\$215
FY98	\$370
FY99	\$99 (STARS stand-down in FY99)
FY00	\$352
FY01	\$381
FY02	\$208 (STARS second stand-down)

Source: E-mail (U), Savage (720 STG/FM) to Wesley (AFSOC/HO), "RE: STARS Study," 9 Jul 03, **SD 42**.

The Wings of Blue have dedicated airlift using DeHavilland UV-18B Twin Otters. Sergeant Poland indicated that the Wings of Blue personnel had discussed signing over a Twin Otter to the STARS, if done through proper channels. Since the stand-down of STARS documentation of further communication regarding this has not occurred. The Navy Leap Frogs usually provides its own jump aircraft or transportation to and from demonstrations. They also have a caveat in their performance handbook that in rare circumstances the show sponsor would have to provide jump aircraft.²⁷

²⁶ E-mail (U), Savage (720STG/FM) to Wesley (AFSOC/HO), "RE: STARS Study," 9 Jul 03, SD 41.

²⁷ Intvw (U), W.T. Wesley, AFSOC/HO, with MSgt Stacey Poland, AFSOC/DOCT, 25 Jun 03, SD 1; Booklet (U), 34 OG/CC, "34th Operations Group Demo Support Booklet," 1 Oct 02, SD 39.

Additionally, if the STARS member selection was setup similar to the Army's Golden Knights, allowing any jump qualified Air Force personnel to compete to be on the team it could still function during contingencies. The program could still be modeled around the concept of marketing CCT and PJ career fields by ensuring that these career fields would be represented on the demonstration team. However, if other career fields filled out the team, it would lessen the burden on the CCT and PJ career fields supporting the STARS program, lessen the effect on recruitment for the specific career fields, and truly make it an Air Force team. If the program is to be brought back to the special tactics arena, the Air Force may consider funding one additional slot for each of these two critical career fields and rotating the STARS members, such as the Navy's Leap Frogs members are rotated, based on three-year tours. This could help maximize the investment on training and recruitment.²⁸

Another facet of locking a team together involved flight dynamics of the jumpers. Sergeant Poland and Mr. Norrad described in some detail how each time the STARS jumped, the jumpmaster would have to verify each jumper was qualified in the particular jump and based on qualifications, decide what order the jumpers should go out in. This step was necessary to avoid airborne collisions and incidents.²⁹

Since the STARS team did not have a dedicated team, they used the primary members and whatever augmentees were available. It would be similar to having the primary pilots of the Thunderbirds stationed at one base and the augmentee pilots stationed at six different bases and then just cobbling together a team, from a pool of pilots, for each performance. The team would perform, but it would put a strain on them each time they performed with a different/new team member that they may or may not have practiced with previously.³⁰

²⁸ Paper (U), United States Navy Parachute Team Web Site, "Leap Frogs Home," 15 Jul 04, [SD 10](#).

²⁹ Intvw (U), W.T. Wesley, AFSOC/HO, with MSgt Stacey Poland, AFSOC/DOCT, 25 Jun 03, [SD 1](#).

³⁰ *Ibid.*

If the team is reconstituted and viewed as an Air Force parachute demonstration team used for recruiting, it could be located at any Air Force base that could support it. If the Air Force chose to stand the team back up and use a dedicated airlift asset for the team, the cost of utilizing the team would increase significantly unless they could be on a base with a similar aircraft and mission. For instance, having both Air Force jump teams operate out of the USAF Academy using similar jump aircraft. This way it would only be one additional jump aircraft to be maintained at a base that already maintains jump aircraft.³¹

Like any other team, they could certainly perform better and safer if they practiced and performed together. Sergeant Poland summed it up in one word: continuity. The STARS program needs this, if it is to activate again.

A photo collage of STARS follows. See supporting documents SD 40 through SD 47 for background information on the photos.³²

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid*; Bio (U), AFSOC/PA, "SSgt Brad Braddock," Jul 02, SD 43; Bio (U), AFSOC/PA, "SMSgt Jack Brehm, Jul 02, SD 44; Bio (U), AFSOC/PA, "SSgt Danny Page," Jul 02, SD 45; Bio (U), AFSOC/PA, "TSgt Calvin Markham," Jul 02, SD 46; Bio (U), MSgt Stacey Poland, Apr 02, SD 2; Bio (U), AFSOC/PA, "SSgt Ron Thompson," Mar 02, SD 47; Speech (U), Wayne Norrad (720 STG), "New York Yankees Jump," 20 Jul 02, SD 48; Bio (U), AFSOC/PA, Sgt Ty Clark," Apr 02, SD 49; "New York, and the Yankees Go to Bat for SOWF," Warrior Link, Spring 02, pg 1, SD 50.



Figure 6. STARS leaving aircraft



Figure 7. STARS in freefall



Figure 8. STARS landing at "Remember the Titans Premiere"

Collage of photos from Mr. Wayne Norrad's STARS CD

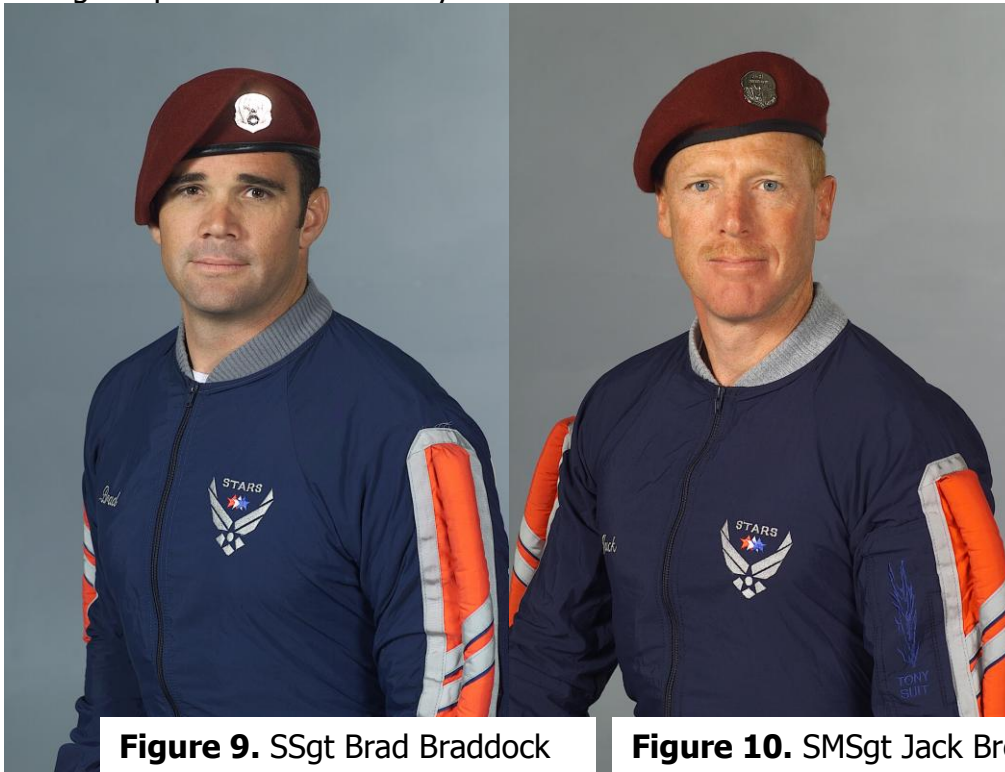


Figure 9. SSgt Brad Braddock

Figure 10. SMSgt Jack Brehm



Figure 11. SSgt Danny Page

Figure 12. TSgt Calvin Markham



Figure 13. MSgt Stacey Poland

Figure 14. SSgt Ron Thompson



Figure 15. Yankee Stadium pregame ceremony with (left to right): MSgt Stacey Poland, SSgt Danny Page, SSgt Brad Braddock, SSgt Ron Thompson



Figure 16. Team members (left to right) SSgt Ian Vredenburgh, Capt Chris Larkin, SSgt Ty Clark, and MSgt Stacey Poland being interviewed in January 2002

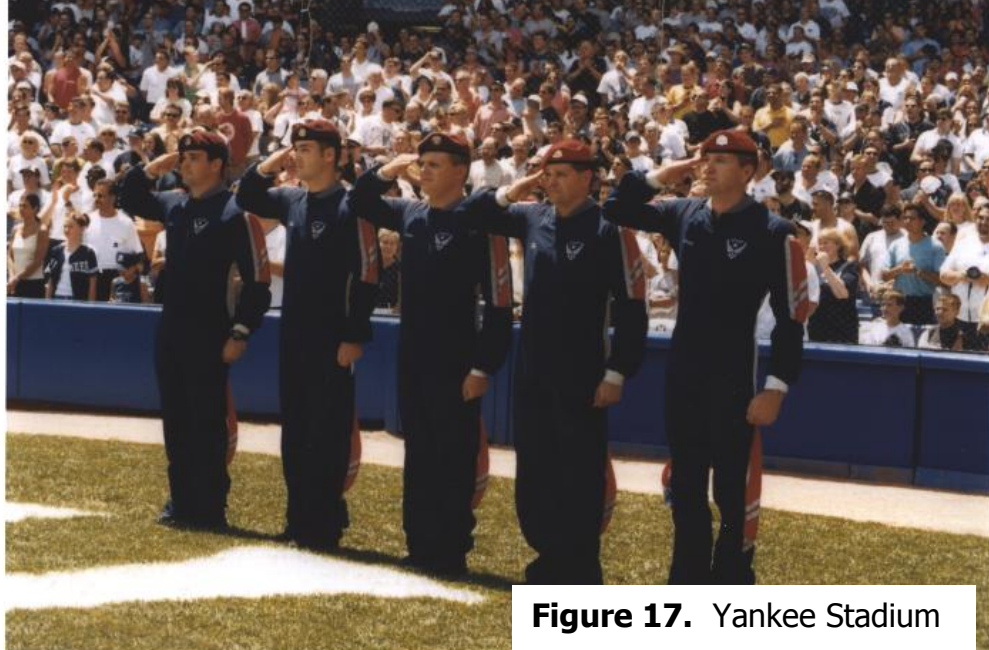


Figure 17. Yankee Stadium



Figure 18. Vandenberg Air Show



Figure 19. 3-way Skychiefs

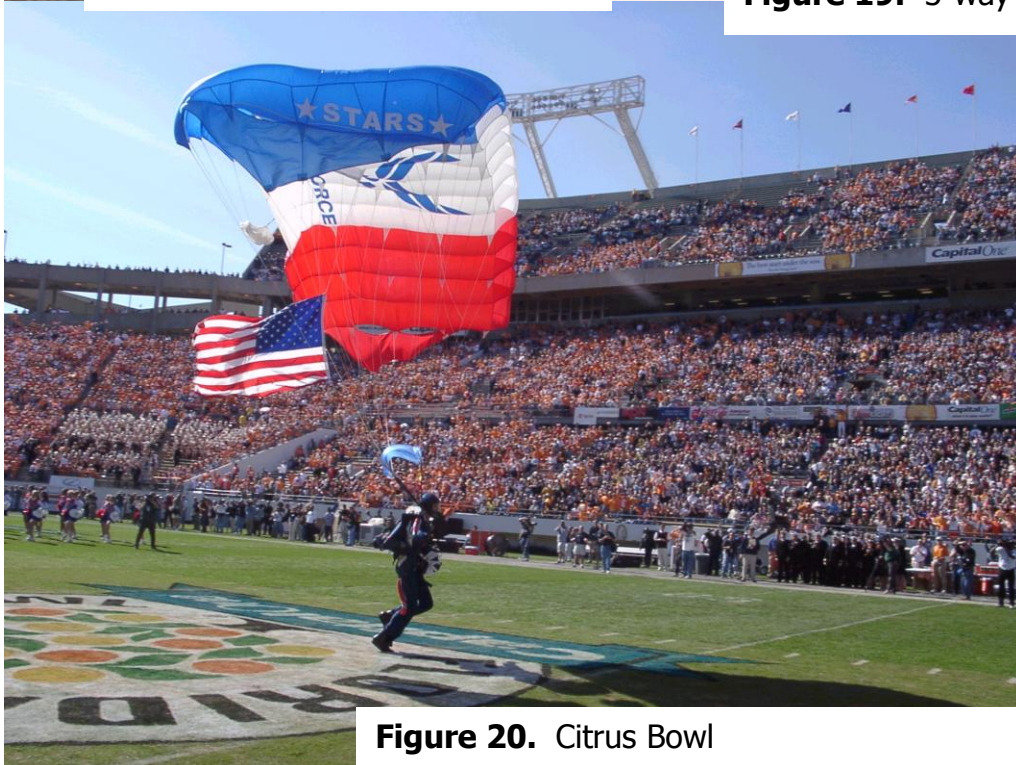


Figure 20. Citrus Bowl



Figure 21. MSgt Poland at stadium at Richland, Virginia



Figure 22. Rochester 96



Figure 23. MSgt Stacey Poland lands at Lowe's Motor Speedway, Charlotte, NC



Figure 24. SSgt Ty Clark being interviewed by KDKA television personnel prior to NFL American Football Conference Championship at Pittsburgh, PA, 27 Jan 02

Appendix A

STARS Performances

DATE	LOCATION	EVENT	APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF ATTENDEES
1 Sep 01	Pittsburgh, PA	U. of Pittsburgh NCAA Football	UNK
20 Dec 01	Orlando, FL	Tangerine Bowl	70,000
01 Jan 02	Orlando, FL	Citrus Bowl	66,000
2-3 Jan 02	Pasadena, CA	Rose Bowl	100,000
27 Jan 02	Pittsburgh, PA	Steelers Football Game	70,000
4 Feb 02	Hurlburt Fld, FL	Excellence Award	2,000
3 Mar 02	Las Vegas, NV	NASCAR	135,000
24 Mar 02	Bristol, TN	NASCAR	130,000
20 Apr 02	Tucson, AZ	Star Spangled Fair	10,000
27 Apr 02	Eglin AFB, FL	Air Show	200,000
29 Apr 02	Hurlburt Fld, FL	AFSOC OAY	500
1 May 02	Ft Lauderdale, FL	Air & Sea Show	2,000,000
26 May 02	Charlotte, NC	NASCAR	160,000
31 May 02	Nashville, TN	Celebrity Softball	35,000
8 Jun 02	Blue Ash, OH	Blue Ash Airport	30,000
13 Jun 02	Omaha, NE	College World Series	13,000
3 Jul 02	Hurlburt Fld, FL	Sound of Independence	10,000
20 Jul 02	New York, NY	New York Yankees Ball Game	56,000
14-18 Aug 02	Gary, IN/Chicago, IL	Air Show	2,100,000
22 Sep 02	Dover, DE	NASCAR	150,000
Total			
Source: Listing (U), Mr. Norrad, [STARS Performances,] n.d., SD 33 .			

LIST OF SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

- SD 1 Intvw (U), W.T. Wesley, AFSOC/HO, wit MSgt Stacey Poland, AFSOC/DOCT, 25 Jun 03.
- SD 2 Bio (U), MSgt Stacey Poland, Apr 02.
- SD 3 Hist (S/NOFORN/Decl: X1/2/3/4/5/6/7/8), History of the 720th Special Tactics Group, 1 January-31 December 2002, pp 39-44, info used (U).
- SD 4 Fact Sheet (U), "USAF STARS Parachute Demonstration Team," n.d.
- SD 5 MFR (U), 720 STG/HO, "Formation of STARS Team," 7 Jan 03.
- SD 6 Paper (U), USSOCOM website, "Team Main Page," 21 Jun 04.
- SD 7 Paper (U), Wings of Blue website, "Wings of Blue," 5 May 03.
- SD 8 Paper (U), The Black Daggers website, "Black Daggers Fact Sheet," n.d.
- SD 9 Paper (U), West Point website, "Parachute Team Homepage," 21 Jun 04.
- SD 10 Paper (U), United States Navy Parachute Team Web Site, "Leap Frogs Home," 15 Jul 04.
- SD 11 Fax (U), HQ USAFE/HO to MSgt Lori St Amant, [USAFE "BLUE MASTERS"] 13 Jan 03.
- SD 12 Paper (U), Golden Knights website "US Army Parachute Team," 28 Jun 04.
- SD 13 Hist (U), USAF Special Air Warfare Center, 1 Jul-31 Dec 64.

- SD 14 TSgt Ray Johnson, "Chute for the STARS Special tactics teams drop in to assist recruiting," Airman, Aug 98.
- SD 15 SSS w/o atch (U), 720 STG/CCR, "Combat Control and Pararescue Parachute Demonstration Systems," 28 Jun 96.
- SD 16 Ltr (U), 720 STG to Maj Bahler, "Combat Control & Pararescue Parachute Jump Demonstrations," 17 Jun 96.
- SD 17 Ltr (U), AFSOC/CC to HQ USAF/CVA, "Combat Control and Pararescue Parachute Demonstration Systems," 28 Jun 96.
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- SD 19 Ltr (U), SAF/FMBO to AF/CVAX, ["AIM HIGH-AIR FORCE" Logo Parachutes for AFSOC Demonstration Team,] n.d.
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- SD 21 AF Fm 3535 w/3 atch (U), 720 STG/CCR to AFRS/RSO, "Funding Support for AIM-HIGH Parachute Team," 15 Aug 96.
- SD 22 Ltr w/4 atch (U), 720 STG/CCR to 720 STG/CC, "Minutes of STARS Parachute Team Meeting," 12 Aug 96.
- SD 23 AF Fm 797 (U), "Job Qualification Standard Continuation/Command Jobs," May 87.
- SD 24 Paper (U), "USAF STARS Meeting," ca Aug 96.
- SD 25 Msg (U), 720 STG to AIG 652 *et al.*, "USAF Parachute Demonstration Team," 022000 Aug 96.

- SD 26 Ltr (U), 720 STG/CC to USAF/XOOS, "USAF STARS Parachute Team Affiliation," 14 Feb 97.
- SD 27 SSS w/1 atch, (U), 720 STG/RPI, "USAF STARS Parachute Team Stand-Down," 7 Jan 99.
- SD 28 E-mail (U), Norrad (720STG/BMC) to StAmant (720STG/HO), "STARS Questions," 6 Dec 02.
- SD 29 E-mail w/1 atch, (U), Norrad (720STG/XPF) to Wesley (AFSOC/HO), "RE: Bio," 22 Jun 04.
- SD 30 E-mail (U), Green (AF/CVAX) to Sikes (AFSOC/PA), "AFSOC PJs," 11 Jul 96.
- SD 31 E-mail (U), Norrad (720 STG) to Green (AF/CVA), "AFSOC Jump Demo Team," 12 Jul 96.
- SD 32 Ltr (U), 720 STG/CCR to 720 STG/CC, "Trip Report, USAF STARS First Performance," 30 Sep 96.
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- SD 34 Msg (U), 720 STG/DOFP to HQ AFSOC/DO, *et al*, "USAF STARS Parachute Team Stand-Down," 080936Z Jan 99.
- SD 35 Background Paper (U), "USAF STARS Parachute Demonstration Team," 31 Jul 00.
- SD 36 TSgt Ginger Schreitmueller, "Air Force 'STARS' take to the skies," Journal of Aerospace and Defense Industry News, 12 May 00.
- SD 37 Msg (U), HQ AFSOC/CC to HQ USAF/XO, *et al*, "USAF STARS Parachute Demonstration Team Support," 122030Z Mar 98.

- SD 38 Paper (U), RAND Corp, "Barriers to Minority Participation in Special Operations Forces", 1999, pp 85-93.
- SD 39 Booklet (U), 34 OG/CC, "34th Operations Group Demo Support Booklet," 1 Oct 02.
- SD 40 E-mail w/1 atch, (U) Norrad (720STG/BMC) to Wesley (AFSOC/HO), "RE: Costs," 17 Jun 03.
- SD 41 E-mail (U), Savage (720 STG/FM) to Wesley (AFSOC/HO), "RE: STARS Study," 9 Jul 03.
- SD 42 Intvw (U), W.T. Wesley, AFSOC/HO, with CMSgt Wayne Norrad, USAF, Ret., 720 STG/XPF, 19 Jul 04.
- SD 43 Bio (U), AFSOC/PA, "SSgt Brad Braddock," Jul 02.
- SD 44 Bio (U), AFSOC/PA, "SMSgt Jack Brehm, Jul 02.
- SD 45 Bio (U), AFSOC/PA, "SSgt Danny Page," Jul 02.
- SD 46 Bio (U), AFSOC/PA, "TSgt Calvin Markham," Jul 02.
- SD 47 Bio (U), AFSOC/PA, "SSgt Ron Thompson," Mar 02.
- SD 48 Speech (U), Wayne Norrad (720 STG), "New York Yankees Jump," 20 Jul 02.
- SD 49 Bio (U), AFSOC/PA, Sgt Ty Clark," Apr 02.
- SD 50 "New York, and the Yankees Go to Bat for SOWF," Warrior Link, Spring 02, pg 1.

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