



**CSM (Ret) Joe Lopez, Sr.**



CSM Joe Lopez, Sr. is recognized for his outstanding service as Senior Military Instructor at the University of Texas at Arlington from 1977-1981 and from 1985-1987.

He enlisted in the Army in 1955, received his basic training at Fort Carson, Colorado and his airborne training at Fort Campbell, Kentucky with the 11th Airborne Division. In 1956 he deployed with the division to Europe and returned three years later to the 101st Airborne Division at Fort Campbell, Tennessee.

During the Cuban crisis of 1960 he joined the Special Forces. After training he was assigned to the 7th Special Forces Group at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. In 1962 he served with the Special Forces in Panama, taking part in classified missions in Central and South America.

Returning to Fort Bragg in 1965 and assigned to the 6th Special Forces Group, he once again found himself preparing for another classified mission, this time heading to Vietnam to put together a special camp named Dak Seang, manned by indigenous personnel and led by Green Berets. He was wounded and evacuated to Japan for transfer to the USA. Joe convinced the doctors to let him return to Vietnam, where he volunteered to serve with the 3d Chinese Nung Battalion, Mobile Strike Force, 5th SF Group. He led his company of Chinese Nungs into many battles.

At the end of his tour he was reassigned to the 10th SF Group in Bad Tolz, Germany. He participated in several covert operations in Europe and was surprised to find out, in 1969, that his combat skills were needed back in Vietnam. Upon arriving in Vietnam he volunteered for the elite Mobile Strike Force (better known as the Mike Force). He was assigned to the 4th Battalion Mike Force and later to the 2d Battalion. During a siege at the Dak Seang SF Camp, he was again wounded and this time evacuated to the U.S. After being released from the hospital he was assigned to 7th SF Group and served as S-3 Training NCO and Company First Sergeant. In 1973 he attended the Sergeant Majors Academy in El Paso, Texas. Upon graduation he was assigned to the 10th SF Group at Fort Devens, Massachusetts, where he served as First Sergeant and Sergeant Major.

In 1977 he was assigned to the ROTC Program at the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA) as Chief Instructor. He was instrumental in the recruiting of cadets from area high school ROTC programs. He was the University Rifle and Pistol Course Instructor and sponsor for the UTA Rifle and Pistol Team. He was also the sponsor of the elite drill team, the Sam Houston Rifles. He worked with selected cadets, teaching them SF and Ranger training on weekends.

In 1981 he was assigned to the 7th SF Group in Panama. During his tour of duty in Central and South America, CSM Lopez planned and executed several covert assignments. In 1983 he was assigned to the U.S. Army Region VII at Fort Sam Houston, Texas as Chief Enlisted Advisor to the Texas Army National Guard.

CSM Lopez was approved for retention beyond 30 years. While waiting for his next assignment, he visited UTA and stopped by the office of university president, Dr. Nedderman who inquired if he was still in the Army. Joe replied that he was and was waiting on his next assignment. Dr. Nedderman picked up the phone, made a call, and Joe found himself back at UTA for his final assignment. He retired in 1987 with 32 years of active service.

His awards and decorations include the **Silver Star, Bronze Star Medal with V device and two OLC, Air Medal with V Device, Soldiers Medal for Heroism in combat, Purple Heart (1 OLC)**, Army Commendation Medal (1 OLC), Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal (4 campaign stars), NCO Professional Development Ribbon with 5 device, Army Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal with 60 device, two awards of the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry, Presidential Unit Citation, Valorous Unit Citation, Meritorious Unit Commendation, Republic of Vietnam Civic Action Medal, Special Forces Tab, Master Parachutists Badge and the parachutists badges from Republic of Vietnam, Germany, Brazil, Honduras, and Canada, and the Combat Infantryman's Badge.

CSM Lopez remained active after his retirement by teaching in the Junior ROTC program in El Paso and as a veterans advocate in the El Paso area. CSM Lopez and his family reside in El Paso. His son, Major Joe Lopez, Jr., is a graduate of UTA and follows in his father's footsteps by serving in the Special Forces.