



General Wayne A. Downing

May 10, 1940 - July 18, 2007

By USSOCOM Public Affairs

Retired Army Gen. Wayne A. Downing, the former commander of U.S. Special Operations Command and Deputy National Security

Advisor for Combating Terrorism, died early July 18 in his hometown of Peoria, Ill., at the age of 67. He was admitted to the hospital on Monday with multiple myeloma and bacterial meningitis.

“U.S. Special Operations Forces join the nation and the family of Gen. Wayne Downing in mourning the loss of this great leader and soldier,” said Adm. Eric T. Olson, the USSOCOM commander, about Downing's death. “His legacy in Special Operations is powerful and he holds a prominent place in our history.”

Downing served in the Army for 34 years and was called upon to serve the nation in a number of different capacities after he retired from the military in 1996.

Downing began his service to the nation when he was commissioned as an Infantry second lieutenant in 1962 after graduating

from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. He served in a number of assignments, including two combat tours in Vietnam, before beginning his long service with Special Operations Forces.

Downing began his service with SOF in March 1975 with the 1st Battalion (Ranger), 75th Infantry at Hunter Army Airfield, Ga., where he was the operations officer and executive officer. In 1977 he took command of the 2nd Battalion (Ranger), 75th Infantry at Fort Lewis, Wash., and in 1984 he became the first commander of the newly established 75th Ranger Regiment. After his selection and promotion to brigadier general in 1985,

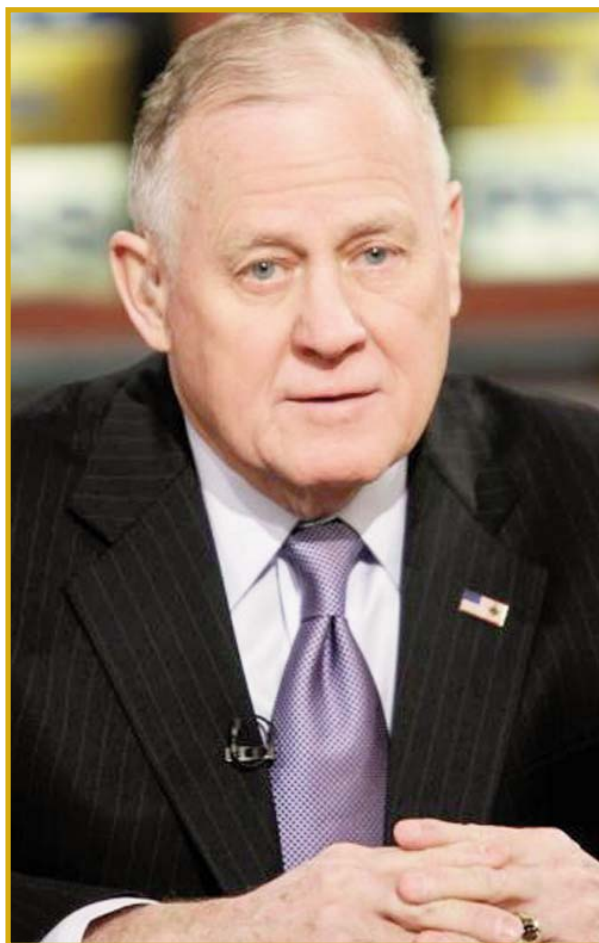
Downing served as the Deputy Commanding General of 1st Special Operations Command at Fort Bragg, N.C. Downing was then selected to be the first director of the recently formed U.S. Special Operations Command's office in Washington, D.C.

He was promoted to major general in 1988. As a major general, he commanded the Joint Special Operations Command at Fort Bragg, N.C. He also commanded all Special Operations Forces — Rangers, Special Forces, SEALs, Air Commandos, Special Operations Aviation, Psychological Operations and Civil Affairs — during Operation Just Cause, the U.S. invasion of Panama. During Operation Desert Storm, he commanded a joint special operations task force assigned to U.S. Central Command that was charged with hunting Iraq Scud missiles and other direct action and special reconnaissance missions.

Downing assumed command of U.S. Army Special Operations Command, Fort Bragg, N.C., the Army component of USSOCOM, and was promoted to lieutenant general in 1991. He was promoted to four-star general in May 1993 and assumed command of USSOCOM, the joint headquarters for all

U.S. Special Operations Forces, at MacDill Air Force Base, Fla. Gen. Downing was USSOCOM's third commander.

Both the executive and legislative branches of the U.S. government called on Downing for his service after he retired from the Army. In 1996, he led a 40-person presidential task force that investigated the attack on U.S. forces at the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia and



made recommendations on how to improve force protection for U.S. forces abroad. Congress appointed him to the National Commission on Terrorism in 1999. After the terrorist attacks on the United States on Sept. 11, 2001, President Bush appointed Downing as the National Director and Deputy National Security Advisor for Combating Terrorism. He continued serving the nation after he left the White House as Distinguishing Chair of the

Combating Terrorism Center at West Point.

In addition to his service with SOF, some of Gen. Downing's assignments included serving with the 173rd Airborne Brigade and 25th Infantry Division in Vietnam and commanding the 1st Brigade, 1st Armored Division in Germany.