
Naval Special Warfare Group 4 Assumes Command of the United States Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School

**By
Naval Special Warfare Group 4 Public Affairs**

Commander, Naval Special Warfare Group 4 (NSWG-4) Captain Chuck Wolf has accepted control of a fourth subordinate command, Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School (NAVSCIATTS), on Stennis Space Center, Mississippi, from the Naval Special Warfare Center (NSWC).

NAVSCIATTS' mission is to provide partner nation security forces with the highest level of riverine and coastal craft operations and maintenance technical training. The change in structure aligns the operational expertise of the Naval Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewmen with the NAVSCIATTS schoolhouse. This will ensure the very latest techniques and procedures are being taught in addition to allowing closer engagement opportunities with friendly countries.

NAVSCIATTS has been conducting security force assistance since 1963 to prepare partner nation forces to conduct small craft operations in riverine and littoral environments, as well as develop and sustain professional and personal relationships.

The reason NAVSCIATTS exists is to provide technical training to our partner nation security force students, not only to improve their individual technical skills, but also to enhance the readiness of select maritime security forces within key partner nations, said NAVSCIATTS Commanding Officer Commander Bill Mahoney.

This mission is closely aligned with the Navy's maritime strategy of increasing security and alliances in waterways across the globe. With this waterborne mission, it is a natural evolution for NAVSCIATTS to fall under NSWG-4, United States Special Operations Command's (SOCOM) maritime mobility component.

This is phase zero of the Navy's maritime strategy: pre-conflict capacity building. NAVSCIATTS provides us with the initial contact with a potential ally or partner nation force and helps set the stage for training with nations around the world, said Wolf.

Trust and cooperation cannot be surged; and our relationships with partner nations must include improving regional and cultural expertise through expanded training, education, and exchange initiatives, he added. The defense of all countries against common threats to security, whether civil conflict, social instability, humanitarian crises, arms, drug, or human trafficking, territorial disputes, piracy, or terrorism, is best achieved through improved cooperation, strong coalitions, and regional partnerships that provide for our collective security. This training and relationship building begins with training programs exemplified by NAVSCIATTS.

Additionally, NAVSCIATTS conducts security force assistance missions in support of Geographic Combatant Commanders (GCCs) in accordance with SOCOM priorities using in-resident courses and Mobile Training Teams (MTT) to prepare partner nation security forces to conduct small craft operations in riverine or littoral environments within their own countries.

The goal of an MTT is to teach both how to operate and maintain the craft used by the partner nation in their own environment and often includes establishing a logistics chain from the ground up. These are skills that the Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewman (SWCC) instructors are specifically trained for as SOCOM's premier maritime experts.

Wolf would like to use NAVSCIATTS to shape Naval Special Warfare's combatant-craft global impact through partner nation capability assessments. He envisions a cohesive strategy for developing partner nation maritime capabilities that will be formulated by engaging with the Department of State, United States embassies, and their military advisory and assistance groups abroad.

Wolf is enlisting the Naval Post Graduate School to send teams of interdisciplinary subject matter experts to designated countries to determine specific and reliable maritime security forces the government should work with, what their current capabilities are, and what their capabilities could become.

There will be a closer lashing-up of Naval Special Warfare (NSW) maritime components with partner nations we should be and are currently working with, said Wolf.

NAVSCIATTS in-resident training is an effective first step of United States Government development of partner nation forces, focusing on teaching independent maintenance, limited planning, and the basics of combined operations. This initial training often leads to MTT deployments and more advanced training.

NAVSCIATTS in-resident training pipeline is crucial to the overall security force assistance concept, said Mahoney. In fact, most countries use our NAVSCIATTS in-resident training as their respective nation's qualification courses. After completing core in-resident and several iterations of train-the-trainer instructor development courses, the follow-on MTTs help partner nations to develop and sustain programs to operate independently on their own to effectively provide both internal and external security of their territorial waters.

After a period of sustained interoperability, the unit will ideally become more involved with the United States, specifically with special operations forces, and develop their own training capabilities.

Continual and persistent engagement with specific units and key partner nations through additional and advanced training, regional exercises, follow-on MTTs, and combined operations will ultimately improve their overall readiness. It is in our mutual interest to improve security through enhanced interoperability, improved alliances, and increased cooperative security, said Mahoney.

Mahoney predicts that the shift in control of his command to NSWG-4 will improve security force assistance efforts to build select maritime security force capacities within key partner nations.

NSWG-4 will be better positioned to improve coordination with Naval Special Warfare units and theater special operations commands to ensure that Security Assistance Officers (SAOs) send partner nation military students to NAVSCIATTS from nations aligned with SOCOM priorities. It is in everyone's interest to more effectively concentrate United States efforts on building select maritime security force capabilities, said Mahoney.

In an ongoing effort to both continually improve the training provided to partner nation forces as well as sustain their reputation among its customers, NAVSCIATTS' schoolhouse instructor cadre seeks out and learns from best practices among similar Department of Defense (DOD) training programs including from the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC), the Inter-American Air Forces Academy, and equivalent Navy Expeditionary Combat Command (NECC) and Coast Guard courses.

For example, this year NAVSCIATTS water-based students will participate in a joint training exercise with WHINSEC's students undergoing land-based training. The maritime students will insert and extract the ground students during a final exercise to demonstrate that the scenario works, as well as the combined training.

Mahoney believes that synergies like these are critical as United States Government and DOD efforts increasingly shift from direct toward indirect methods. This indirect focus has been NAVSCIATTS' focus since its days as a start-up Coast Guard training team in Panama in 1961.

NAVSCIATTS is distinct from other commands with similar missions because the school exclusively trains international students. The cadre is full-time instructors; and the command is adjacent to Special Boat Team 22 (SBT-22), SOCOM's premier riverine command, allowing the instructors to easily draw upon a wealth of knowledge from the SWCC who operate at SBT-22.

Another benefit to NAVSCIATTS' location is the ease of access to the Pearl River, which provides some of the finest riverine and coastal training environments in the world.

NECC and the Coast Guard offer similar training; but their equivalent courses are not as long, as in-depth, or facilitated by a dedicated full-time instructor force, focused solely on training international students.

Despite our relatively small size, our NAVSCIATTS master training specialist SWCC cadre provides unmatched professional knowledge and expansive institutional experience unmatched in the military, said Mahoney. Our sustained competitive advantage within the maritime security force assistance arena is the result not of one single aspect of our command, but rather a mix of internal excellence through a culture of teamwork, a sterling reputation among our customers, and external stewardship from both NSW and SOCOM leadership over our 48 year history.

NAVSCIATTS' instructor force of less than thirty is comprised of full-time, bilingual, master training specialists, including SWCC, government employees, civilian contractors, and Navy engineers. The instructors are highly qualified, said Mahoney; their sole job is to effectively train international security forces on the operations and maintenance of small craft as well as sustain those relations for future United States Government engagement.

The instructor cadre teaches partner nation maritime forces how to protect their own waterways through courses offered at the schoolhouse in Mississippi. Nine courses are offered in both Spanish and English and cover such topics as patrol craft familiarization, outboard motor maintenance, mission planning, navigation, weapons training, rules of engagement, laws of armed conflict, and how a military law justice system functions in accomplishing military objectives.

All instructors are United States citizens, but many are originally from countries such as Brazil, Colombia, El Salvador, and Panama. This cadre has trained more than 6,000 international students from more than 55 countries in the past 48 years.

There simply is no other command in existence with the capacity to train partner nation students in small craft operations like NAVSCIATTS, said Mahoney.

The dynamic command that exists today started with somewhat humble beginnings in 1961, as a Coast Guard military training team deployed to the Panama Canal Zone to train the local military on small craft operations. In the midst of the deployment, the team recognized the need for sustained training and based a Coast Guard Small Craft Inspection and Training Team (SCIATT) at the United States Naval Station, Rodman, Panama, in 1963.

Although the ultimate goal of the schoolhouse is further reaching than a typical learning institution, it is still a schoolhouse with students and instructors who need the occasional break from the routine. When the students at the schoolhouse are not training, they make use of the nearby gym, soccer field, basketball and volleyball courts, barbecue areas, or internet lounge.

Under the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program, NAVSCIATTS today supports a robust Field Studies Program (FSP) designed to ensure students return to their respective countries with a greater understanding of United States business, military, and government cultures. As part of the FSP and in conjunction with the Navy International Programs Office, NAVSCIATTS coordinates educational trips to local businesses and civic activities in Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama.

Students have the opportunity to learn about their classmates' cultures too; during each course students are asked to share a cultural presentation about their home country. This provides opportunities to cultivate relationships with foreign countries, as well as develop and sustain professional and personal relationships, in order to provide the United States with both access and influence in partner nations.

The relationships forged at this small command in Southern Mississippi will last a lifetime and will put a human face on very important decisions made in the future that will impact maritime security on a global scale, said Wolf.