

**HONORABLE THOMAS W. O'CONNELL**  
**Colonel, US Army, Retired**



COL O'Connell was commissioned as a Distinguished Military Graduate from the Reserve Officer Training Corps Program at the University of Rhode Island in 1968 with a Bachelors degree in Economics. He later earned a Master's degree in Management from Central Michigan University while attending the Army's Command and General Staff College. While at the Naval War College, he also earned a Master's degree in International Relations, graduating with the highest distinction.

After an Infantry tour with the 4<sup>th</sup> Armored Division in Erlangen, Germany, COL O'Connell completed tactical intelligence and advisor training and served in Southeast Asia as a field advisor to Vietnamese forces, including duties in the Phoenix Program, and was awarded three medals for valor.

After serving as a Combat Intelligence Instructor and Company Commander at the Army Intelligence Center, COL O'Connell spent three years with the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division as an Intelligence Officer at battalion, brigade, and division levels. He then spent two years on exchange duty with the British Army at the Joint Service Intelligence Centre, United Kingdom, where he commanded the Foreign Armed Services Branch and allied liaison and Special Operations personnel on tactical and strategic collection against the Warsaw Pact nations. COL O'Connell was then assigned as the Senior Intelligence Officer to 1<sup>st</sup> Special Forces Operational Detachment-DELTA from 1980 to 1983. He then commanded the 313<sup>th</sup> MI Battalion of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division for two years.

After attendance at the Naval War College, he returned to Fort Bragg as the Director of Intelligence, J2, Joint Special Operations Command, and continued in the Special Operations intelligence field with a two-and-a-half year brigade command of an Army Special Mission Unit. After a short tour as the Deputy Director of Special Operations Command's Washington Office, he was selected as an original member of the Central Intelligence Agency's Office of Military Affairs in 1993.

COL O'Connell retired in the summer of 1995 after 27 years of continued service. His career included participation in four conflicts: Vietnam, Granada, Panama, and Southwest Asia, as well as various assignments to 33 countries.

After retirement he served with the Raytheon Corporation for seven years. In 2003, he was nominated by President Bush and confirmed by the US Senate to serve as the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict. In this position he had oversight of 50,000 Special Operations Forces, and an \$11B annual budget. Upon leaving the Pentagon in April 2007, he received the Department's highest award for civilian service, as well as that of the US Coast Guard.

Some of COL O'Connell's awards include the Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit (1 Oak Leaf Cluster), Bronze Star with Valor (2 Oak Leaf Clusters), Purple Heart, Air Medal, Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal (2 Oak Leaf Clusters), Army Commendation Medal with Valor (2) (4 Oak Leaf Clusters), the Humanitarian Service Medal, Joint Service Achievement Medal, Army Achievement Medal, Republic of Vietnam Campaign and Service Medal, Vietnam Cross of Gallantry, Expert Infantry Badge, Master Parachute Badge, DoD Distinguished Service Award, and the US Coast Guard Distinguished Service Award.

COL O'Connell was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2008. He passed away on 18 January 2016.