
WHAT IS THE FIRST EARTH BATTALION AND HOW DID IT ORIGINATE?

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By Jim Channon

Post Vietnam 1978 was a time when military morale and enrollment were at an all time low. During this period the U.S. Army needed to drastically shift approaches and prepare to defeat a vastly larger Soviet force in Europe. Army leaders called upon officers to develop needed creative approaches to dealing with this challenge. They were encouraged to fully explore the Army's Be All That You Can Be philosophy.

In response, U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel Jim Channon created the First Earth Battalion, that collected new technologies to support a conceptual prototype of the soldier of the future. Channon was inspired by the human potential and advanced human performance movements and drew many of his ideas from these fields and from the time he spent at Esalen Institute.

Many senior generals in the Army backed Channon because he was a bold example of what a young officer could do creatively. The word spread and other elements within the Army became more boldly involved in testing ideas that were on the edge. They came to call him the "lightning rod".

Like any endeavor that involves studying new ideas, some of the ideas panned out and others did not. The larger story is that the U.S. Army is one of the most creative organizations in the world and that it must continue to be so in order to deal with the radically different missions it must prepare for. Few people understand that reality because of the rigid prototype the media has created around military culture.

WHAT IS EVOLUTIONARY TACTICS?

Jim Channon delivered his ideas about the First Earth Battalion through his illustrated field manual, Evolutionary Tactics which offered a 21st Century vision of the soldier of the future. Evolutionary Tactics was published by the Army in 1978.

The manual was modeled after the popular Whole Earth Catalog with illustrations of advanced human performance skills. It is credited with kick-starting a very creative surge of activity in the U.S. Army. Army commanders adopted the elements that served them. There was no one cookie-cutter solution.

Original copies have become something of collector's item. Since that time, tens of thousands of copies have been downloaded from the Internet by fans across the globe. The archetype used in the manual is the warrior monk … who is invincible in war but very persuasive in peace. We see this model in action in the middle east today. See

WHAT IS THE MOVIE "THE MEN WHO STARE AT GOATS" AND HOW DOES IT RELATE TO THE FIRST EARTH BATTALION?

The movie evolved from a book of the same title written by British satirical writer Jon Ronson. It stars four of the most creative minds in Hollywood today: George Clooney, Kevin Spacey, Jeff Bridges and Ewan McGregor.

The title of the book and film is based on an experimental lab that once existed at Fort Bragg, NC where the military reportedly attempted to kill goats simply by staring at them. There were no corresponding approaches in Jim's field manual.

The highly anticipated film is due out in December 2009. The movie is a comedy, much of which is inspired by Jim Channon's First Earth Battalion because it kick-started a very creative surge in the army.

Channon is portrayed in the film by Jeff Bridge's who plays the character Bill Django. The First Earth Battalion is known in the film as The New Earth Army a name Jim offered the producers who wanted the creative liberty of making comedy without any direct association with the actual Battalion scenarios.

HOW ACCURATELY DO THE BOOK AND THE MOVIE PORTRAY THE REAL STORY OF THE FIRST EARTH BATTALION?

Though they both claim to be based on a true story, author Jon Ronson and screenwriter Peter Straughan took wide artistic license blurring the lines between fact and fiction in order to create a somewhat dark Hollywood comedy. Here are some important facts:

- Jim Channon was never discharged from the U.S. Army. He served in the U S Army as an infantry officer and creative spark-plug from 1962 to 1982 and was in Vietnam twice 65-66 and 70-71. During his time in Vietnam, he lost just one infantry soldier and never killed an innocent civilian. He was known for his ability to imagine

and illustrate the future battlefield and its advanced applications.

Returning home from Vietnam, his goal was to find non-lethal and peaceful solutions to potentially change the shape of war as we know it and save lives in the process. His work in the military was highly respected as he was asked to present to large high ranking conferences with his most creative talents and launched a simulation and games program that is now funded at 50 million dollars a year.

- Channon retired from the military in 1982 and did not serve in Iraq. (Ronson speculated that the sound healing therapies detailed in Evolutionary Tactics evolved into torture techniques in Abu Graib or Guantanamo. This is total speculation since sounds have been used since the beginning of armed struggle to influence moral or frighten the enemy.

WAS THE FIRST EARTH BATTALION A SECRET PARANORMAL FORCE IN THE US MILITARY?

No. The Earth Battalion has acted like a think-tank collecting and reviewing advanced human performance skills from all disciplines and it still does. It was never secret although some of the spin-off ideas may have become secret once tested (such as remote viewing.) The think-tank is still active and provides advanced human performance solutions for soldiers planet-wide. It is supported by Jim's retirement pay and has dozens of other volunteer military thinkers as part of the brain trust.

Paranormal sensibilities possessed by soldiers can increase survival rates on the modern and very complex battlefield. The goal is to create more situationally-aware combatants with a more advanced understanding of threats, allowing for peaceful incursions into dangerous areas and sparing the lives of civilians.

WHAT ABOUT THE GOAT LAB AT FORT BRAGG, DID THEY REALLY KILL GOATS THERE?

Jim says he hasn't a clue. John Alexander another battalion member, mentioned below, says Ronson called himself a documentary film-maker

and then took extra-ordinary license with whatever he wanted.

JIM HAS LEAD TOWNS, DISTRICTS, GOVERNMENTS, CORPORATIONS IN HIS SIGNATURE STRATEGIC DESIGN PROCESS. HE CALLS HIMSELF AN OPTIMAL FUTURIST. WHAT DOES THAT ENTAIL?

Most futurists today tend to be people who communicate about what might happen in the next few years. Visionaries tend to cast images about possibilities that seem far ranging. What he does is interview leaders and scan the planet for things that are working now. Then he upgrades their potential and bundles them into socially attractive settings. So, then they become strategies that are describable and organized graphically so people may actually get at the business of creating and even constructing them. Walt Disney created the word imagineer to make the connection between visionaries and engineers. To some extent his graphics talents allow him to illustrate things that can be constructed because they are drawn in 3D. He uses a personally created advanced visual language to get this done. If you view his over 70 videos on youtube.com you will see the graphics and storywork live.

His real gift is that he has scanned the social architecture of the earth and has created bundled solutions for many parts of the coming world. His focus is on qualities of life assembled in beautiful settings. He has interviewed over 2000 leaders on their ideas of a future with a higher purpose. Those ideas have been assembled in PROJECT EARTHRISE that he created with the fellows at the World Business Academy. They are ideas projected 100 years out. We believe he may be more fluent in long range futures than anyone alive at the moment. He has an extra-ordinary set of skills.

WHERE ARE MEMBERS OF THE FIRST EARTH BATTALION AND WHAT ARE THEY DOING TODAY?

Not surprisingly many original members remain actively involved in planetary affairs. Jim Channon lives in Hawaii on an eco-homestead and has pioneered a wide range of evolutionary ideas for living. Jim is still actively engaged in envisioning the global militaries of the world coming together as a New Earth Army to deal with environmental and social problems of the future. He calls this endeavor Operation

Noble Steward and has written about on his website and discussed it in his many You Tube videos. See , and .

John Alexander, the father of non-lethal weapons has just completed a major analysis of Africa and has written two books on the future of warfare. His character in the film is played more or less by the George Clooney role although there are few direct correspondences since the comedy writer needed all the creative license he could get. John's book, *The Warrior's Edge*, provided an accurate description of many of his projects that explored phenomenology. Still exploring, he currently serves as a council member of the Society for Scientific Exploration (<http://www.scientificexploration.org/>) and the board of directors of the International Remote Viewers's Association ([www-irva.org](http://www.irva.org))

Major General Bert Stubblebine is developing a sustainable community in Panama and raising global awareness about questionable medical practices created by large pharmaceutical companies involved in Codex.

Most of the 130 some odd members of the Army's original think-tank called Task Force Delta (where these ideas were spawned) have gone on to positions of meaningful social responsibility and other future-based technologies.