

Chaplain Irvin J. Banta III, SGM Ret., D.Min.  
NATEODA National Chaplain

Born a military brat in Fort Polk, Louisiana son of a WWII veteran, Irvin was the eldest of seven. He grew up in Franklin, Indiana helping his father in the greenhouses of a flower shop. From grade school to High school he ran the local paper route. On weekends, he mowed lawns to help support the family. Growing up he enjoyed spending his free time reading and researching in the local public library and high school library. He enjoyed language studies and radio communication. After graduating High School Irvin joined the Armed Forces and served 18 months in Vietnam 328th Radio Research (ASA), Det. 3, 198th Infantry brigade; and 196th Infantry brigade from 1970-1972. He had a break in service for about a year and then went to Ft Meade, Maryland and was assigned to a signal company. Then from the signal company he went to 144th Ordnance Detachment (EOD) and then to EOD School, Indian Head, Maryland. He graduated from EOD School in 1974. Then Irvin was assigned to the 77th EOD Yuma, Arizona where he met his wife Debbie Ferris, (sister of EOD SGM James "Jim" Ferris). They were married in Yuma 1976.

Irvin was one of the early EOD volunteers for 1<sup>st</sup> Special Forces Operational Detachment – Delta (Airborne), Fort Bragg, North Carolina. He arrived at the Unit in the spring of 1978 and attended the Operator Training Course -2 (OTC-2). Following graduation from OTC-2, passed Delta's Selection and Assessment Course and attended Basic Airborne School. Irvin was assigned to A Squadron as an EOD Operator. Irvin was on the Operation EAGLE CLAW mission to rescue the 53 American hostages held by the Iranians in Tehran, Iran. Irvin left the Unit in 1982, for an assignment to the 6<sup>th</sup> Ordnance Detachment (EOD), Fort Shafter, Hawaii. In 1985, Irvin was involved in MIA recovery efforts in Laos. Later that year was assigned to Redstone Arsenal Hazardous Devices School (HDS) as an Instructor and was the NCOIC. Irvin was then the NCOIC Army EOD Proponent Office at Redstone Arsenal, Alabama.

In 1989, Irvin attended the SGM Academy in Fort Bliss, Texas. He then returned to Redstone as the TRADOC EOD SGM for OMEMS (Redstone Arsenal). In 1990 he was asked by the FBI to present his research findings to the International Association of Bomb Technicians and Investigators (IABTI) which were later published by the FBI BDC.

Irvin retired from the Army as an EOD Sergeant Major in 1992 after serving 22 years. Irvin earned a Doctoral degree Counseling Psychology from Trinity College and Theological Seminary, concentrated in Biblical counseling. He earned a Masters of Divinity from Samford University where he concentrating in theology and pastoral care and a Bachelor of Science degree from Columbia College. He was licensed and ordained as a Baptist minister in the spring of 1991, and received endorsement as a professional Law Enforcement Chaplain that same year. As Bi-Vocational Pastor (1992), he became the LEO Chaplain, Senior Training Coordinator, and Deputy for Madison County Sheriff's Office. He was asked to support the FBI as a Chaplain/Counselor from 1997 to the present. He returned to teaching EOD Soldiers at Redstone Arsenal as an Alutiiq contractor (2004) then promoted to run the contract as the Program Manager/Program Director; was also the Chaplain for Huntsville Alutiiq office. Irvin

began a Private Counseling Practice while working with the Sheriff's Office around 1994 that is still active today (nearly 30 years now).

He is a member of the American Association of Christian Counselors (AACC), as well as the International Conference of Police Chaplains and the National Sheriff's Association, Chaplain Division. He is certified in Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) and Debriefing (CISD); as well as instructor qualified in Sexual Harassment and Rape Prevention training (SHARP). Additionally, he is certified to administer and score individuals on the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis (T-JTA). Irvin is also a member of the local HAM radio club.

While working in Huntsville, Irvin was PTA President, AYSO certified Soccer Referee, and supported youth mission work in his local church. Irvin was married to his wife, Debbie Banta for 39 years before the Lord took her home after her battle with ALS in 2015. He has 2 children and 4 grandchildren.

Sergeant Major Banta's awards and decorations include the Legion of Merit Medal, Defense Meritorious Service Medals, three Army Meritorious Service Medal, the Joint Service Commendation Medal, two Army Commendation Medal, two Army Achievement Medal, seven Good Conduct Medals, two National Defense Service Medals, the Vietnam Service Medal with four Campaign stars, the Humanitarian Service Medals, the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal, the Joint Meritorious Unit Awards, and the Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm Unit Citation. He is authorized to wear the Master Explosive Ordnance Disposal Badge, and the Parachutist Badge.