

## Donald D Blackburn

Brigadier General **Donald Dunwoody "Don" Blackburn** (September 14, 1916 – May 24, 2008) was a United States Army Special Forces officer, best known for his significant command and developmental roles in the U.S. Army Special Forces.

He was also the commander of the highly classified Studies and Observations Group from 1965 to 1966. Since most of his military career involved clandestine operations, many of Blackburn's exploits remain unknown to the general public.

### **Donald D. Blackburn**

#### **Rank, Service**

**Brigadier General O-7, U.S. Army**

#### **Veteran of:**

**U.S. Army Reserve 1938-1940**

**U.S. Army 1940-1971**

**World War II 1941-1945**

**Cold War 1945-1971**

**Vietnam War 1957-1958, 1960, 1965-1966**

#### **Tribute:**

Don Blackburn was born on September 14, 1916, in West Palm Beach, Florida. He was commissioned a 2d Lt of Infantry through the Army ROTC program on May 30, 1938, and went on active duty beginning September 22, 1940. His first assignment was as a Communications Officer with the 24th Infantry Regiment at Fort Benning, Georgia, followed by service as an advisor with the 12th Infantry Regiment of the Philippine Army and as a Signal Officer with the 11th Infantry Division of the Philippine Army before the fall of Corregidor in May 1942. After the Japanese Invasion of the Philippines, Capt. Blackburn evaded capture and then formed up with Philippine Guerrilla forces, eventually serving



as Commander of the Guerrilla forces on the island of Luzon from July 1942 to May 1943, and then as Commander of the 11th Infantry Regiment of the Philippine Army in Guerrilla Warfare against Japanese forces from June 1943 until the end of the war. LtCol Blackburn remained in the Philippines as Commander of the 11th Infantry Regiment when it was integrated into the regular Philippine Army in October 1945, and he returned to the United States in February 1946. After attending the POW Orientation Course he served as Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence with the U.S. Army Military District of Washington from July 1946 to September 1947. Col Blackburn next attended the Infantry Officer Advanced Course at Fort Benning from September 1947 to June 1948, followed by service as a Staff Officer with the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel with Headquarters U.S. Army in the Pentagon from June 1948 to April 1950. After attending Airborne School he served as an Instructor in the Department of Military Psychology and Leadership at the U.S. Military Academy from June 1950 to January 1953, and he then attended Armed Forces Staff College at Norfolk, Virginia, from February to July 1953. His next assignment was as a Staff Officer with Headquarters Allied Forces Northern Europe, NATO, at Oslo, Norway, from August 1953 to July 1956, followed by service as Commanding Officer of the 3rd Training Regiment at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, from August 1956 to June 1957. He served as Assistant Chief of Staff for Personnel with the U.S. Army Training Center at Fort Jackson from June to September 1957, and then as Senior Advisor for the 5th Military



Region with the Military Assistance and Advisory Group in South Vietnam from June

1957 to September 1958. His next assignment was as Commanding Officer of the 77th Special Forces Group at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, from October 1958 to June 1960, and during this time he deployed to Southeast Asia from April to May 1960. He attended the National War College in Washington, D.C., from August 1960 to June 1961, and then served as Deputy Director of Development for Special Warfare with Headquarters U.S. Army in the Pentagon from June 1961 to June 1964. Gen Blackburn next served as Director of Special Warfare in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations with Headquarters U.S. Army from June 1964 to May 1965, followed by service as Commanding Officer of the Studies and Observation Group with U.S. Military Assistance Command in South Vietnam from May 1965 to May 1966. He served as a Staff Officer with the NATO Military Committee in Washington, D.C., from July to September 1966, and then served as Assistant Deputy Director for Intelligence and Evaluation with the Defense Communication Planning Group in Washington, D.C., from October 1966 to September 1967. Gen Blackburn's next assignment was as Assistant Commander of the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg from September 1967 to September 1968, followed by service as Director of Plans and Programs in the Office of the Chief of Research and Development with Headquarters U.S. Army in the Pentagon from October 1968 to August 1969. He then served as Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency and Special Activities with the U.S. Army Element in the Office of the Joint Chiefs of

Staff in the Pentagon from August 1969 to January 1971. During this time Gen Blackburn helped plan and oversee the initial development for Operation Ivory Coast, the Son Tay Raid to rescue American Prisoners of War held in North Vietnam on November 21, 1970. His final assignment was as Director of Developments and Deputy Chief of Research and Development in the Office of the Chief of Research and Development with Headquarters U.S. Army from January 1971 until his retirement from the Army on July 1, 1971. Don Blackburn died on May 24, 2008, and was buried at Arlington National Cemetery.