

ADM Eric T. Olson, U. S. Navy (Ret)

Admiral Eric T. Olson served as the eighth commander of U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) headquartered at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida from July 2007 to August 2011.

As the commander USSOCOM, he was responsible for ensuring the readiness of joint special operations forces and, as directed, conducting operations worldwide.

He previously served as Deputy Commander, U.S. Special Operations Command from 2003 to July 2007. Admiral Olson was the first Navy SEAL ever to be appointed to three-star and four-star flag rank, as well as the first naval officer to be USSOCOM's combatant commander.



A native of Tacoma, Washington, Admiral Olson graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 1973 and qualified as a Naval Special Warfare officer in 1974. He has served operationally in an Underwater Demolition Team, SEAL Team, SEAL Delivery Vehicle Team, Special Boat Squadron, and at the Naval Special Warfare Development Group. He has commanded at every level from SEAL Platoon officer-in-charge to Naval Special Warfare force commander.

Admiral Olson has participated in several conflicts and contingency operations, and has served as a SEAL instructor, strategy and tactics development officer and joint special operations staff officer. His overseas assignments include service as a United Nations Military Observer in Israel and Egypt, and as Navy Programs Officer in Tunisia. He served on the Navy staff as Assistant Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Plans, Policy, and Operations).

Admiral Olson earned a Master of Arts degree in National Security Affairs at the Naval Postgraduate School and studied both Arabic and French at the Defense Language Institute. He is a Joint Specialty Officer and Political-Military Affairs sub-specialist with emphasis on Africa and the Middle East. His awards include the Distinguished Service Medal and Silver Star.

Admiral Olson retired from active duty after over 38 years of service.