



Mark Simon

M-9172

Mark Simon, 58 passed away on November 29th, 2025 while serving as the Special Operations Liaison Officer at the U.S. Embassy in Belgrade, Serbia. Mark enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1986 and was awarded his Special Forces qualification in 1996 while assigned to the 20th SFG(A). In 1999 he was reassigned to the 19th SFG(A). He was deployed numerous times post 9/11. Among his awards and decorations are the Bronze Star (2 OLC), the Joint Meritorious Unit Award (2 OLC), the Army Meritorious Unit Award, the General Douglas MacArthur Leadership Award, the Special Forces TAB, the Ranger TAB, the Combat Diver Badge, the Military Freefall Badge, and the Master Parachutist's Badge. In civilian life Mark worked for the Defense Contract Audit Agency as a Management Analyst. He is survived by his wife (Elizabeth), son (Matthew), and daughter (Emily). A celebration of life will be held in Newport, Rhode Island in January, 2026. Interment will be at Arlington National Cemetery at a later date.

Mark Joseph Simon

November 29, 2025 (Age 58)

Central Europe

Special Forces

SFA Chapter 11, Mem# M-9172

Mark Simon passed away unexpectedly on November 29, 2025. He was 58 years old.

Mark was born in Madison, South Dakota and grew up in Estelline. After graduating from high school in 1986, he enlisted in the US Army. He quickly earned his Airborne and Ranger tabs, and then served six years with the US Army's 3rd Infantry Regiment "The Old Guard" before successfully earning his Special Forces tab and fulfilling his goal of becoming a Green Beret.

He left active duty to join first the Maryland National Guard and then the Rhode Island National Guard, qualifying as a Combat Diver and HALO parachutist, among many other accomplishments. He was happiest when falling out of the sky or exploring under water. He became a Special Operations Warrant Officer in 2006, rising to the rank of CW4.

Mark was deployed several times post 9/11—twice to Kosovo, twice to Afghanistan, and once each to Kuwait and Iraq. Over the course of his military career, he earned numerous awards and commendations, including three Joint Meritorious Unit Awards, the Army's Meritorious Unit Commendation, three Bronze Stars, and the General Douglas MacArthur Leadership Award. Although he downplayed his accomplishments, he was proud of his service and committed to his fellow soldiers, who were and will always remain his brothers.

At the time of his death, Mark was serving with Special Operations Command Europe as the Special Operations Liaison Officer at the US embassy in Belgrade, Serbia, following a four-year assignment at the US embassy in Budapest, Hungary. He believed in the importance of US engagement abroad and thrived among his US and foreign counterparts.

Mark held a BS in Decision Sciences Management and an MS in Peacekeeping Operations, both from George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia, as well as other professional certifications. Alongside his supposedly part-time military career, he spent more than 30 years with the Defense Contract Audit Agency at Fort Belvoir as a Management Analyst and then as the Program Manager for Facilities and Space Management. He was extremely proud to be a Federal Government employee and was looking forward to returning to his role as a civil servant following his military assignments. He truly believed in public service.

Somewhere in all of this activity, he met his wife Elizabeth on a blind date and they married in 1995, welcoming Emily in 2002 and Matthew in 2006. Mark's military and federal careers were exceptionally distinguished, but his children were his greatest accomplishments and he was immensely proud of them. They continue to embody the very best of him.

Mark was well-known among his family and friends for many things, including his seemingly endless affinity for grueling athletic pursuits. He was an avid runner. As a member of the Army National Guard's All-Guard marathon team, he ran marathons throughout the US as part of the Army's recruiting efforts. When marathons got too easy, he began running ultra-marathons. When that got boring, he took up Spartan Races and triathlons, competing in Ironmans and Half-Ironmans throughout the US and abroad. He also spent an improbable year on the Rhode Island National Guard's biathlon team, reasoning that although he didn't really know how to ski, he knew how to shoot, and somehow it all worked out. In all these endeavors, he had an enthusiastic audience in his wife and kids, who schlepped all his gear and cheered him on.

His impressive collection of racing gear, training bikes, racing bikes, wetsuits, dive equipment, running shoes, bike shoes, hiking shoes, backpacks, headlamps, Camelbaks, nutritional supplements, Oakley sunglasses, and Garmin watches exasperated his wife and amused his kids and took up the entire basement, but they are testament to his dedication to push himself to the very limits of his abilities.

Mark had a lifelong love of travel and took advantage of his prime location in Central Europe to visit more than 25 countries in the four years he spent there, facilitating a growing collection of souvenirs and tchotchkes and crowding the family travel map with ever more pins. One of his last forays was to France, where he visited Omaha Beach and the Ranger Monument at Pointe-du-Hoc in Normandy—a fitting and very moving experience. And he died while visiting Norway, where his mother's family originated.

Mark was a natural comedian and storyteller. His impersonations of family members, especially his dad, are legendary, and he enjoyed sharing his adventures. Everything was fair game, from amazing experiences to National Lampoon-esque disasters. He loved books, music, movies, superheroes (both Marvel and DC, for those who might be concerned), and anything to do with Star Wars, Star Trek, and science fiction. His superhero comic book collection is prodigious. His alarm clock was set to Queen's "Flash Gordon" theme song. In fact, all his multiple morning alarms were set to music, and his kids always knew that "Juke Box Hero" meant that it was 7:30am and time to get up.

His meticulous attention to detail and organization were well-known to all. One of his favorite gifts ever was a label-maker, which held up admirably under copious use. Every time he deployed, his parting words to Elizabeth were: "Please don't crap up the basement." He carried a fishing tackle box full of literally everything you needed to prep a uniform, from your BDUs to your mess dress. Extra rack? Check. Extra tabs? Check. Extra ribbons? Check. Plus a sewing kit, ruler, and protractor. He showed up to help his brother and sister-in-law move and brought all his own cleaning equipment and supplies. He was always there for you, and he usually had exactly what you needed.

More than anything, Mark loved his family. He was one of seven siblings, growing up in a tight-knit group in a small town in South Dakota, working his paper route and playing football and basketball and running track in high school. He worked hard. And although he lived in far-o^ places, crossed countless time zones, and worked in countries most people only ever read about, he never lost touch with home. He invested extraordinary time, energy, and resources to stay connected, making sure his family always knew they were in his thoughts.

In addition to Elizabeth, Emily, and Matthew, Mark is survived by his siblings Michelle Tvedt (Doug), Douglas Simon, Deanna Stelter (David), Jennifer Radtke (Blaine), and Eric Simon (Gena), along with many nieces and nephews and even a few great-nieces and -nephews, all of whom he adored. He was preceded in death by his parents, Mike and Doris, and his older brother Todd, who was his hero.

Mark was also a beloved member of Elizabeth's family and will be remembered by his father-in-law, Lawrence Velte, and his brothers-in-law Eric Velte (Kathleen) and Daniel Velte (Urszula) and their children. His mother-in-law, Joan, passed away in 2012, and is no doubt gathered with his parents and brother to welcome him home.

Despite his many successes, in the end Mark took his own life. We will never know exactly why he chose this path, but how he died will never diminish how he lived. He is resting easy now. And if his passing prompts even one soldier or servicemember to take a step toward seeking health and healing, it will be a blessing.

Mark will be remembered at a celebration of life in January, in Newport, Rhode Island. He will be buried at Arlington National Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, he would surely want to support organizations that help soldiers and their families in times of crisis and transition, among them the Green Beret Foundation, the Special Forces Charitable Trust, the Wounded Warrior Project, the Special Operations Association of America, and the Special Forces Warrior Foundation. His family is grateful for the outpouring of affection and support from around the globe.