

RETIRED POLICE SGT. / U.S. MARINE TO CONQUER VOLCANO THAT NEARLY KILLED HIM

U.S. Marine Staff Sgt. Mark R. Clifford led a team defending Subic Bay naval operations against communist terrorists when Mt. Pinatubo exploded

MORAGA, CALIFORNIA, CA, UNITED STATES, March 3, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- RETIRED SAN LEANDRO POLICE SGT. / U.S. MARINE TO CONQUER VOLCANO THAT NEARLY KILLED HIM



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Mark R. Clifford

D-Day for Marine Veteran Mark R. Clifford is April 7, 2025

Mt. Pinatubo Devastation Described:

<https://markrclifford.com/in-honor-of-veterans-day-a-veterans-story/>

San Francisco East Bay resident Mark R. Clifford, 60, the

married father of three, has survived a volcano eruption, 25 years as a San Leandro Police Officer, and a recent stroke—more than enough to discourage the average human from leaving home.

On April 7, Clifford will attempt to reach the crater of Mt. Pinatubo, the Philippine volcano that nearly killed him 34 years ago.

Fateful Day

On June 12, 1991, Philippine Independence Day, Clifford was a 26-year-old U.S. Marine Staff Sergeant from San Francisco commanding 19 men responsible for protecting the Subic Bay Naval Station from the communist National People’s Army.

“Shortly after, we were alerted to the impending eruption of Pinatubo, which was 23 miles from our base. I looked up and saw what appeared to be spilled milk covering the blue tropical sky. Before we knew it, ash was raining down, covering our uniforms. We could barely breathe.”

The fateful day was a perfect storm of nature. The destruction caused by the eruption—multiplied by Typhoon Yunya and constant earthquakes—spread rock debris and ash

beyond the 28-mile blast area, leaving 100,000 people homeless and killing 800.

Waiting for Death

After helping with base evacuations, Clifford's team hunkered down in a metal Quonset hut that had become an oven. Throughout the night, super-heated ash rained down, threatening to smother them.

"The ash was so heavy and hot it defoliated the jungle around us. We knew then we were being buried alive and began preparing for death. When I went to sleep that night, I was at peace, believing I would never wake up." The next day, he and his men clawed their way out of what could have been their tomb.

"We suffered burns on our hands and fingers, but we survived." The near tragedy is a theme of his debut novel, [Typhoon Coast](#).

"Every day, I think about how close I was to death," he said. "I think returning and conquering Pinatubo will help push aside the nightmares. I hope so."

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