

Eric Olson, USN, RET.

Former Commander of the U.S. Special Operations Command and Four-Star Admiral Navy SEAL

“When the history of these wars is written, the first, last, and most pivotal chapters will be about Eric and the people he has led and trained and mentored his entire life.” Admiral Mike Mullen, Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Eric Olson is a retired United States Navy Admiral who served as the commander of the U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) from 2007–2011. During his tenure as America’s top special operations officer, he was responsible for recruiting, training, equipping, and deploying broadly capable forces worldwide. Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta said, “As a result of his hard work, we now have the best-trained, the best-equipped, and the most experienced Special Operations Force in the history of the United States.” A senior member of the United States National Defense team, Olson is often described as one of this century’s great military leaders and credited with developing the specialized forces that have accomplished some of the most notable military operations of the last decade.

Olson was the first three- and then the first four-star Navy SEAL, as well as the first naval officer to be USSOCOM’s combatant commander. He retired from active duty after more than 38 years of service, at which time he was the “Bull Frog,” the longest-serving Navy SEAL on duty. His personal operational experiences were diverse, marked by valor and strong leadership. Olson is also known as a visionary and action-oriented leader who stayed connected with his forces at all levels. Having developed the best of the best, Admiral Eric Olson addresses building, training, and leading highly effective teams and our nation’s geopolitical challenges. Described as “the most important man you never heard of,” he is exclusively represented by [Leading Authorities, Inc. speakers bureau](#).

Career. Olson’s actions as a Navy SEAL have been of national importance and utmost secrecy; many details of his operations are still classified. His career has included major, historic geopolitical events, and he was key to the successes of special operations forces in our recent conflicts. Admiral Mike Mullen, the former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said, “When the history of these wars is written, the first, last, and most pivotal chapters will be about Eric and the people he has led and trained and mentored his entire adult life. From the shadows of the Hindu Kush to the streets of Baghdad, our special operators have literally changed the face of modern warfare.”

Military Resume and Awards. Olson served in operational and leadership roles, where he developed many new tactics and techniques. In addition to leading USSOCOM, Olson was commander of a counter-terrorism unit and later the Naval Special Warfare Command. His overseas assignments included service as a United Nations military observer in Israel and Egypt and a Navy programs officer in Tunisia. He served on the Navy staff as assistant deputy chief of naval operations and as chief of staff at the Joint Special Operations Command. Olson has also been awarded myriad military awards, and he has been recognized for his service by several civilian organizations and three foreign governments. In 2017, he was recognized as a US Naval Academy Distinguished Graduate, making him the first member of his graduating class to be so honored.

Olson is now president of ETO Group, consulting on national security; an adjunct professor at Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs; a director of Iridium Communications; and a director of the Special Operations Warrior Foundation.