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## Austin Fall : Green and Golden

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Alumni



## **AUSTIN FALL** ***BA, POLITICAL SCIENCE '94***

Lieutenant Commander Austin D. Fall has spent a lifetime confronting danger across the globe, both above and below sea level. His resume reads like a Marvel All-American super-hero: Navy diver, Explosive Ordnance Disposal Officer in Charge, and Anti-Terrorism Force Protection Officer, among other formidable assignments. Austin has spent nearly 25 years in active and reserve duty in the U.S. Navy. Along the way, he earned a Combat Action Ribbon, the Bronze Star Medal for Valor, and more. Always, service has been the bedrock of Austin's world.

Born in Cheyenne, WY, he was raised in Arizona, Florida, New Jersey, and New York. Austin enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1987, trained as a diver, and was sent to Guantanamo Bay in Cuba. In 1990, he was assigned to his first ship, USS Recovery ARS 43, and subsequently participated in numerous open ocean tows, aircraft salvage operations, and a Mediterranean cruise during Desert Shield/Storm.

In 1991, Lieutenant Fall was honorably discharged from active military service and returned to Florida to continue his education. He remained affiliated with the Navy Reserve and was assigned to its Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit 2. In this capacity, he worked in civilian support operations at the Port of Miami and in extensive salvage and recovery operations following the potent Hurricane Andrew in August 1992. During his two years studying Political Science at USF St. Petersburg, Austin's innate leadership skills flourished as Student Government representative, then president. He was also president of the pre-law Legalis Society. His peers recognized and lauded his clear thinking, tenacity, and ability to collaborate.

After graduation from USFSP, the ever courageous and calm alumnus transferred to the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit 12 in Charleston and was attached to the Mine Counter Measures Detachment 4. In 1996, Austin re-enlisted and was immediately assigned to the USS Grapple ARS 53 as a Navy diver. Aboard the ship, he undertook another Mediterranean cruise and then assisted in the salvage and recovery operation following the tragic crash of TWA Flight 800 off Long Island in 1996.

In 1998, Austin was selected for the Special Operations Officer program and was commissioned in November. He then attended Surface Warfare Officers School, Damage Control Assistant School and reported to the USS Grasp (ARS 51). Austin moved up the ranks, ultimately attaining the position of Command Diving and Salvage Officer. During this period, Austin participated in the 1999 recovery of the iconic USS Monitor (the first ironclad warship commissioned by the Union Navy during the Civil War), another Mediterranean voyage, and the search and recovery of John Kennedy Jr.'s ill-fated Piper Saratoga aircraft off the coast of Martha's Vineyard.

With the dawn of a new millennium, Austin pursued even more training and attended Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) School at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida. After EOD tactical training in San Diego, CA, and airborne training at Fort Benning in Georgia, he reported to the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit 2. As an Officer in Charge, Austin completed a deployment in support of the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard in Kuwait and was awarded a Navy Commendation Medal and a Coast Guard Commendation Medal. A subsequent deployment, in support of the Second Marine Expedition Force (II MEF) in Al Anbar Province, Iraq, earned Austin and the EOD team the Combat Action Ribbon and the Bronze Star Medal for Valor.

After additional work in Iraq, Austin continued to provide leadership in anti-terrorism protection, training and personnel coordination through a myriad of professional roles. Promoted to Lieutenant Commander in 2008, Austin assumed duties as Operations Officer until traveling to Fort Leavenworth, KS, to attend the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College in 2009. He was then assigned to work on EOD force shaping and operational war plans. Austin was also instrumental in assessing and planning assistance to Haiti following massive earthquakes in 2010. Later that year, he transferred to the Navy's Operational Test and Evaluation Force (OPTEVFOR) where, as an Operational Test Director, Austin oversaw the design, coordination and implementation of tests within the complex fields of expeditionary warfare.

Lieutenant Commander Austin Fall retired from active duty in 2012 and lives with his family in Virginia Beach, VA — where he is formulating his next remarkable adventure!

*“I was very fortunate to be able to attend USF St. Pete. The faculty and administration were very challenging at times and I walked away with an unforgettable experience and a solid education. In the small town-like campus atmosphere you almost had to try not to be known by name, making the time there even more personalized. More importantly, in addition to leaving with a college degree, I left with friendships that continue to this day and are just as precious.”*

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