

Mayor Slesnick succeeds on second parachute mission

by Matt Bokor
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GOLDEN KNIGHTS

Mayor Slesnick makes a 14,000-foot sky dive with Army tandem master

Deterred by bad weather their first time aloft, several Florida mayors, including Don Slesnick of Coral Gables, recently made a symbolic sky dive with members of the U.S. Army's Golden Knights parachute team.

In all, 16 mayors from across Florida had planned to parachute with the Golden Knights, who train at Homestead Air Reserve Base. Three mayors made the first jump on Feb. 27 before bad weather interfered. Mayor Slesnick and his counterparts from Homestead

and Windermere were able to complete their jumps on March 1.

Mayor Slesnick, a Vietnam veteran and president of the Florida League of Mayors, came up with the idea as a show of support for the military.

"Why did I jump? The long and the short of it is that I put together a group of elected public officials -- mayors -- in order to bring attention to the military and our support of the men and women of the armed forces. On Saturday (Feb. 27), as our closing part of the event -- 16 mayors signed a 'community covenant' pledging to support the soldiers, sailors, airpersons and Marines who come from or return to our cities. ...

"The jump wasn't something on my list of things to do in life -- one reason that I

signed up for the artillery was to stay on the ground -- but I was committed to follow through

“On Saturday (Feb. 27), after three other mayors had jumped and the wind gusts were picking up, I was 15 seconds away from leaving the plane – and didn’t get to go, I became determined that I would finish what I started.

“When the call came to my office on Monday (March 1) that the conditions were great for jumping, I drove to Homestead and hoped that the good weather would hold. It did and I took the plunge.

“I was excited before the jump, nervous at the point of departure, awestruck at the sight and thrilled to land safe and sound.”

For more than 50 years, the Golden Knights have been wowing audiences at air shows, competitions and most recently, with high-profile tandems. The team was in Homestead Jan. 25 through March 5 conducting winter training.