Special Operations in Past and Present

Implications for Policy Makers

Edited by

Jan Hoffenaar

Special Operations in Past and Present
Implications for Policy Makers

Proceedings of the 21st Annual Conference of the
Euro-Atlantic Conflict Studies Working Group
of the Partnership for Peace Consortium of Defense Academies and Security Studies Institutes

23-27 May 2022
Gdynia, Poland

Compiled by
Martin Hoekstra, Jan Hoffenaar, Harold E. Raugh Jr. and Katarzyna Wardin

Edited by
Jan Hoffenaar

Polish Naval Academy
of the Heroes of Westerplatte

Netherlands Institute
of Military History

Editorial support: Minte Kamphuis
Layout: Erik van Oosten
Print: Royal van der Most, Heerde
ISBN: 9789070677633
Front cover: Ministry of Defence, Netherlands

Table of Contents

Introduction

Jan Hoffenaar

In recent decades, Special Operations and Special Operations Forces (SOF) have gained tremendous relevance and interest, both in military circles and in the political and public domain. This was the main reason for choosing these units as the central theme for the 21st annual conference of the Euro-Atlantic Conflict Studies Working Group of the Partnership for Peace Consortium of Defense Academies and Security Studies Institutes, organised by the Polish Naval Academy of the Heroes of Westerplatte and the Netherlands Institute of Military History in Gdynia from 23 to 27 May 2022. Historians and military personnel from seventeen countries came together to discuss (aspects of) the phenomenon of special operations from different perspectives. Historical case studies and more theoretical reflections alternated. This publication contains the edited versions of most of the contributions to the conference.

Nowadays, in NATO we mean by special forces, or SOF: "specially designated, organised, trained, and equipped forces, manned with selected personnel, using unconventional tactics, techniques, and modes of employment".[1] They are further distinguished by their independence, agility, creativity and acting 'under the radar'. These small elite military units conduct a wide array of so-called special operations, e.g. special reconnaissance and intelligence gathering, eliminating or capturing high-profile targets, counter terrorism activities, and providing military assistance to allied forces or foreign insurgency movements. In particular, through their so-called 'direct actions' – characterised by surprise, speed and purposiveness – special forces can achieve strategic objectives at relatively limited cost.

However, the above description is time-bound. 'Special units' have a long history. Since time immemorial, regular armies, as well as navies, have had small separate units of specially trained soldiers to carry out special operations, often also in support of those conventional units. They do things that conventional units are not capable of, or only with a higher chance of failure. Examples include sabotage operations, eliminating key personnel and espionage and reconnaissance behind enemy lines. Examples include the light troops (raiders, hussars, cossacks, etc.) in the eighteenth-century armies in Europe and North America, the tirailleurs in Napoleon's armies, the special units formed at the instigation of Winston Churchill in the Second World War (widely regarded as the cradle of modern SOF), the special units deployed in counterinsurgency operations and decolonisation wars in the 1950s and 1960s in Africa and Asia, and the anti-terror units in Western Europe in the 1970s. Meanwhile, much has been written about special operations (forces), often to advance doctrine and/or theory.[2] The contributions in this publication contain mainly historical practical examples, from which some relevant notions for today can be extracted.

In the first article, Frederik Eriksson analyses the changing appreciation of the Swedish Rangers in the 20th century. This original ski infantry for the far North evolved from light infantry to special forces for special operations (in the Second World War and the 1950s) and then back to almost normal infantry with conventional tasks. He introduces

1 NATO, *AJP-3.5*.

2 Zie o.a.: McRaven, *Spec Ops*; Kiras, *Special Operations and Strategy*; Spulak Jr., *A Theory of Special Operations*; Finlan, *Special Forces, Strategy and the War on Terror*; Yarger, *21st Century sof*; Rubright, *A Unified Theory*; Searle, *Outside the*; Glicken Turnley, Michael and Ben-Ari, eds., *Special Operations Forces in the 21st Century*; Shamir and Ben-Ari, "The Rise of Special Operations Forces: Generalized Specialization, Boundary Spanning and Military Autonomy."; Ansbacher and Schleifer, "The three ages of modern Western special operations forces.".

the concept of 'conventionalisation' (of special units), of which he distinguishes two types. According to the first type, this phenomenon occurs when special units are assigned more and more tasks, making them less specialised. The second type develops when the units are assigned more (heavier) weapon systems, making them more like normal infantry. Almost en passant, Eriksson also gives an overview of Sweden's overall defence plans.

Carmen-Sorina Rijnoveanu then covers Romanian special intelligence missions in the first years after the First World War. Romania, which had just achieved its – since the mid-nineteenth century – goal of national unification, then had to counter a mix of propaganda, sabotage and terrorist actions by Moscow-directed Bolshevik groups. These tried to get the army on their side, wanted to create chaos and revolution in society and threatened the territorial integrity of the Romanian state (the Soviet Union did not recognise the union of Bessarabia with Romania). The intelligence missions had to gather as much information as possible about the enemy's plans through infiltration actions and operations in environments that the Bolshevists controlled.

Four contributions deal with special forces at the time of the Second World War. Back then, many countries created special units that had great similarities to today's SOF and sometimes still exist today. Jean Foucrier convincingly shows that French units in the Special Air Service (SAS) during Operation *Overlord* were in reality not the glorious elite warriors as the heroic national narrative existing almost from the beginning would have us believe. It took a lot of effort to fill the units, they hardly operated in an irregular fashion and the military impact of their actions was very modest. At least as important as their military role, however, was the propagandistic and morale-boosting role of these "heralds of fighting France". Blaž Torkar recounts the history of No. 7 Yugoslav Troop (No. 10 Inter-Allied Commando). This was a small unit that could hardly function as such because the majority of the soldiers soon wanted to join the partisans led by Josip Broz 'Tito', who wanted to liberate Yugoslavia from all foreign troops. In her article, Linda Parker discusses a lesser-known aspect of the British SAS, namely spiritual care. Using books and letters from chaplains, she explains how these tried to make a positive contribution to the soldiers' welfare and keeping their morale high. Manuel Stănescu, finally, gives us an insight into the work of some intelligence and counterintelligence missions of the Romanian army.

During conflicts with non-state actors, states must at all times have accurate information about their opponents' intentions, plans, locations, resources and population support. Special forces are ideally suited for this purpose. One way they can do this is by posing as guerrillas. Peter Kiss uses two historical case studies ('Force X' in the Philippines, 1946-1954 and the 'Selous Scouts' in Rhodesia, 1973-1980) to analyse not only the possibilities, advantages and success factors, but also the disadvantages and risks of deploying what he calls "fake guerrillas".

After the Second World War, many countries chose to form new SOF-like units. This was not always easy, as, for example, Matej Medvecký and Miloslav Čaplovič describe in their contribution on the 73rd Infantry Regiment, a special operations airdrop unit established in 1949. Lack of actual interest among military superiors and a pinching communist environment were mainly to blame. Jordan Baev provides an exploratory survey of the organisation, doctrinal development and practical preparations of Bulgarian SOF and

Spetznaz[3] units over the past eighty years. He draws on many recently accessed archives.

The transition to a post-Cold War society meant much for the political and military orientation of countries and their armed forces. Petr Janoušek explains how this transition took hold in the 1990s in Czechoslovakia and, from 1993, the Czech Republic, a country that had transitioned from communist rule to democracy and joined NATO in 1999. Special/elite units were at the forefront of this process of change, according to Janoušek. In terms of pure military expertise, this was fairly quick, but in terms of ideological and political orientation, the process was more difficult. By practising, attending courses and going on foreign missions with military personnel from NATO countries, Czech servicemen not only gained an exclusively military-tactical and -technical view of their profession, but also an understanding of values such as freedom, democracy and the rule of law and their protective role in it.

Martin Rink analyses the problems in reunified Germany with the creation of a completely new SOF unit, completely different from the existing organisational structure. According to him, the need to establish this unit should be understood in the context of a long-standing trend of "special forcification" or "SOF-isation" of conventional units. This takes place through the introduction of sophisticated command and control systems, intelligence and reconnaissance features and weapons systems, combined with the multiplication of threats and risks due to the process of globalisation and the consequent adaptation of the entire armed forces to expeditionary action. He addresses his subject from a comprehensive approach by problematising both the unit's structure and the command and control process and its (special) identity.

It is on the latter aspect that Sven Behnke's contribution connects. He wonders whether special ethical standards should be developed for (German) SOF. He thinks not – because the same values and standards (of the German constitution) should apply to all military units – but does think – given their special tasks in special circumstances and tendencies to see themselves as elite soldiers – that they deserve extra guidance and constant care in this area. He concludes his contribution with good clues as to how the specific (ethical) challenges of special operations forces units can be met.

Martijn van der Vorm's contribution examines how the Dutch *Korps Commandotroepen* (KCT, the Dutch Army Special Forces Regiment) learned from the experiences of three missions in southern Afghanistan between 2005 and 2010 and how it tried to embed these experiences in the organisation. The regiment's relatively small size, continuity of personnel, the establishment of its own centre of expertise and also access to undisclosed funds contributed, he says, to the regiment's successful learning curve.

This volume concludes with some notes based on the articles and discussions at the conference.

3 "*Spetznaz*" is an acronym for "special purpose".

REFERENCES

Ansbacher, Yair and Ron Schleifer, "The three ages of modern Western special operations forces," *Comparative History* 41, no. 1 (2022): 32-45.

Finlan, Alastair. "A Dangerous Pathway? Toward a Theory of Special Forces," *Comparative Strategy* 38, no. 4 (2019): 255-275.

Finlan, Alistair. *Special Forces, Strategy and the War on Terror. Warfare By Other Means*. Londen: Routledge 2008.

Glicken Turnley, Jessica, Kobi Michael and Eyal Ben-Ari, eds., *Special Operations Forces in the 21st Century. Perspectives from the Social Sciences*. London: Routledge 2017.

Kiras, James D. *Special Operations and Strategy: From World War II to the War on Terrorism*. New York: Routledge, 2006.

McRaven, William H. *Spec Ops: Case Studies in Special Operations Warfare: Theory and Practice*. Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1995.

NATO Standard. *AJP-3,5: Allied Joint Doctrine for Special Operations*. Edition B Version 1. 2019.

Rubright, Richard W. *A Unified Theory for Special Operations*. Tampa, FL: JSOU Press, 2017.

Searle, Tom. *Outside the Box: A New General Theory of Special Operations*. Tampa, FL: JSOU Press, 2017.

Shamir, Eitan and Eyal Ben-Ari, "The Rise of Special Operations Forces: Generalized Specialization, Boundary Spanning and Military Autonomy," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 41, no. 3 (2018): 335-371.

Spulak Jr., Robert G. *A Theory of Special Operations: The Origin, Qualities, and Use of SOF*. Hurlburt Field, FL: JSOU Press, October 2007.

Yarger, Harry R. *21st Century SOF: Toward an American Theory of Special Operations*. Tampa, FL: JSOU Press, April 2013.

From Light Infantry to Special Forces and Back Again

Swedish Rangers During the 20th Century

Fredrik Eriksson

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to discuss conventionalisation with regards to special forces, looking at how Swedish ranger units, initially ski-infantry for the far North transformed from light infantry to special forces, and then back to infantry with roughly conventional tasks. I will analyse how ranger units became a solution to strategic challenges and went through several transformations during the 20th century. With technical, operational and tactical changes, rangers have gone through several phases from the First World War and to the end of the century. This article builds in part on the book *Från Savolaxbrigaden till Särskilda skyddsgruppen.*[1]

Through the concept of conventionalisation it is possible to illustrate how special forces units can become more and more 'conventional', either with new technology and/or new requirements in the tactical, operational and strategic arenas. The questions addressed in this paper are:

- What were the main features of the development of Swedish ranger units during the 20th century?
- In what way does conventionalisation characterisee the development of ranger units?
- In what way did rangers conduct special operations during the 20th century?

From an analytical standpoint, special operations and special forces have to be separated from one another, as special operations does not require special forces per se. Instead special operations can be conducted by regular military units or even by civilians. The thing is not the *who*, it is the *how*. The definition of a special operation is that it is an unconventional or unorthodox operation, meaning that it is separated from what 'conventional' in a specific historical period. This means that what is unconventional changes with technological and historical development. Consequently, special forces that are created for specific tasks will if they do not change become more and more conventional. This does not mean that they cannot conduct special operations on the other hand.[2]

CONVENTIONALISATION

The Vietnam War saw a rise in the number of special forces in the American arsenal, initially special forces were successful in operations against the Viet-Cong. In the early stages of the war special operations forces (SOF) cooperated with the Central Intelligene Agency (CIA) in unconventional warfare. In this case they conducted operations in what is today referred to as Foreign Internal Defence (FID) or counter-insurgency. SOF recruited and trained minorities, armed and trained civilans in the fortified hamlets project. The purpose was to separate the Viet-Cong from the civilian population and disrupt the rebellion. The project Civilan Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) was successful in the initial stages of the war. As the war progressed, special forces were brought under the umbrella of the more conventional

1 Eriksson, Ericson Wolke, and Åselius, *Från Savolaxbrigaden till Särskilda skyddsgruppen.*
2 Ibid., 17-19; Rubright, *Unified Theory.*

Army. The increased American efforts diverted Army Special Forces from CIDG and other military assistance tasks to regular border patrols and direct action towards the Viet-Cong. This form of conventionalisation focused more on kinetic combat missions as opposed to low intensity disruption. This meant a step away from unconventional warfare in favour of conventional army operations. In the Vietnam studies in the 1970s Colonel Francis J. Kelly draw the conclusion that SOF worked best in cooperation with the CIA.[3] Both organisations were created for unconventional operations and irregular warfare with guerilla type units.

This example gives an insight into change in military organisations and factors influencing how units designed for unconventional warfare becomes conventional. Political scientists Theo Farrell and Terry Terriff describes this kind of changes as depending on cultural norms, politics/strategy and technological change. Kelly indicates that the Vietnam case was a question of culture as the Army took over.[4]

To conclude, conventionalisation is in this case a process in which military organisations transform special forces into something they are more familiar with i.e. conventional military units. Special forces are distinguished by independece, agility, unorthodox tactics, techniques and procedures. In theories of special operations it is vital to separate between tactical and strategic level. Admiral William McRaven's influential theory on special operations focused in the tactical level and came to define special operations as sabotage raids through the historical examples he employed. For McRaven special operations and special forces are one and the same. In his theory, special operations were conducted by small units, during a limited time frame, with unproportional strategic and political effect in relation to the resources. The units were well trained in advance and the operation was shrouded in secrecy. Consequently, special operations became offensive commando-type raids against defensive positions on the tactical level.[5] Political scientist Colin S. Gray has quite a similar definition as McRaven but referring more to the strategic level. Also for Gray special operations and special fores are linked to one another.[6] Political scientist James Kiras combines both McRaven and Gray but with focus on the operational level. Kiras completes the theoretical approaches by discussing the strategic level and links tactical special operations to conventional ones in a full operation.[7]

The most open interpretation of special operations comes from American researcher Richard W. Rubright. He defines special operations as simply extraordinary operations for special effects.[8] All of the above definitions entail unconventional and unorthodox factors that are hard to incorporate in hierarchial traditional military organisations. As a result unconventional units incorporated into a more conventional framework can become more and more conventional. It is here important to remember that conventionalisation can stem either from cultural, political/strategic, technical/tactical or combinations of them.

---

3 Kelly, *u.s. Army Special Forces 1961-1971 (Vietnam Studies)*, 160-172; Lohaus, *A Precarious Balance*, 15-21.
4 Farrell and Terriff, "The Sources of Military Change," 7-17.
5 McRaven, *Spec Ops*, 4-23.
6 Gray, *Explorations*, 146-48.
7 Kiras, *Special Operations*, 5.
8 Rubright, *Unified Theory*, 1, 9, 29.

RANGERS DURING THE 1700S AND 1800S

Swedish rangers belonged to the first generation of special forces, i.e. light infantry with capacities outside the domain of 'ordinary' conventional forces. In their time they were unorthodox. With technological change, rangers were complemented by paratroopers, marine commandos and combat divers after the Second World War and even later on by special forces proper. Sweden was a latecomer in forming the same kind of fulltime special forces units. The Swedish conscription system forbade employed soldiers – as all *soldiers* were conscripted. The only employed military were officers. Consequently Sweden had no standing force or special forces units (apart from the various conscripted ranger units). With the end of the Cold War the Swedish armed forces founded special forces, first the Special Protection Group (*Särskilda skyddsgruppen* – SSG) in 1994. This unit initially employed soldiers through promoting them to reserve officers. From the beginning, their task was fighting Spetznas, later it developed into general anti-terrorism and high-risk intrernational operations group. In 2007 another special unit emerged with the Special Reconnaissance Group *(Särskilda inhämtningsgruppen* – SIG). SIG came from the paratroopers with experiences from reconnaissance missions in the Balkans. SSG and SIG amalgamated into the Special Operations Group (*Särskilda operationsgruppen* – SOG) in 2011.

Earlier in history, Swedish rangers appeared in response to changing strategic conditions during the early 1700s. The defeat in the Great Northern War (1700-1721) brought a new strategic situation in Finland, where future fighting would occur in the operational environment of southern and central parts of the eastern provinces. The areas were heavily forested and barren with poor infrastructure and a small population. The first units to fight there were independent ranger companies organised from the 1740s.[9]

In the mid 1700s rifled muskets, the preferred weapon of ranger units, became widely adopted. During the Seven Years War (1756-1763) Prussia developed hussars and rangers to fight in skirmish type battles and to disrupt enemy supply. The same kind of units became widely used when the war spilled over into America (French and Indian Wars) where the terrain favored non-linear tactics. Ranger units were also used in the American War of Independence.[10] The Swedish army fought these Prussian units in what is known in Sweden as the Pommeranian War (1757-1762) and organised similar types of units – the most well known was the Sprengtporten Free Corps consisting of hussars, rangers, regular cavalry and half a battalion of regular infantry.[11] The units had more or less the same tasks as the Prussian units.

During the 1700s rangers went from experimental units to more standardised light infantry, particularly for forested areas in Finland. The Savolax Brigade was formed in the 1770s combining regular infantry, cavalry, artillery and ranger battalions. The brigade employed new kinds of training and education for officers and men. For example an extensive mapping of the anticipated battlefields took place.[12] In the 1780s irregular cavalry completed the picture with the formation of Swedish cossack units, designed for long

9 Aminoff, *Nyuppsatta truppförband.*
10 Duffy, *Army of Frederick the Great*; Grenier,*The First Way of War*; Jennings, *Empire of Fortune.*
11 Petrelli, "Franska husarerna."
12 Gussarsson, *Kartans makt I krig och fred.*

range reconnaissance, raids and to fight Russian cossacks. There were no actual cossacks in the Swedish units but the name signified an irregular manner of fighting.[13]

During the Russo-Swedish War (1788-1790) the Savolax Brigade fought in several battles employing ranger style fighting.[14] In the war several ranger, free corps hussars and dragoon units were set up and fought what was then unconventional battles in the enemy rear.[15] The case was the same in the Finnish War (1808-1809) when different ranger units were employed. The Savolax Brigade conducted a successful delayment campaign in the interior of Finland, employing ranger tactics, circumvention maneuvers over land and by boat on the many lakes in eastern Finland. Rangers also instigated and supported peasant rebellions behind Russian lines.[16]

After the defeat in the Finnish War and the loss of Finland, ranger units were formed in the border areas in the North and to the West in Sweden. In 1840 the northernmost infantry regiment was divided into two "*Feldjaeger*" corps and in 1853 another regiment was transformed into "*Feldjaegers*". The designation indicated rangers/light infantry but were in fact regular infantry for the border regions. They rarely had any special training or equipment. There were however a few examples of the opposite, particularly in training skirmish battle together with what were then called *tirailleurs* – in the Swedish case they were a mix of snipers and skirmish line soldiers. In total there were five ranger (or *feldjaeger*) corps during the 19th century.[17] The experiences of ranger units at the turn of the century was quite wide and related to both international trends and local strategic needs.

INDUSTRIALISATION AND THE FIRST WORLD WAR

The industrial revolution transformed warfare with manufacturing of equipment, railways and the electric telegraph. Modern fast firing weapons and conscription increased the strength of armies and of the defensive – evident in the wars of the late 19th century. The advent of the railways and telegraph also gave incitements for using small special units for sabotage against transports and vital infrastructure for mobilisation.

Industries and railways meant an increased importance for the northern parts of Sweden – up until then a wasteland bufferzone. The railways were built in the north between 1866 and 1902 and required defence. Planning started in the 1880s and a fortress was built in Boden to protect the region.[18] At the same time the perceived threat of Russia loomed. The fear of a surprise attack from the Finnish-Swedish border to take Boden fortress spurred intensive debate. The conquering of fortresses has always been the quintessential special operation already during the Middle Ages.[19] McRaven writes that all special operations are offensive attacks against defensive forms of warfare. This includes the use of surprise, as

13 Tigerstedt, *Biografiska anteckningar*; Mothander, "Gustav III's svenska kosacker."
14 Birck, *General Tolls krigsplan*; Birck, "Hastfers rapport."; Ericson, "Kriget till lands 1788-1790."
15 Mothander, "Dragoner eller husarer?"
16 Nelsson, *Duncker och Savolaxbrigade*, 92-96; Persson, *1808*, 111-14.
17 Söderberg, "Regementets tidigare historia."; Åhslund, "Hästjägarepoken."; Holm, *Kungl. Västmanlandsregementes historia*; Kindberg, *Anteckningar*.
18 Cronenberg, "Från Karlsborg till Boden," 43-47, 56-58.
19 Harari, *Special Operations in the Age of Chivalry*.

well as other factors, to achieve what McRaven calls "relative superiority" that enables small special forces units to defeat larger formations. Relative superiority is only possible during a short time period.[20]

Defending Boden was a problem as it required large amounts of troops, and during the winter, there were no conscripts serving in the garrison. Hence the fortress was protected only by the officers and non-commissioned officers against a potential surprise attack. Already in October 1910 experiments started with a ski-battalion of the Norrbotten Regiment. The purpose was to guard the fortress during winter and also protect the border. The first conscripts were recruited nationally as opposed the normal regional system, and the conscripts also volunteered for extra long military service. The recruits had to be outdoor people and good skiers. This was the start of the modern ranger units – ski-infantry for the northern parts of the country. In April 1913 the commandant Major General Lars Tingsten initiated an exercise to illustrate the vulnerability of the fortress. A detachment of hussars together with ski-infantry posed as a Russian column supported by sabotage units cutting telegraph and telephone lines. After a quick march from the border they reached the fortress, where only three strongholds were manned by untrained soldiers. The fortress fell quickly and Tingsten's message was obvious – a larger and more able garrison was needed.[21]

The ski-battalion was also employed for special operations, at least in planning. The expansion of the Finnish railway system worried the General Staff as it made Russian deployment to northern Finland possible. Major Ludvig af Petersens together with Captain Fredrik Lindencrona commanded an intelligence group in Boden called the "Finnish Departement". The departement also planned several sabotage actions against Finnish railroads. Several reconnaissance trips were made to explore the Finnish railway system. Particularly bridges were studied in detail.[22] In June 1913 a sabotage operation was planned on the railway bridges at Hiivala, crossing the Iijoki River, and in Kemi, crossing the Kemi River. The bridges would be blown up by detachments of ski-infantry from Boden. Units should also be fluent in Finnish to be able to gather information from locals. Explosives were smuggled into Finland in advance and hidden with local agents. In January 1914 Petersens wrote a memo on establishing a base on an island in Haparanda archipelago where units could be based. Explosives and supplies would be smuggled there in advance and buried in zink boxes. During the winter the units would use skis over the ice and in Summer infiltration would be by small motor launches. The rangers trained these kind of sabotage actions on Swedish bridges over the Kalix River.[23]

Plans to insert units by boat further south in Finland existed from 1912. The "Operation against x" plan was created by Captain Ludvig Falkman of the General Staff. The plans were to blow up the railway bridge at Perhonjonki and the operation should take place when war was imminent but had not in fact broken out. The plan had been approved by the chief of the General Staff and the chief of the Navy Coastal Squadron (*Kusteskadern*).

20 McRaven, *Spec Ops*, 4-23.
21 Ericson [Wolke], "Från besättningstrupp till utbildningscentrum," 189-228; Barck, "Skidlöparbataljonen," 11-12.
22 Cronenberg, "Från Karlsborg till Boden," 47-9; Wäsström, "Den dolda fronten," 85.
23 Ericson [Wolke], "'Rysslands gräns,'" 218; Åselius, *The "Russian Menace" to Sweden*, 353; Frick and Rosander, *Det vakande* ögat, 212-213.

The plan did not require government approval but could be initiated by the General Staff.[24]

During the First World War the ski-battalion was mobilised as a precaution against Russian attacks and the battalion also served along the border during the Finnish Civil War (1918). In the 1920s the experiences from the war were analysed and then turned into doctrine and new equipment. The battalion had the task of guarding the border to Finland in the anticipation of a Soviet attack through Finland (although Sweden and Finland were close to war in 1918-1919 over the Åland islands). The battalion used skis during the winter and fought on foot during the Summer. They were equipped with portable radios in 1933 and heavy weapons completed the equipment from 1935 with light machineguns (Browning Automatic Rifles) and 80mm mortars. The use of heavier weapons came from the analysis of the experiences from the First World War.

THE SECOND WORLD WAR AND THE RANGERS

The deteriorating situation during the 1930s led to increased military spending from 1936, although most things did not have time to be initiated before the war broke out. The ski-battalion was mobilised during the Autumn of 1939 to guard the border to Finland, particularly during the winter of 1939/1940. The battalion was stationed in Kiruna and changed name to the Ranger Battalion (*Jägarbataljonen*) in 1940. In 1941-1942 another battalion was set up to guard the Norwegian border in the far north.[25]

There were regulations for ranger units, but initially they were underdeveloped. The Infantry Regulations from 1939 for example, only contained limited regulations for ranger platoons and companies (*Infanterireglemente Regemente* 1, 1939). This changed during the war and in particular after the Finnish Winter War (1939-1940) giving much inspiring for ranger units. The successfull Finnish use of ski-infantry, long range reconnaissance patrols and so called "*Motti*-battles" in Suomussalmi and Raate in december 1939 and January 1940, were fundamental for Sweden. The *motti*-tactics were described in books written by the victor of Suomissalmi Major General Hjalmar Siilasvuo, published already in 1940.[26] Ski-infantry circumvented the Soviets through forrested terrain, splitting up larger Soviet units into smaller pieces, destroying them one after another. These experiences were transferred from Finland to Sweden by the Swedish Volunteers Corps and its ranger units. They took part in the fighting against the Soviets. Many of the Swedish ranger commanders had their combat experience from the Winter War as ranger company commanders.[27] From Finland they took the experiences of fighting the Red Army and amalgamated it into the Swedish ranger units. The similarities in climate and terrain between Finland and northern Sweden made the implementation easy. The forested areas with harsh climate, limited infrastructure and population made it easier for ski-infantry to delay much larger units. The terrain also made the use of long range reconnaissance patrols effective. The Swedish tactics for defending the north were all about controlling the few roads leading into Sweden from the East. The

24 Åselius, *The "Russian Menace" to Sweden*, 352-53.
25 Hallström, "Skidlöparbataljonen."; Gyllenhaal, *Elitförband i Norden*, 18-23
26 Siilasvuo, *Striderna i Suomussalmi* and Siilasvuo, *Kampen i Kuhmo 1939-1940*.
27 Andolf, "I österled", 253-56.

plan was to delay the Soviets along the roads using regular infantry, mines and ski-infantry for attacking the enemy rear.

The 1942 defence act saw many changes for ranger units, inspired by the Finnish Winter War, but also due to the changed strategic situation with Norway and Denmark occupied by Germany, and increased Swedish ability. The number of automatic weapons increased during the war. In the 1945 tactical regulations a ranger group of ten men consisted of a platoon leader, a deputy platoon leader and a non-commissioned officer all armed with submachineguns (model 37-39). Of the seven men in the group one was armed with a light machinegun/automatic rifle (model 21-37), two men had automatic rifles (model 42), and four men had rifles (model 96-38). One of the riflemen was a sniper, one was a replacement/loader for the light machinegun and the last two had demolitions training (*Infanterireglemente Regemente* I 1945, 97). This differed strongly from the rangers of before the war.

The 1942 act also contained the development of Corps Ranger Battalions (*Kårjägarbataljoner*) trained by the Ranger Battalion in Kiruna – a total of three battalions were set up 1942-1944 with the primary task of reconnaissance and combat in forests and mountains, as forward units of the three army corps´. The Corps Ranger Battalions had the task of attacking enemy flanks, rear and commnications in a delayment-style battle influenced by the Winter War.[28]

PARTISAN RANGERS

During the war, partisan warfare became an important means to resist an occupier – particularly in Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. The Swedish pioneer on the area was Colonel Axel Gyllenkrok, writing a booklet called *Partisan War* (*Partisankrig*) in 1943. It was a handbook for guerilla warfare and for resistance movements. The booklet was smuggled into occupied Denmark and Norway during the war. In 1945 it was expanded into a book titled *Partisan War in Snow, Forests and Mountains* (*Partisankrig i snö, skog och berg*). Gyllenkrok emphasised the need to resist an invader with all means available, including irregular warfare conducted by overrun units. The remaining soldiers should form temporary units behind enemy lines and continue the fight – sometimes this was referred to as "Free War" (*Fria kriget*).[29]

The work with establishing a partisan concept started in 1942 when the Defence Staff initiated planning on the organisation of partisan units. Tactical Instructions came in the Autumn of 1942. The basis was organising "free ranger groups" (*Fria jägargrupper*) of between 20 and 30 men, with a maximum of 200 depending on the tasks. Their task was, in case of a German attack on Sweden from Norway, to infiltrate into Norway to delay and disturb German advances. In Norway the ranger groups should attack German columns, bases, supply bases, staffs and particularly infrastructure. Another task was to incite rebellion in Norway by arming and leading Norwegian civilians for raids further into Norway. The III, III, V and VI Military Regions were ordered to organise around 60 platoons of between 35

28 Hallström, "Skidlöparbataljonen."; Gyllenhaal, *Elitförband i Norden*, 18-23.
29 Nelsson, "Axel Gyllenkrok."

and 40 men each. The ranger groups should initiate operations without awaiting central orders in case of a German attack. Command was delegated as far down in the organisation as possible.[30] Each military region planned recruitment, training, organisation and decided on particular targets in Norway and Finland.

In total 50 primary targets were identified in Norway and seven in Finland. Several hundred secondary targets also existed. The ranger units were organised by the infantry regiments. Training started early in 1943 and by January 1944 a total of 75 platoon leaders had been trained at the War Academy Karlberg. Platoon leaders were chosen for being bold, enterprising, disciplined outdoor people. The soldiers in ranger units were chosen by the regiments and should be under 30, strong and healthy skiers or athletes with outdoor skills, used to rough conditions. Basic training consisted of orientation, assault tactics, demolitions and mine warfare, grenade throwing, shooting and survival. Partisan theory was studied with Gyllenkrooks booklet combined with battle reports from Finland. In April 1944 a total of 9,300 men had been trained, organised in 77 independent ranger platoons plus reserves. The rangers were allocated a higher percentage of automatic weapons as mentioned above, but was complemented on platoon level by more than 100 handgrenades, 60 kg of dynamite, 50 kg nitrolite, ignition devices, portable radios (model 40 or 42) and specially designed rations. The secrecy surrounding the system of ranger units was strict. The code for rangers was "loggers" and partisan warfare was referred to as "logging".[31]

The III Military Region with headquarters in Skövde, had the task of surprising and occupying central positions across the Norwegian border. Places like Halden, Brekke, Enningdal and Sollum should be occupied and all bridges blown up. The V Military Region with headquarters in Karlstad, should organise units to blow up bridges Northwest and West of Oslo – at Fetsund, Minnesund and Eidsvoll. Railwaystations in Ski and Hamar should be attacked as well as the roads and railways Oslo-Kongsvinger and Kongsvinger-Elverum. The V Military Region organised 21 ranger platoons but also 30 local defence ranger platoons organised by the Home Guard – in total around 2,500 men. The latter units had the task of preparing sabotage on the Swedish side of the border in case of German attack.[32]

In the extreme North, in the VI Military Region with headquarters in Boden the targets were found both in Norway and Finland, particularly bridges, roads, infrastructure and airfields. The ranger units of the VI Military Region also had important tasks in what was called "Operation Z". This operation aimed at opening a corridor to the Atlantic in case of a German attack to open up for Allied support. The operation started at Tärna with the target of occupying Mo i Rana and Ranenfjord. The ranger groups had the task of surprising the German border defences and at a depth destroy telephone and telegraph communications. They would also destroy the hydroelectric plants at Bjerkaelven and Rössaaen, flooding part of the area, fuel- and ammunition depots in Hattfjelldal and Trofors. Finally the ranger units would attack German positions along the advance route of the Swedish units,

30 WA, Försvarsstabens arkiv (F.d. hemliga arkivet), arméavdelningen, vol. F IV:11, "PM om gränsjägarplutoner i PM 4 oktober 1942 & 13 oktober 1942."
31 Gäfvert, "Det fria kriget," 262-72, 298-99.
32 Ibid., 277-78.

also bringing pamphlets inciting a Norwegian popular rising against the occupiers.[33]

These ranger units were special forces of Second World War type, but with a Swedish twist. They were sabotage units inspired by partisan warfare theory combining defensive and offensive tactics. The platoon leaders and conscripts were specially selected and given special training and equipment. They were supposed to fight an unconventional battle behind enemy lines both in the opening stages of the war and during a war of attrition. There were similarities to the commando raids conducted by the belligerents in the war. The command structure was delegated to the local commanders. The ranger units were therefore as 'special' as possible in Sweden during the Second World War.

THE COLD WAR RANGER UNITS, 1945-1980

With the end of the war a longstanding concern over the strategic dimensions of the Baltic region reappeared. The Soviet Union emerged again as a threat when Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were reincorporated. Finland was defeated and under pressure from the Soviet dominated armistice commission, Poland became Communist and the Eastern parts of Germany were occupied by the Soviets.

During the Autumn of 1944 the supreme commander initiated a strategic study for the defence of Sweden after the war. The study incorporated lessons from the war and what kind of military threats could be anticipated. Terror bombings combined with paratroopers landing, land invasion and/or amphibious landings, all together with psychological warfare and surprise.[34] The "cases" were the same as before the war – a Soviet attack in the north of Sweden direction Narvik (Case IIIN), a Soviet attack over the Baltic towards the Stockholm region (Case IIIC), a Soviet attack in the south of Sweden to occupy Öresund (Case IIIS), or combinations of these. All cases were seen as parts of a larger war between East and West – the Marginal Doctrine. This doctrine emerged in the 1950s and founded firstly on the idea that a conflict between East and West would follow a time of deteriorating relations. Sweden was neutral, but risked being dragged into a larger war in Europe. Sweden's position in the Baltic, stretching from the Arctic to the Baltic Straits meant that Swedish territory was sought after. The primary perceived enemy was the Soviet Union, attacking Swedish territory to reach Narvik in the north and close the Baltic Straits in the south. As the Soviets were facing NATO on the central and southern European fronts at the same time, only a fraction of Soviet forces were available against Sweden – approximately 30 divisions. This was the margin Sweden prepared to face. In case IIIN Soviet forces were anticipated to attack/overtake Finland and the attack would follow the few roads into the region through the north of Sweden.[35] According to the Marginal Doctrine Sweden anticipated facing 30 Soviet divisions. The enemy would be met with a strategic defensive with tough deep defense supported by fortifications. The preferred operational concept was averting battle (*avvärjningsstrid*) and delaying battle (*fördröjningsstrid*). The purpose was

33 Ibid., 281-84.

34 WA, Försvarsstabens arkiv, (F.d. hemliga arkivet), arméavdelningen, vol. F IVQ:4 1945 års försvarsutredning, "*Sveriges militärpolitiska läge*, 11 oktober 1945."

35 Wallerfelt, *Den hemliga svenska krigsplanen*, 69-73; Wallerfelt, *Si vis pacem – para bellum*, 41-44.

to inflict losses on the enemy while maintaining strength, rather sacrifice territory to avoid being annihilated.[36] The inspiration came directly from the Finnish experiences during the Winter War and Continuation War. The latter war started when Finland joined Germany in operation Barbarossa 1941 and ended with a Finnish-Soviet Armistice in 1944. In Finnish history the Continuation War is linked to the Winter War and is seen as a continuation.

For the rangers the experiences from the war meant commando style raids inspired by partisan warfare and the Finnish experiences of long-range reconnaissence/sabotage patrols. Concepts of fighting in barren wastelands and special operations were common through contacts with the resistance movements in Norway, the Finnish army, Swedish veterans from Finland, the Western Allies and Germany as well as the ranger units after 1942. In 1944 the Ranger Battalion in Kiruna became the Army Ranger School (*Arméns Jägarskola* – AJS). This was a school for training ranger type units for the entire Army. The types of units trained at the Ranger School were still the Corps Ranger Battalions and Free Ranger groups and platoons. The post-war Corps Ranger Battalion consisted of a Staff, three or four Corps Ranger Companies, Heavy Company (with machine guns, mortars, anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns) and a Support Company, total 1,200 men. This was more or less a reinforced light infantry battalion for surprise attacks behind enemy lines against communications, transports, support units, air fields, reserves and command units. The ranger platoons on the other hand were supposed to fight further into Finland to delay a potential Soviet advance. In case of war the units should infiltrate (on skis in winter and on horseback in summer) into Finland and remain there until the Soviets had passed them by. Their task was long-range reconnasissance and sabotage. During the 1950s through to the 1970s, 300-400 rangers were trained every year. The platoons were commanded by the Ranger Staff (*Jägarstab*) containing units with support, command and heavy weapons.[37]

CAVALRY AS RANGERS

From 1949 cavalry squadrons were transformed into reconnaissance units, either mounted on horse or bicycle. The process of dismounting the cavalry was cumbersome and long. In the 1950s the importance of mounted ranger units in the north was maintained, while in the south the mounted units were equipped with off-road vehicles. The horse equipped units only disappeared slowly from service. The last mounted unit was the Norrland Dragoons in Umeå, training mounted ranger units until 1966.

In 1965 trials between mounted rangers and rangers equipped with over-snow vehicles (Bv 202) from the Ranger School were held. The Ranger School units won the trials on all counts. The over-snow vehicles had the great advantage of increasing endurance and firepower with more heavy weapons, ammunition and mines. From the late 1960s Ranger Companies model 69 were trained both by the Ranger School and the Norrland Dragoons.[38]

---

36 Wallerfelt, *Si vis pacem – para bellum*, 120-121.

37 Jonsson, "Arméns jägarskola," 48-51; Wallerfelt, *Si vis pacem – para bellum*, 133-40; Gyllenhaal, *Elitförband i Norden*, 25-26; De Verdier, "Från fästningsinfanteri till jägarregemente," 111-13.

38 Ericson [Wolke], "Hästen i atomåldern," 295-301; Santesson, "Till ledningens tjänst," 55; Jonsson, "Arméns jägarskola," 51; Gyllenhaal, *Elitförband i Norden*, 26.

The units from the Ranger School were called Lappland Rangers and the units trained by the Dragoons were called Norrland Rangers. From 1972 Norrland Rangers were trained to form Norrland Ranger Battalions with over-snow vehicles, mortars, different anti-tank weapons and mines. The battalion consisted of a Staff and Support Squadron, three Ranger Squadrons, an Anti-tank Platoon and a Mortar Platoon.[39]

As an example of the tasks of these ranger units, the 1962 defense plan for the Local Defence District 67 in Kalix can be used. The 604th Ranger Platoon was deployed as a reconnaissance reserve at Rantajärvi on the Swedish side of the border. Their task was long-range reconnaissance into Finland in the direction Saukkola-Rovaniemi. The platoon was under particular orders from the regional commander in Boden to scout the Soviet advancement. The platoon should be able to start operations with four hours notice. In Parviainen, northwest of Haparanda, the 609th Ranger Platoon deployed and had the task of long-range reconnaissance in the direction Tervola-Kemi along the main road and railway from the south. The platoon was also on four hours alert. These platoons should be able to monitor the enemy over four weeks mostly behind enemy lines, bringing all supplies needed.[40]

But are these Cold War ranger units really special forces? It is not an easy question to answer. The organisation of the Ranger School indicate a more special operations directed unit. It was a training establishment to which units were sent for training. It was not a regiment of its own. Consequently officers at the Ranger School only served for limited periods of time, while non-commissioned officers belonged to the regular staff. The purpose was to spread knowledge in the army, but also indicates that it was not a regular unit, but a school. The rangers were supposed to conduct missions on the border between conventional and unconventional operations. The Second World War sabotage/partisan units were special forces conducting special operations. The Corps Ranger Battalions from the Second World War were trained by Ranger School, but set up by regular infantry regiments and had more conventional tasks. It is perhaps possible to say that the unconventional ranger units of the Second World War became more conventional. The soldiers within the units were still specially selected and trained, but their equipment was no longer special, but became more and more similar to the regular infantry. The task of strategic and operative long-range reconnaissance to discern the centre of gravity of the Soviet advance belonged to the special operations family was still within the realm of special operations. In the 1970s the new form of Corps Ranger Battalion, the Norrland Ranger Battalion emerged. It could however be questioned whether these units actually conducted unconventional warfare, although they of course could. The plans however indicated more conventional light infantry tasks. The main purpose although was long-range reconnaissance over long periods of time behind enemy lines. It could be unconventional as well as conventional. It is safe to say that with more and more regular infantry equipment with mortars, grenade launchers, anti-aircraft weapons and over-snow vehicles, the task became more infantry-like.

---

39 Santesson, "Till ledningens tjänst," 56; Wallerfelt, *Den hemliga svenska krigsplanen*, 163.

40 WA, Kalix försvarsområdes arkiv, (F.d. hemliga arkivet), mobiliseringsavdelningen, vol. F V:2, "1962 års försvarsplan för Kalix fo."

During the 1970s the experiences from the Second World War faded and the equipment from the war was taken out of service. New equipment became increasingly expensive with new technology and only parts of the organisation could be modernised. The late 1970s and early 1980s also saw more intense rivalry between the East and West. For Sweden, this new phase in the Cold War was a challenge as new threats came to the fore. During the 1980s fear of a Soviet surprise attack increased with submarine incursions from 1980 and onwards. The knowledge of Soviet special forces – *Spetsnaz* – increased during the 1980s, as did the fear of enemy intelligence operations.

The Marginal Doctrine that had dominated Swedish planning during the first parts of the Cold War, built on the idea that an attack on Sweden was part of a larger conflict between East and West, and that Sweden was not the primary target but collateral damage, in the 1970s and 1980s was challenged by increased Soviet capacity and aggression. The invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, and the aforementioned submarine incursions made a big impression. The new concept built on the idea that Sweden could be the initial target in the opening stages of a larger war between the East and West. This meant that the readiness and initial capacity of the armed forces was to low to meet a Soviet surprise attack. This changed the Swedish strategic doctrine, starting with what was called Operative Study 2 beginning in 1973.[41]

In 1978 new war plans focused more on delayment battle manifested through *Tactical Regulations 80* in 1980 and *Army Regulations 2 Tactics* from 1982.[42] Delaying the enemy in depth became increasingly important. The focus on long-range reconnaissance shifted towards more long-range combat missions for the rangers. Their task became to delay the enemy in depth, increasing demands on command, supply and fire support behind enemy lines. Sabotage had always been part of the ranger way of warfare, but during the 1980s heavier weapons became more important. The demands increased as delayment of the enemy over long periods of time was required. In 1981-1983 trials were made with new types of ranger units made to fit the new doctrine. There were two different trial units – long-range rangers companies and 'unified' ranger companies. The unified company had the purpose of simplyfying ranger organisations to one single form of company/battalion – Ranger Company 85 and 85G (G stood for *Gräns*, Swedish for border). In 1975 the Ranger School became the Lappland Ranger Regiment (I 22), still training Lappland Ranger Companies of the 85 and 85G type.[43]

In 1980 the Norrland Dragoons moved to Arvidsjaur to train Norrland Ranger Battalions.[44] The task of the battalions in the new regulations was combating the invader in arctic terrain behind enemy lines for up to one month. The primary tactic was surprise attacks with mines and sabotage as the battalions would be disadvantaged numerically. The advantages of ranger were surprise and local knowledge. Supplies were brought on over-snow vehicles and completed by depots behind enemy lines arranged in peace time.

41 Wallerfelt, *Si vis pacem – para bellum*, 176-79.
42 *Taktikreglemente 80*, *Arméreglemente 2 Taktik/AR 2*.
43 Wallén, "Norrlandsjägarbataljonen," 349-51.
44 Gyllenhaal, *Elitförband i Norden*, 39-40.

Ranger combat would be conducted and organised by the battalion over an area of 2,500 square-km. The battalion brought its own fire support with light mortars while artillery and air support would be unlikely. This kind of battle stressed the supply and support organisation as it demanded heavier weapons, more of them and also more ammunition. The primary targets were enemy transports and certain types of units – rocket artillery, bridge layers, road engineer vehicles and other kinds of engineering vehicles, as well as supply formations particularly fuel trucks.[45]

Lappland Ranger Regiment organised Ranger Companies and Border Ranger Companies during the 1980s. The ten border companies were local defence units stationed along the Finnish border, closely resembling the ranger platoons of the 1960s. There were also six independent Ranger Companies trained by the regiment. Their tasks were similar to that of the Norrland Ranger battalions. In the 1978 plans the Northern Military Region had nine Norrland Ranger Battalions, ten Border Ranger Companies, fourteen Ranger Companies, four "*Feldjaeger*" Battalions (regular light infantry) and one Paratrooper Battalion. The border units were part of six Border Defence Regiments deployed along the border to delay the enemy. The border rangers had a combination of reconnaissance and combat missions. The units were strongly connected to the local area, with police officers and customs personnel attached and the units were also bilingual in Swedish and Finnish. The units could be mobilised within 24 hours. Before the outbreak of war the border rangers had the task of guarding the border and prepare to destroy vital infrastructure. After the outbreak of war they became regular ranger units.[46] These units recieved anti-tank missiles (model 56) in the late 1980s – becoming Ranger Company 90/90G. In 1992 the six independent Lappland Ranger Companies were reorganised into two Lappland Ranger Battalions.[47]

During the 1980s rangers also received the task of guarding against Soviet *Spetsnaz* in a surprise attack. This was only part of the tasks given to ranger units, and particularly the Border Ranger Companies. During the 1990s Sweden also developed special forces proper to counter *Spetsnaz*.[48] The changes in the 1980s completed the transformation of the Swedish rangers from being special operations forces into becoming arctic trained light infantry, although very capable units, but perhaps not special forces proper. They were still elite units but their kind of tasks became less unconventional, instead becoming incorporated into the overarching strategic goal of delaying a Soviet mechanised advance direction Narvik. As a consequence ranger units became heavier and heavier, with more heavy weapons, requiring more transport capacity.

After the Cold War ended, Sweden maintained the same organisation until the late 1990s. Thereafter followed subsequent waves of closedowns of military units. Among the regiments closed down was the Lappland Ranger Regiment. The Norrland Dragoons were reduced to a battalion subordinated to to the Norrbotten Regiment. In September 2021 the Norrland Dragoons was reinauguerated as an independent regiment for training

45 Wallén, "Norrlandsjägarbataljonen," 352-359; Gustafsson, "Milo ÖN – flank till Nordnorges avvärjningsområde," 80.
46 Gyllenhaal, *Elitförband i Norden*, 26-28; Ekman, *Kalixlinjen – kalla krigets lås i norr*, 111-23.
47 Lundquist, "Lapplands jägarregemente," 116-17.
48 Eriksson, Wolke and Åselius, *Från Savolaxbrigaden till Särskilda skyddsgruppen*, 243- 44.

ranger squadrons for the only remaining Norrland Ranger Battalion, still with the same organisation as in the 1990s but with updated equipment.

FROM LIGHT INFANTRY TO SPECIAL FORCES AND BACK AGAIN

As mentioned in the introduction, the concept of conventionalisation can be understood from the American Vietnam experience. There special forces were incorporated into a conventional army style type of combat, instead of conducting special operations. The reason for this was mainly cultural – the army was a conventional organisation that had a hard time understanding what special forces did. Therefore the special forces units and their CIDG-patrols were employed to conduct standard infantry operations. The CIA, on the other hand, was an organisation used to unconventional methods, and could easily work with special forces in clandestine special operations.

The Swedish case was a bit different. The Swedish rangers emanated from the need of fighting light infantry action in a harsh climate and difficult terrain. Consequently the rangers were ski-infantry, equipped more or less as standard infantry. Early on, rangers became a solution to the problem of readiness and withstanding a Russian/Soviet surprise attack. The way of seeing the elite rangers as a solution was a cultural way of approching the units. As time progressed, rangers received better equipment, more training and the best conscripts. It was therefore natural for military leaders to see them as the solution in facing surprise attack (in the early 1900s as well as in the 1980s). On the other hand, giving more and more tasks – for example defending against *Spetsnaz*, one of the tasks of the Border Ranger Companies, meant that the units became less and less specialised. This is one type of conventionalisation, units becoming swamped with tasks, leading to less training on each specific task. In effect it was a downgrading of the ranger unit training. But viewing rangers as a solution to all problems was a cultural factor, preeminent in leading military cultures.

Looking back to the Second World War, it was obvious that rangers became special forces, trained and planned to conduct special operations. The Second World War and the 1950s were perhaps the more unconventional era concerning the ranger experience. But during the Cold War the technological and tactical development, with heavier and heavier weapons, changed the character of rangers. This is also a form of conventionalisation – when the very incorporation of weapon systems changes the character and thinking of unconventional units. The large use of mortars, anti-tank weapons and mines made ranger units distinctly heavier, and therefore more similar to regular infantry.

The ranger units have for their entire existence balanced on the edge of being special forces for special operations and light infantry for conventional operations. The centre of gravity has changed over the years, sometimes more conventional and times more unconventional. This article illustrates that what are special forces and what are special operations is hard to determine, while the definitions are at the same time fluid. They develop with changing political and stategic settings, with technological and tactical change, all within the framework of a military culture that changes slowly. The conventionalisation of Swedish rangers also indicates that what is special forces today always will change and

perhaps become the conventional forces of tomorrow. At the same time we do not know what will be the special forces and special operations of tomorrow.

ARCHIVAL SOURCES

War Archives (WA - Stockholm)

Försvarsstabens arkiv (F.d. hemliga arkivet), arméavdelningen, vol. F IV:11.

Försvarsstabens arkiv, (F.d. hemliga arkivet), arméavdelningen, vol. F IVQ:4 1945 års försvarsutredning. "

Kalix försvarsområdes arkiv, (F.d. hemliga arkivet), mobiliseringsavdelningen, vol. F V:2.

PRINTED SOURCES

Arméreglemente Del 2, Taktik och Bihang (AR 2). 1982. *(Army Regulations Part 2, Tactics and Appendix)* Stockholm: Försvarets läromedelscentral.

Infanterireglemente Regemente 1, 1939 års upplaga. 1939. (*Infantry Regulations Regiment 1, 1939 edtion)* Stockholm: Försvarsstaben.

Infanterireglemente Regemente 1, 1945 års upplaga. 1945. (*Infantry Regulations Regiment 1, 1945 edtion)* Stockholm: Försvarsstaben.

Taktikreglemente 80. 1980. *(Tactical Regulations 80)* Stockholm: Försvarsstaben.

REFERENCES

Åhslund, Bengt. "Hästjägarepoken. Kavalleriproblem under den indelta tidens slutskede." In *Umeås blå dragoner,* edited by Arvid Cronenberg, 27-55. Arvidsjaur: Norrlands dragonregemente, 1994.

Aminoff, Carl Gustaf. *Nyuppsatta truppförband i Finland 1770-1810. Administrativ historia och Personal* Helsingfors: Svenska Litteratursällskapet, 1971.

Andolf, Göran."I österled: Norrlandsdragoner som Finlandsfrivilliga". In *Umeås blå dragoner,* edited by Arvid Cronenberg, 245-283. Arvidsjaur: Norrlands dragonregemente, 1994.

Åselius, Gunnar. *The "Russian Menace" to Sweden: The Belief System of a Small Power Security Élite in the Age of Imperialism.* Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1994.

Barck, Åke. "Skidlöparbataljonen." In *Lapplands jägare 1945-1995,* edited by Åke Barck, 11-21. Kiruna: Lapplands jägares kamratförening, 1995.

Birck, Erik. *General Tolls krigsplan år 1788. Dess utförande och sammanbrott.* Helsingfors: Svenska Litteratursällskapet, 1944.

Birck, Erik. "Hastfers rapport till Gustaf III om Puumalaintermezzot." *Historisk Tidskrift för Finland* (1946)

Cronenberg, Arvid. "Från Karlsborg till Boden: Tillkomsten av Bodens fästning mot bakgrund av tidens operativa teori." In *Boden: Fästningen – garnisonen-samhället,* edited by Bror Oscar Nyström and Sven Skeppstedt, 29-82. Boden: Kungl. Bodens artilleriregementes historiekommitté, 1990.

De Verdier, Nils. "Från fästningsinfanteri till jägarregemente." In *Lapplands jägare 1945–1995,* edited by Åke Barck, 107-114. Kiruna: Lapplands jägares kamratförening, 1995.

Duffy, Christopher, *The Army of Frederick the Great.* Chicago: Newton & Abbott, 1996.
Ekman, Sten. *Kalixlinjen – kalla krigets lås i norr: befästningarna, fasta artilleriet, de svenska planerna och det sovjetryska anfallet.* Hallstavik: SMB, 2013.
Ericson [Wolke], Lars. "Från besättningstrupp till utbildningscentrum." In *Boden: Fästningen – garnisonen-samhället,* edited by Bror Oscar Nyström and Sven Skeppstedt, 189-228. Boden: Kungl. Bodens artilleriregementes historiekommitté, 1990.
Ericson [Wolke], Lars. "Kriget till lands 1788-1790." In *Gustav III:s ryska krig,* edited by i Gunnar Artéus, 69-109. Stockholm: Probus, 1992.
Ericson [Wolke], Lars. "'Rysslands gräns står kall och skarp vid Torneå och Karungi': Svensk neutralitetsvakt i övre Norrland 1914–1918." In *Mellan björnen och örnen: Sverige och Östersjöområdet under första världskriget, 1914-1918,* edited by Johan Engström & Lars Ericson [Wolke], 209-222. Stockholm/Visby: Gotlands fornsal, 1993.
Ericson [Wolke], Lars. "Hästen i atomåldern: K 4 och kavallerifrågan 1945-1966." In *Umeås blå dragoner,* edited by Arvid Cronenberg, 289-308. Arvidsjaur: Norrlands dragonregemente, 1994.
Eriksson, Fredrik, Lars Ericson Wolke and Gunnar Åselius, *Från Savolaxbrigaden till Särskilda skyddsgruppen: Svenska specialoperationer och specialförband från medeltid trill 1995.* Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2022.
Farrell, Theo and Terry Terriff. "The Sources of Military Change." In *The Sources of Military Change: Culture, Politics, Technology,* edited by Theo Farrell and Terry Terriff, 3-20. Boulder/London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002.
Frick, Lennart and Lars Rosander. *Det vakande* ögat*: Svensk underrättelsetjänst under 400* år. Lund: Historiska Media, 1998.
Gray, Colin S. *Explorations in Strategy* Westport/London: Praeger, 1998 (1996).
Grenier, John. *The First Way of War. American War Making on the Frontier, 1607–1814* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
Gussarsson, Maria. *Kartans makt I krig och fred: Fältmätarna, det nya kriget och samhällelig utveckling 1805-1831.* Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2023.
Gustafsson, Bengt. "Milo ÖN – flank till Nordnorges avvärjningsområde." In *Den stora invasionen: Svenskt operativt tänkande under det kalla kriget,* 59-84. Stockholm: Medströms förlag, 2017.
Gyllenhaal, Lars. *Elitförband i Norden.* Stockholm: Fischer & Co, 2009.
Gyllenkrok, Axel. *Partisankrig.* Malmö: C.A. Andersson och Co, 1943.
Gyllenkrok, Axel. *Partisankrig i snö, skog och berg.* Malmö: C.A. Andersson och Co, 1945.
Gäfvert, Björn. "Det fria kriget – från idé till krigsorganisation." In *Nya fronter – 1943: spänd väntan,* edited by Bo Hugemark, 297-312. Hallstavik: SMB, 2002.
Hallström, Arne Gunnarsson."Skidlöparbataljonen." In *Kungl. Norrbottens regementes historia 1841-1966,* 297-312. Boden: Norrbottens regementes kamratförening, Boden, 1972.
Harari, Yuval Noah. *Special Operations in the Age of Chivalry, 1100-1550.* Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007.
Holm, Torsten. *Kungl. Västmanlands regementes historia. Tredje delen. Från värnpliktens införande till 1925 års försvarsordning 1810-1925.* Stockholm: Kungl. Västmanlands regmentes historiekommitté, 1938.
Jennings, Francis. *Empire of Fortune. Crowns, Colonies & Tribes in the Seven Years War in America.*

New York: Norton, 1988.
Jonsson, Clarence."Arméns jägarskola." In *Lapplands jägare 1945-1995,* edited by Åke Barck, 47-56. Kiruna: Lapplands jägares kamratförening, 1995.
Kelly, Francis J. *U.S. Army Special Forces 1961-1971 (Vietnam Studies).* Washington D.C.: Department of the Army, 2004.
Kindberg, Axel. *Anteckningar om Värmlands fältjägare. II. Delen: oktober 1814-1901 samt Lefnadsteckningar.* Stockholm, 1919.
Kiras, James D. *Special Operations and Strategy: From World War II to the War on Terrorism.* London: Routledge, 2006.
Lohaus, Phillip. *A Precarious Balance: Preserving the Right Mix of Conventional and Special Operations Forces.* Washington D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 2014.
Lundquist, Björn. "Lapplands jägarregemente." In *Lapplands jägare 1945-1995,* edited by Åke Barck, 115-148. Kiruna: Lapplands jägares kamratförening, 1995.
McRaven, William H. *Spec Ops: Case Studies in Special Operations Warfare: Theory and Practice* (New York: Presidio, 1996).
Mothander, Carl. "Gustav III's svenska kosacker. Ett militärt kuriosum." *Meddelande XII. Kungl Armémuseum,* 1951.
Mothander, Carl. "Dragoner eller husarer?" *Sotamuseo,* 1953.
Nelsson, Bertil. "Axel Gyllenkrok." In *Svenska officersprofiler under 1900-talet,* edited by i Gunnar Artéus, 274-296. Stockholm: Militärhögskolan, 1996.
Nelsson, Bertil. *Duncker och Savolaxbrigaden. Finska kriget 1808-1809.* Lund: Historiska Media, 2000.
Persson, Anders. *1808. Gerillakriget i Finland.* Stockholm: Ordfront, 1986.
Petrelli, Johannes. "Franska husarerna." *Illustrerad militärrevy,* 1905.
Rubright, Richard W.A. *Unified Theory for Special Operations* McDill: JSOU Press, 2017.
Santesson, Olof. "Till ledningens tjänst: Kavalleriet och stabernas signalister." In *Den stora armén,* edited by Bo Hugemark, 53-60. Stockholm: Medströms förlag, 2015.
Siilasvuo, Hjalmar. *Striderna i Suomussalmi.* Stockholm: Medén, 1940.
Siilasvuo, Hjalmar. *Kampen i Kuhmo 1939-1940.* Stockholm: Medén, 1944.
Söderberg, Ulf. "Regementets tidigare historia." In *Umeås blå dragoner,* edited by Arvid Cronenberg, 19-26. Arvidsjaur: Norrlands dragonregemente, 1994.
Taktikreglemente 80, Arméreglemente 2 Taktik/AR 2, Stockholm: Försvarsmakten 1980.
Tigerstedt, E S. *Biografiska anteckningar om Savolaxbrigadens män 1808-1809.* Helsingfors: Svenska Litteratursällskapet, 1908.
Wallén, Lars. "Norrlandsjägarbataljonen." In *Umeås blå dragoner,* edited by Arvid Cronenberg, 349-370. Arvidsjaur: Norrlands dragonregemente, 1994.
Wallerfelt, Bengt. *Si vis pacem – para bellum: svensk säkerhetspolitik och krigsplanering, 1945-1975.* Stockholm: Probus, 1999.
Wallerfelt, Bengt. *Den hemliga svenska krigsplanen,* edited posthumously by Olof Santesson and Kent Zetterberg. Stockholm: Medströms förlag, 2016.
Wäsström, Sven. "Den dolda fronten." In *Boden: Fästningen – garnisonen-samhället,* edited by Bror Oscar Nyström and Sven Skeppstedt, 83-100. Boden: Kungl. Bodens artilleriregementes historiekommitté, 1990.

Behind the Frontlines

The Role of Romanian Special Intelligence Missions 1918-1924

Carmen-Sorina Rîjnoveanu

INTRODUCTION

At the end of the First World War, Romania accomplished its goal of national unification which had been the main country project ever since mid 19th century. This accomplishment did not, however, solve the major security issues, which only took on new dimensions and implications. Besides the complicated military situation, the biggest challenges were posed by the actions of the Bolshevik forces that were in full revolutionary-anarchic offensive. Such actions had the purpose of instilling a state of disorder, instability and fear that would facilitate territorial disintegration, with the main target being the region in Eastern Romania – Bessarabia – whose union with the Romanian state had not been recognised by the Bolshevik authorities in Moscow. The broader objective was particularly focused on triggering a Bolshevik-like revolution in Romania, part of a more ambitious plan that would have included the entire European continent.

This article will focus on highlighting the role of military intelligence missions conducted under the coordination of the General Staff during the first interwar years, when their main objective was that of preventing and countering subversive activities planned or carried out under the aegis of the Bolshevik-revolutionary movement. Although a separate structure of the Special Forces – as we define it today – was not in place at that time, this analysis will focus on the issue of special intelligence missions, because these represented a relevant part of the tasks of nowadyay Special (Operations) Forces. Intelligence missions were a special dimension of military actions, and carrying them out generated high interest on the part of the military decision-makers, who understood the need to expand their instruments of action according to the diversification of the types of threats they were confronted with. Counterintelligence actions included the organisation of special units and networks that had as mission gathering intelligence, including by infiltrating agents among the Bolsheviks and corrupting others, but also planning of missions in the enemy's area of action, so as to identify their plans and methods of action.

We shall focus on 1924, the year that marked the outbreak of the Bolshevik armed Revolution in Bessarabia (the Tatarbunary Uprising) and its suppression by the Romanian armed forces. The following period was characterised by new steps in view of reorganising and optimising the military intelligence service, steps which materialised in the form of the first Secret Intelligence Service of the army. This intelligence service would play a defining role in the period prior to the outbreak of the Second World War. By nature of its missions, many of the actions carried out in the analysed timeline fitted within the pattern of actions of the special forces, although the establishment of such forces would take up to a century to become reality – until 2003, when the specialised structure of special forces was created as an elite unit within the Romanian army.

What were the means and tactics of action of the Bolshevik forces? How did military intelligence units act and how did they influence the level of strategic decisionmaking? To what degree did the intelligence actions contribute to the prevention and countering of enemy plans against the Romanian state? These are just some of the questions that we plan to find answers to, all while acknowledging the fact that the available documents can only give us an incomplete view to the understanding and awareness of this phenomenon.

BOLSHEVIK PROPAGANDA – THE ENEMY IN THE SHADOWS

Starting with 1917, when the Bolshevik Revolution broke out, the Romanian army was basically faced with a new enemy. And by a new enemy we refer to the aggressive propaganda that was being spread on the Romanian front, where almost one million Russian soldiers were deployed – most of them already subjects of Bolshevisation, aiming at creating a state of chaos and anarchy among the troops. Starting from the well-known slogans – "peace and bread" – the revolutionary plan was to convince the Romanian soldiers to leave the front and join the revolutionary-Bolshevik movement. The fact that this plan failed in the case of the Romanian army remains to this day a topic of interest for historical research.

As the end of the war was drawing closer, pressures continued throughout the year of 1918. Tactics and objectives were subject to a number of nuances and adjustments in approach. The main goal became the disintegration of the Romanian state, and in order to achieve it, it was particularly important to convince soldiers and officers to join the side of the revolutionary cause. One such example was the manifesto of December 14, 1918 addressed to the conscripts for the removal of the officers and the outbreak of the revolution. The document constituted an incitement to violence, disobedience and the overthrow of state order, as it read as follows:

> "Romanian soldiers! Assemble in your companies and regiments, choose your trusted men, form your councils, i.e. Soviets. Drive out the officers, seize the arms depots, arrest the policemen, arrest the King, and throw in prison all the members of the Brătianu, Marghiloman, Averescu families, [a.n. representative Romanian political figures] and all the other leeches of the people. Make a republic in Romania as well, as the workers and peasants of Russia, Germany and Austria-Hungary did."

The activity report for the month of December 1918 of the Romanian Group attached to the Communist (Bolshevik) Party in Russia provides us with valuable information regarding the methods of action planned and put into practice to achieve the revolutionary objectives against the Romanian state. Among them, the following measures were considered: the publication of brochures in Romanian (*Manifesto to Romanian soldiers* – 40,000 copies; *Appeal to Romanian soldiers from Russia* – 2,000 copies); sending agitators and couriers to Romania and Bessarabia, to Hungary and Transylvania; the creation of provincial cells in various cities of the Soviet Union. Through these cells, Romanian prisoners of war, among whom there was an ongoing activity of agitation, were sent back to the country. It was found that the mood of the prisoners of war was very good, revolutionary.[1]

At the same time, there was an intensification in the propaganda activities and the appeals to the soldiers, which incited to military disobedience and desertion.[2] The actions of force against Romania would gain momentum after the establishment of the Romanian

1 Activity report of the Romanian Group attached to the Communist (Bolshevik) Party in Russia for the month of December, Moscow, December 22, 1918/January 4, 1919, in Tănăsescu coord., *Ideologie* vol. II, 110-111.

2 Manifesto of the Central Committee of the Romanian communist groups in Russia addressed to the conscripts urging the rejection of military orders and the turning of arms against their own state, Chișinău, summer 1919, in Tănăsescu coord., *Ideologie* vol. II, 283-286.

Communist Party on May 8, 1921. In these conditions, a change of strategy took place, with the objective being the instrumentalisation of grievances and failures of internal cohesion to trigger a social revolution.[3]

More to the point, Romania was now faced with a new security reality: the intensification of subversive actions aimed at the internal disorganisation of the state and territorial dismemberment. Weakening the cohesion of the army and the fighting spirit of the troops was, therefore, part of a much more ambitious plan aimed at destabilising the state and providing the right framework for the outbreak of a revolution coordinated from the outside. In these new conditions, intelligence gathering and intelligence-related activities became particularly important in the overall decision-making process within the military.

It should be noted that at the outbreak of the First World War, there was no organised army intelligence service in Romania. Based on the statement of Mikhail Moruzov (who was to become the first head of the army's secret intelligence service),[4] preserved in the archives of the Ministry of National Defence, we learn that the lack of such a specialised structure significantly affected the ability of military decision-makers of being aware of the state of the other armies and to more efficiently plan the operational tasks. The intelligence structures of the army during the war were under the command of the General Staff – Section II – , with the 5th Intelligence Bureau and that of the General Headquarters – the 2nd Intelligence Bureau.[5] Also, there was a second type office, in addition to the headquarters of the major military units, which carried out counterintelligence activities in the army and counterespionage on the territory.[6]

At the end of the war, it became obvious that the vulnerabilities identified during the war had to be managed by taking measures to streamline the operational intelligence activities of the military. The multiplication of threats and especially the particularly scattered and subversive character required increased vigilance and careful monitoring of potential actions directed against the army and the stability of the state in general.

---

3 Spânu, *Serviciul de informații*, 185.

4 Mihail Moruzov (1887-1940) is considered the founder of the Secret Intelligence Service. With a controversial and particularly complex personality, Moruzov is considered one of the most captivating figures of Romanian espionage. Coming from a modest family, he managed to rise very quickly in the power hierarchy of military espionage. He understood the importance of building an Intelligence Service with structures, objectives and the necessary resources to be able to carry out a wide range of internal and external actions. In close relation to King Carol II, Moruzov became practically omnipotent, exercising his influence with authority both in espionage services and in many of the domestic political actions. Moruzov was arrested in September 1940 and imprisoned in the Jilava prison, where he was assassinated by a legionary commando on the night of November 26-27

5 Eugen Cristescu mentioned in his Memoirs that after the start of the war, a strong Special Security Brigade was included in the establishment of the General Headquarters for informational action and the defense of the rear of the military commands, in Troncotă, *Istoria Serviciilor de Informații, fascicola I (1850- 1918)*, 47.

6 Cristescu, "Organizarea," 95.

SPECIAL UNITS

During the war, a special unit called the Delta Intelligence and Security Service operated under the leadership of M. Moruzov.[7] The name of this service appears in a document from September 25, 1917, as the "Danube Delta Safety Team", and then on January 31, 1918, it appears in documents under the name of the "Danube Delta Safety Brigade".

Established in 1917, the main mission of this secret intelligence structure was to infiltrate enemy networks in order to counter the espionage actions carried out against the Romanian army. The structure worked under the command of the General Headquarters of the Romanian army. The service was designed as a special intelligence service, well covered so as to be better protected from potential risks. It was active on the Dobruja front and on the Black Sea coast, with headquarters in Ismail-Sulina.[8]

From a 1934 report drawn up by Moruzov, titled *Overview of the Intelligence Services of the Army* (*Expunerea asupra serviciilor de informații ale armatei*)[9], we also find an assessment of the successful counterintelligence activities of this service during the war. The most spectacular achievement was the capture of the German Colonel Friederich von Mayer, who led the German information apparatus on the Dobruja front and the Black Sea shore. He was later brought inside the Romanian lines and "exploited for informative purpose".[10] The capture operation took place 75 km behind the enemy front, with major risks, but it proved to be a real intelligence success. In addition to this appealing action the following are also mentioned: the arrest of 156 spies out of a total of 178 that had been sent to the defence lines of the Romanian army by the Intelligence Service of the German army; preventing the enemy from destroying any depot of the Romanian army; rescuing some Romanian soldiers and officers from the Bolsheviks in southern Bessarabia, etc.[11] Some of the other actions carried out were aimed at organising several incursions over the defence lines of the enemy front, as a result of which the reinforced points at Murighiol and Beltepe were destroyed.

Eventually, the objective of the intelligence activities of the special team was focused on detecting revolutionary individuals, deserters, assessing the agrarian situation and on the expansion of Bulgarian and German espionage actions north of the Danube River.[12] It would also get involved in the Bulgarian Commission for the purchase of grain from southern Bessarabia (1918).

The activity of this intelligence structure continued even after the conclusion of the armistice and peace in Bucharest between Romania and the Central Powers (on April 24/ May 7, 1918). At this point turned into the Security Service of Dobruja, this structure was the only one of its kind authorised to operate in the area, despite the fact that the terms of the peace treaty required the total cessation of intelligence activities against former enemies.

---

7 The information-operational deployment area was in the Danube Delta, which represented an important strategic point used for insider trading and the clandestine passage of secret agents from one side of the front to the other.

8 Troncotă, *Istoria Serviciilor Secrete românești*, 75-78.

9 Troncotă, *Mihail Moruzov și frontul secret*, 215-223.

10 Troncotă, *Istoria Serviciilor Secrete românești*, 76.

11 Troncotă, "Overview of the Intelligence Services of the Army," in *Mihail Moruzov și frontul secret*, 216.

12 SRI archives, fonds "d", file no. 7702, ff. 63-72, in Troncotă, *Mihail Moruzov și Serviciul secret*, 218-235.

Given its secret, almost conspiracy-like character, it practically acted as a stand-alone secret service.[13] With the unification of Bessarabia (on March 27, 1918) and the increase in Bolshevik pressure and threats on Bessarabian territory, the service expanded its scope of action. From Moruzov's report from 1934 we learn that important services were rendered to the army through actions aimed at rescuing officers, troops and dignitaries "who had fallen into the hands of the Bolsheviks", as well as actions that aimed at "thwarting the actions of the Bolshevik army and taking over all Russian depots". According to existing information, Moruzov managed to become the Commander of some of the Red Army's contingents, which were later disbanded – a strategy that ensured the infiltration and obtaining of rich intelligence fact-collection from the ranks of the Bolshevik forces.

The Danube Delta Security Service, through its character, action tools, accomplished missions and used tactics, integrated in a complex way elements specific to those of the special and intelligence forces. In this sense, it represented an innovation for the Romanian armed forces.

STREAMLINING THE MILITARY INTELLIGENCE MISSIONS

Given the emergence of new types of threats, special attention was given to keeping up the effectiveness of the intelligence and counterintelligence structures of the army. The military counterintelligence activity was officially regulated only after the First World War, through the order of the day no. 36 from May 1, 1918, of the General Staff. At the proposal of Colonel Nicolae Condeescu, Chief of the Intelligence Bureau of the Section II of the General Staff, after the demobilisation of armed forces on July 1, 1918 it was approved to set up an intelligence section made up of two bureaux – Bureau 1 (Intelligence) and Bureau 2 (Counterintelligence).[14]

The expansion of the Bolshevik threat led to the intensification of special actions carried out as part of espionage and counterintelligence missions. The situation became particularly complicated due to the emergence of a hotbed of threat on the western border. The major concern of the Romanian political and military leadership was a possible coordination of Russian and Hungarian actions and the carrying out of a combined east-west operation by the Bolshevik forces. The culminating point was the decision to launch the Romanian military campaign against the Bolshevik regime led by Bela Kun, an operation which had been coordinated and decided together with the allied forces. The campaign in Hungary took place against the backdrop of increased subversive actions of espionage and Bolshevik propaganda. The need to carry out special actions to counteract them was obvious. On October 28/November 10, 1918, in the context in which the second mobilisation of the Romanian army took place, two sections were created: Section II (with an Intelligence Bureau and a Counterintelligence Bureau), for the Operations Army subordinated to the General Headquarters, and Section IV – Intelligence, subordinated to the General Staff.[15]

13 Troncotă, *Istoria Serviciilor Secrete românești*, 76.
14 Spânu, *Serviciul de informații al României*, 175.
15 Troncotă, *Istoria Serviciilor Secrete românești*, 78.

The information bulletin of the General Headquarters of the Romanian army from January 15-31, 1920, with regards to the state of mind of the population and the troops, highlighted the attention given to intelligence gathering and to the close tracking of revolutionary agitations and persons suspected of subversive intentions. In this regard, a series of specific cases are mentioned: five individuals who crossed the Dniester River from Ukraine were referred to the Martial Court; two deserting officers from Denikin's Army[16] were arrested by the Command of the 5th Division; a group of 20 Hungarian officers coming from Poland were detained as suspects. In conclusion, it is shown that the morale of the soldiers was satisfactory, but a recommendation was made to the Command of the 19th Division to request an end to any brutal treatment of the soldiers. By that it must be understood as paying increased attention to the prevention of discontent that could generate acts of disobedience in the ranks of the troops. The bulletin issued by the Counterintelligence Bureau is relevant from another perspective as well. A number of measures were included so as to prevent Bolshevik propaganda among the soldiers. Thus, it is mentioned that in Bessarabia, in order to combat Bolshevism, schools for adults were established in all localities where there were units commanded by officers. Their purpose was to increase the level of literacy and civic education, with special attention being paid to the promotion of patriotism and gratitude towards the deeds of arms of the forefathers. It was also required that in each garrison celebrations of a national character be organised, in the form of conferences and artistic activities, simultaneously with taking measures to improve the living conditions of the soldiers (for example, providing better meals).

The information sent by the Intelligence Section, Bureau II within the General Headquarters shows us the extent of the actions carried out on the territory of the country and the danger they posed to national security. Thus, the information bulletin of February 27, 1920 informed that the socialists in Romania would start spreading propaganda among the soldiers, to influence them not to open fire against the Russian Bolsheviks who were going to attack on the Dniester River. Propaganda activities were also very intense in Transylvania and in the Dobruja region. A major priority was the tracking of espionage activities. In February 1920, the Intelligence Section warned of the existence of five French-flagged ships in the port of Ramadan (southern Romania). It was mentioned that their staff was made up of Bulgarians, part residents of Dobruja who had fled to Bulgaria, part officers in the Bulgarian Army who "under the guise of work interests, crossed daily to Bulgaria and returned to spy against Romania".[17]

Another action plan uncovered by the intelligence activities carried out by the army concerned the organisation of attacks against certain personalities and political leaders. The Intelligence Bureau of the 5th Division informed on the formation of a group of 63 people located in Bern, made up of deserting Romanian soldiers who had fought in the

16 Anton Ivanovich Denikin was a Russian General who fought in the First World War and the Russian Civil War. He was one of the most prominent leaders of the White movement in Southern Russia and Ukraine and a key figure in the White army during the Civil war. He was commander of the White Volunteer Army fighting in Southern Russia against the Bolshevik forces. He kept its position until the defeat of the White forces in autumn 1919 and winter 1920.

17 Information Bulletin prepared by the General Headquarters regarding the anti-Romanian actions in which Hungarian and Bulgarian Bolsheviks were trained, General Headquarters, Information Section, Bureau II, Bucharest, February 27, 1920, in Tănăsescu coord., *Ideologie* vol. III, 50-52.

Hungarian Bolshevik army, and who were under the coordination of the Bolshevik Central Committee in Moscow. This group had the mission of organising a large-scale terrorist action in Romania. Based on the decryption of the correspondence code, it was discovered that among those targeted were some of the most important Romanian political leaders: Ion I.C. Brătianu, Vaida-Voevod, Al. Marghiloman, Take Ionescu, General Al. Averescu, etc.[18]

Among the measures taken to prevent and counteract such actions, it was decided to set up communal committees in the areas at the Dobruja border, which were tasked with reporting spies, revolutionaries, propagandists and those who would spread tendentious rumors or manifestos to the detriment of the state's security. In Bessarabia and Bucovina, a major risk was the possibility of repatriating all Romanians, deserters and refugees, who were in Russia, an objective pursued by the Soviet government who was looking to obtain a general amnesty for them. The military intelligence services were drawing attention to the risk that once inside the country, these propagandists would prepare for revolution without the help of an intervention from the Soviet forces.

The information notice of April 1, 1920 revealed the fact that the Bolsheviks were preparing for two major actions: one for revolutionary propaganda in Romania, and the second one for a major military offensive against Poland. As regards Romania, the objective was to create a centralised communist organisation which would include the pre-existing communist organisations in various provinces, and which would be in permanent contact with Russia. To such a centralised organisation, it was intended to also add a terrorist section, with its members selected from Tiraspol. The notice stated that "the Bolsheviks' goal was to prepare, in 2-3 months, strong Bolshevik organisations and to supply them with everything necessary to be able to cause the revolution, if not at country-level, at least in Bessarabia and Bucovina, and to facilitate a military operation of the Bolshevik armies against Romania".[19]

The main objective of the Bolshevik plans was to attract the army on the side of the revolutionary movements, an objective for which any sacrifice could be made. A particular target group was that of the Romanian prisoners of war on Russian territory who had to be convinced, through propaganda, to support the Bolshevik revolutionary plans. The reports on revolutionary work in the army show us that the actions carried out did not give satisfactory results. [20]

In mid 1920s, the Bucharest authorities would admit that the situation in Bessarabia had become particularly worrying. The explanation was that the entire Bolshevik campaign was not a proper Bessarabian movement, but a purely Russian one, led by people coming from Russia and supported by the Comintern. Equally important was understanding that the population of Bessarabia was more open to Bolshevik ideas considering its much

18 Information notice of the General Staff Service of the 5th Division regarding the preparation of attacks against Romanian political figures by deserters who fought in the Hungarian Bolshevik Army, with the support of the Moscow Bolshevik Committee, Bucharest, March 26, 1920, RNA, CC Collection of the PCR, fonds 8, file 1594, f. 30, in Tănăsescu, *Ideologie* vol. III, 66-67.

19 Information notice on Bolshevik and Russian plans to invade Romania and Poland, Chișinău, April 1, 1920 in Tănăsescu, *Ideologie* vol. III, 85-86.

20 Note of the Directorate of Police and General Security about the Conference of Romanian Communists in Vienna chaired by C. Rakovski, Romanian Military Archives, Great Headquarters fonds, file 20/1920-1921, f. 31, in Tănăsescu, *Ideologie* vol. III, 116-117.

greater exposure to such influences from the time when it had been a component part of the Russian Empire. Bolshevik activities intensified starting with February 1920, when Bolshevik troops arrived at the Dniester River. The plan of action included the creation of a secret organisation consisting of agents to be brought from Russia and employed in Bessarabia, Bucovina, and Moldova. Among their objectives we mention the following: the establishment of a military espionage service to procure the location plans of the ammunition depots and the monitoring of the state of mind of the Romanian army in relation to Bolshevism, including by having agents infiltrate the troops in order to generate a state of demoralisation and instigate movements within the army. [21]

Against the backdrop of the worsening of acts undermining the security of the state, on October 21, 1920, Prime Minister Alexandru Averescu requested the King to enforce the state of siege that would allow strict actions to restore the order affected by the outbreak of the general strike in Bucharest. The royal decree was signed on the same day and it provided for the enforcing of the state of siege within the radius of the Bucharest city and the extension of censorship throughout the country.[22]

However, terrorist actions intensified in the following period. On December 8, 1920, a bomb attack took place in the meeting room of the Romanian Senate resulting in three deaths, including that of the Minister of Justice Dimitrie Greceanu, and three wounded, among them General Constantin Coandă, the President of the Senate.

The treaty recognising the unification of Bessarabia with Romania was signed in Paris on October 28, 1920. Along with the recognition of Romania's sovereignty over Bessarabia, the contracting parties to the treaty (the British Empire, France, Italy, and Japan) commited to provide assistance to Romania in case of Russian attempts to get back Bessarabia.[23] Despite the new decisions taken at international level, the situation in Bessarabia became particularly complicated at the end of 1920. The information provided by the military intelligence services was particularly valuable in assessing the risks and challenges on Romania's eastern border. The report sent on December 15, 1920 by the Minister of Defence, General Răşcanu, to Prime Minister Alexandru Averescu provides significant clues regarding the actions taken by the enemy forces.[24] It revealed the fact that that the Bolshevik forces keep concentrating troops being mentioned the number of troops, their position and location, as well as the directions of concentration on the entire eastern border line. It was shown that the main direction of concentration was towards Poland, but attention was also drawn to the fact that, in the event of the signing of peace between the Poles and the Bolsheviks, these forces might carry out an operation against Romania.

A major challenge for the Eastern Command was the espionage activities carried

21 Report on the Bolshevik movement in Bessarabia, June 1920, Romanian Military Archives, Cabinet of the Minister, folder 47, ff. 892-941, in Tănăsescu, *Ideologie* vol. III, 126-128.

22 Royal decree regarding the introduction of the state of siege in Bucharest and censorship throughout the country, in Tănăsescu, *Ideologie* vol. III, 20-205.

23 Treaty between the main allied and associated powers and Romania, Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Fond Conventions, III, Bucharest, Imprimeria Statului, 1920.

24 Report of the Minister of War, General Răşcanu, on the political-military situation in Bessarabia addressed to the Prime Minister, General Alexandru Averescu, Bucharest, December 15, 1920 in Tănăsescu, *Ideologie* vol. III, 272-276.

out by the Bolsheviks behind the enemy front. The report drawn up on December 15, 1920 provides valuable information related to the organisation and operation system of the Soviet spy service. The main task was the intelligence gathering by surveillance of the most important military points and by infiltrating the command and military establishments of the enemy. A detailed description of the profile of the Bolshevik agents operating in the coverage area of the Romanian front was also included. Among them, the following are mentioned: the secret agent whose main tasks were to find out information about the military commands, their structure and organisation, military forces, relations between soldiers and officers, troop morale, etc.; the scout agents that acted behind the front with responsibilities to inform in connection with the state of the logistical organisation and the level of the infrastructure (bridges, access roads, railway lines, etc.); terrorist agents who were the ones sent behind the front to carry out specific missions: destruction, murder, railway accidents and damage of railways, etc.

The actions to undermine the Romanian state organised by the Bolshevik forces coordinated by Moscow reached their climax in September 1924, when the Tatarbunary armed uprising took place, through which it was attempted to occupy Bessarabia and annex it to the USSR.[25] The implications of this action were strongly felt in the strategic planning of Bucharest, which intensified its efforts to secure the eastern border, one that remained particularly vulnerable throughout the interwar period.

The intensification of dangers on the eastern border once again highlighted the importance of intelligence activities in countering the various destabilising actions attempted by enemy forces from outside, with the support of increasingly sophisticated networks that were formed internally. In 1924, the General Staff decided to establish the Secret Bureau of the Second Division (Section II) under the leadership of Mihai Moruzov, a structure later known as the Secret Intelligence Service of the Romanian army.[26] The Secret Service organised intelligence centres in Chernivtsi and Chișinău whose mission was to collect information from the USSR. In addition to these centres, the General Staff also had a Secretariat, an Intelligence Gathering Bureau, which operated up to 100 kilometres into USSR territory, and a Counter-espionage Bureau, all these structures being headed by Mikhail Moruzov.[27] Their activities were focused on the eastern border, where they had identified the main objectives of the Soviets who sought to obtain complete information on the Romanian army – organisation, deployments, military troops, armament, command, combat methods, and knowledge of vital points (ammunition depots, food, arsenals) – and to spread news that was biased and discreditable to the Romanian state.

The founding of the army's secret intelligence service in 1924 opened the doors to a new stage in the dynamics and construction of the Romanian military intelligence system, but also in the organisation and coordination of specific missions. The research on this period and on the role played by the military intelligence service in the years preceding

25 The Tatarbunary Uprising of September 15-16, 1924 represented a direct aggression against the Romanian state based on the plan organised by the Bolshevik Revolutionary Committee from Odessa. After crossing the Dniester River, the rebels announced the beginning of the uprising and the annexation of Bessarabia to the USSR. The armed uprising was defeated by the Romanian army after only two days on September 18, 1924. The events at Tatarbunary were, however, part of a much larger plan to destabilise Greater Romania.

26 Pintilie et. al., *Istoria Serviciului secret de informații*, 67.

27 Ibid., 68.

the outbreak of the Second World War constitutes a separate chapter, with successes along the way, but also with shadows and controversies that make up for a complex and equally complicated picture of the activity of a structure that dominated the Romanian intelligence community in the period between the two world wars.

CONCLUSION

The experience gained in the first post-war years shows us a gradual tendency on the side of the political and military decision-makers to understand the importance of establishing military structures capable to carry out intelligence gathering missions, necessary to extend the capacity of managing with the new types of threats. Considering the highly subversive and scattered characteristics of the actions against the Romanian state under the command of the new Bolshevik power centre in Moscow, the tasks of the special services became particularly complicated. They targeted performing missions both inside and outside of the country, against an enemy that would rather act directly or from the shadows, with combat tools different from the classic ones. Especially in cases that called for actions 'behind the front', i.e. in the area of action of the enemy, the existence of special forces would have been of utmost neccessity, as a closer coordination between the various internal services – military and non-military – acting in the field of intelligence gathering was necessary. The army was supposed to play a critical role since the new threats had two main targets: the territorial integrity of the state and the desintegration of the army cohesion and unity. The mix of threats – from subversion and propaganda to sabotage and terrorism – created a complete new reality that the army had to deal with. Managing the Bolshevik threat required the use of tools, strategies and forces covering a wide range of missions.

But the preferred strategy was to make use of various intelligence networking or individuals. Such an example was Canadian Colonel Joseph Boyle[28] who was in charge of executing several important special missions: in March 1918, he succeeded to free the Romanian keep prisoners in Odessa by the Bolsheviks, to recapture part of the Romanian treasure confiscated by the new Russian revolutionary regime and to save members of the Romanov family relatives of Queen Marie of Romania, and other specific missions. Such methods could not, however, cover the real need to build mechanisms, tools and applied strategies of action that would allow the management of military needs in the field of intelligence and counterintelligence or to carry out complex missions in these fields. The creation of the Secret Intelligence Service of the Romanian Army solved part of the problem, but it took almost 100 years until Romania created a distinct military structure for special operations able to perform a wide range of missions and tasks in a hostile and complicated environment.

28 More information on Colonel Boyle's activity in Romania during the war can be found in Cristescu ed., *Queen Marie and Colonel Boyle*.

ARCHIVAL SOURCES

Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Fond Conventions, III, *Treaty between the main allied and associated powers and Romania* signed in Paris, Bucharest, Imprimeria Statului, 1920.

REFERENCES

Cristescu, Eugen. "Organizarea *și* activitatea Serviciului Special de Informații." In Cristian Troncotă and Eugen Cristescu, *Asul serviciilor secrete românești – Studiu, memorii, documente*. Bucharest: Roza Vânturilor Publishing House, 1995.

Cristescu, Sorin, ed. *Queen Marie and Colonel Boyle – Confessions*. Bucharest: Tritonic Publishing House, 2016.

Pintilie, Florian et. al. *Istoria Serviciului secret de informații, 1917-1940*. Bucharest: I.N.I. Publishing House, 2000.

Spânu, Alin. *Serviciul de informații al României în războiul de reîntregire (1916-1920)*. Bucharest: Military Publishing House, 2019.

Tănăsescu, Florian, coord. *Ideologie* și *structuri comuniste* în *România, vol. II (9 decembrie 1918-31 decembrie 1919)*. Bucharest: National Institute for the Study of Totalitarianism, 1997.

Tănăsescu, Florian, coord. *Ideologie* și *structuri comuniste* în *România, vol. III (9 decembrie 1918-31 decembrie 1919)*. Bucharest: National Institute for the Study of Totalitarianism, 2001.

Troncotă, Cristian. *Istoria Serviciilor de Informații, fascicola I (1850- 1918)*. Bucharest: ANI Publishing House, 2002.

Troncotă, Cristian, and Eugen Cristescu. *Asul serviciilor secrete românești – Studiu, memorii, documente*. Bucharest: Roza Vânturilor Publishing House, 1995.

Troncotă, Cristian. *Mihail Moruzov* și *Serviciul secret de informații al armatei române*. Bucharest: Evenimentul Românesc, 1997.

Troncotă, Cristian. *Istoria Serviciilor Secrete românești. De la Cuza la Ceaușescu*. Bucharest: Ion Cristoiu Publishing House, 1999.

Troncotă, Cristian. *Mihail Moruzov* și *frontul secret*. Bucharest: PAUL EDITIONS, 2020.

The French SAS in Operation Overlord

Heralds of Fighting France

Jean-Charles Foucrier

INTRODUCTION

The history of the Special Air Service (SAS) benefits from an abundant international historiographical production, from scientific studies to novels.[1] In France, historians have rationally focused on the two French parachute regiments involved in Operation *Overlord*, which were integrated into the new British SAS brigade in the spring of 1944 under the names of the 3rd and 4th SAS Regiments. Of all the irregular means employed by the British during the Second World War (Special Operation Executive, Political Warfare Executive, etc.), the SAS certainly represent the most conventional aspect, with combatants inserted into the framework of vast operations.[2] The trajectories of these men engaged in the liberation of France behind enemy lines have met with a certain echo among the public. As early as 1947, the writer and resistance fighter Joseph Kessel, who is best known as the author of *Le Chant des Partisans* during the conflict, published *Le Bataillon du Ciel*, a novel about the battles of the French SAS in Brittany, which he adapted the same year into a film of the same name. Both works depict a gallery of elite warriors, as exuberant as they were united, evolving in a Brittany held by the occupying forces, guiding the internal Resistance into battle, and managing to prevent the mass dispatch of enemy reinforcements to Normandy. This image, although partly cracked by scientific research at the turn of the twenty-first century, remains largely installed in the literature aimed at the general public.[3]

Among the few discordant voices on the heroic national narrative of the French SAS paratroopers is a thesis defended at the University of Montpellier III proposing a prosopographical, sociological and memorial study, with the highlighting of "myths that have taken an inordinate place in history".[4] Although useful in the process of deconstructing the French SAS historiography, the study completely sidesteps the question of the political stakes, which were nevertheless consubstantial to the creation of this unit. Other authors have questioned a possible hidden mission of the SAS, without developing their promising questioning.[5]

The archives of the *Service historique de la Défense* in Vincennes, which are freely accessible,[6] tell a story that is far more complex than the operational and heroic aspects that have been the hallmark of the SAS for nearly three-quarters of a century. Among the reports written by the French SAS leaders shortly before the start of Operation *Overlord*, one element of language in particular catches the eye: the 'moral role' of the SAS paratroopers, at least as important as the military objective.[7] An expression that appears several times in archive documents, even at the highest level with the Air Force General Staff (*État-Major de l'Armée de l'Air* – EMAA), and that serves as the basis for a new problematic: what were the real missions of the French SAS in Operation *Overlord*, beyond the sole military considerations?

---

1 It is not within the scope of this study to review SAS' extensive historiography, which is mentioned for example in *The SAS Encyclopedia*.
2 Tenenbaum, *Partisans et Centurions*, 46.
3 See bibliography reviewed below.
4 Pascual, "La Brigade du Special Air Service,", 714.
5 Porteau, "L'action combine," 107-124.
6 SHD, sub-series 4 D, "*Seconde Guerre mondiale – Forces aériennes libres et Forces alliées*."
7 SHD AI 4 D 39, 3e bureau, "Rapport du commandant Bourgoin, *Notes sur un mode d'emploi éventuel des parachutistes français*", October 5, 1943, 4.

In addition to answering this question, this study places the action of the French special forces in perspective with the Allied plans of spring 1944 thanks to the archives kept in London[8] and Norwich,[9] in order to evaluate the real scope of their actions. The origin and nature of the paratroopers are also discussed: who are these men, and on what objective and subjective criteria are they selected for *Overlord*? A question that raises the complex and paradoxical notion of 'elite soldiers' within the French Army of National Liberation, and reveals the political tensions fracturing the two rival poles in London and Algiers.

AN OPERATIONAL HISTORY THAT LOOKS LIKE A NATIONAL NOVEL

Special Forces Anchored in an Official Historiography

After the victory of May 1945, the story of the adventure of the French SAS engaged in Brittany as part of Operation *Overlord* was developed. The two SAS regiments succeeded in guiding the resistance against the occupying forces, while multiplying sabotage and ambushes that made it possible to fix the mobile forces and prevent them from converging on the Normandy front as reinforcements. A glorious story, in which the SAS appear as the architects of the victory in Brittany – and indirectly in Normandy – above all carried by the very actors of this triumph. As an example, and to quote one of the least known, is the oral testimony left in 1982 to the *Service historique de la Défense* by the former Free French Air Force (*Forces Aériennes Françaises Libres* – FAFL) sergeant Djamil Jacir, who was commissioned as a parachutist in 1943 and parachuted into Brittany on the evening of 5 June 1944:

"[The objective was] to make it difficult for the German troops in Brittany to go to Normandy to reinforce the troops there. I think we achieved that goal because the Germans had great difficulty in moving. The 150,000 Germans who were in Brittany stayed there, not because of the 400 French paratroopers who couldn't prevent them from leaving, but because they were harassed by the maquis, hampered by the telephone cuts, not knowing what was going to happen. Brittany liberated itself, it was the Bretons who liberated their country."[10]

This story was repeated unchanged until the turn of the millennium. Thus, according to the official history of the paratroopers: "It was vital to prevent the flow of German divisions towards the fragile Normandy bridgehead during the first twenty crucial days of the landing. The action of the air force, which was limited, had to be supplemented by paratroopers framing and arming the Resistance. The paratroopers were therefore asked to complete, or even replace, the action of the air force".[11] The *Histoire des parachutistes SAS de la France libre* (History of the SAS paratroopers of Free France) says no different, referring to the "French paratroopers of the 4th SAS dropped in Brittany on the night of 5 June 1944 in order to harass enemy units, create insecurity and hold back as many enemy forces as possible in the region".[12] All of these accounts show a definite tendency to be satisfied with

8 IWM, P. 417 - 10/8, Kingston McCloughry, *The Transportation Plan*.
9 UEA, The Zuckerman Archive, AEAF *Planning 1943 – 44*.
10 SHD AI 8 Z 300 (1), oral testimony of Sergeant Djamil Jacir, June 30, 1982.
11 Dufour, *Chasseurs-parachutistes*, 37.
12 Portier *Les Parachutistes SAS*, 191.

testimonies, which are certainly useful but not cross-referenced with the archives, and to never question the real motives of the SAS paratroopers' mission, nor their actual results in Brittany. The origin of the construction of this heroic and unquestioned narrative can easily be traced to the years following the end of the Second World War.

The Constructive Mechanisms of a Myth

From 1941 onwards, the organisation of the FAFL was based on General Martial Valin, who retained command of the French air force in Great Britain in 1943 and 1944. This officer also proved to be an effective communicator, speaking nearly a hundred times on the BBC in favour of Free France. One of his speeches was entitled "*Comment on écrit l'histoire*" [How history is written], evoking the exploits of his pilots in combat.[13] This title could ironically be applied to the whole history of the FAFL, written by its own actors – starting with their own leader, Valin – with a rather uncritical view of their exploits.[14] The particular history of the SAS paratroopers is no exception to the rule, with the publication in 1947 of Joseph Kessel's *Bataillon du Ciel*, mentioned earlier. It was an immediate success, in line with *L'Armée des ombres* (Kessel, 1943), another novel evoking the heroic action of the resistance, which was also adapted for the cinema. Other films based on the novels, such as *Battle of the Railroad* (1946), *The Longest Day* (1962) and *Is Paris Burning?* (1965), help to develop the decisive action of the resistance in stopping German reinforcements to Normandy, destroying the railroads more effectively than the Allied air force, while reinforcing the aura of Gaullist France in the 1960s.[15] These artistic works, which have no pretensions to historical truth, nevertheless form the framework of an official story taken up by the actors – the SAS, and validated by the Allied leaders.

Probably the most famous assessment of the effectiveness of the resistance comes from Dwight D. Eisenhower. In his memoirs, the former supreme commander of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces (SHAEF) estimates the action of the resistance in Brittany at the equivalent of fifteen Allied divisions, the potential of an army; a very generous tribute – the largest concentration of irregular fighters in Brittany in the maquis of Saint-Marcel painfully gathered 6,000 men –, which admittedly took place in a Cold War context, where Eisenhower abandoned his identity as a military leader for that of a diplomat conciliating with Paris.[16] A second long-range symbolic assessment comes from General de Gaulle, also written in a particular political context in 1956, two years before his return to power. The former leader of the Free French Forces was dithyrambic about the resistance in Brittany.[17]

"Brittany is teeming with maquisards, especially in the Côtes-du-Nord and Morbihan where the terrain is favourable to them. It was therefore decided to supply the Bretons with arms and to send our 1st Régiment de Chasseurs Parachutistes (*sic*),[18] which was kept ready

13 SHD AI Z 23332, "Communiqués du général Valin pour 1943, *Comment on écrit l'histoire*", no date.
14 Foucrier, *Général Martial Valin*.
15 Launay, "Quand l'armée française rencontre Hollywood," 82.
16 Muracciole, "La France a contribué," 323.
17 De Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre*, 553-554.
18 Only the 2nd and 3rd Regiment of Parachute Fighters (Régiment de Chasseurs Parachutistes – RCP) took part in the battles of the summer of 1944, the 1st RCP being in formation in the Mediterranean and entering into operation only in the autumn on the Vosges front.

in England under the orders of Colonel (*sic*)[19] Bourgoin, to the area. On the eve of the landing and during the following days, our interior forces saw a large number of containers and groups of parachutists fall from the sky. As a result, the resistance was ignited. Thirty thousand men entered the field, some organised in regular units, others leading a sort of chouannerie. [...] The occupier was blocked in the centres and ports. [...] The Breton fighters attacked him without respite. Among them, Colonel Bourgoin and his men were like the leaven in the dough. [...] When Patton's tanks, having crossed the Avranches gap, arrived in Brittany at the beginning of August, [...] the Maquisards served as perfectly informed guides and accompanying infantry for the American tanks."

An idyllic picture – certainly revealing General de Gaulle's lack of knowledge (of interest) in the French air force –, which completed the mythical story of the French SAS paratroopers of *Overlord* in the 1950s for more than half a century.

Faced With the Facts: the Overlord Plans and the Limits of the Wehrmacht

The historiography of the SAS evolved at the turn of the 21st century, with the emergence of studies mobilising previously unexploited archives. Three seminal works in particular question the myth of the French SAS in Brittany.[20] The first two paint a picture of a largely underpowered *Wehrmacht* and *Waffen-SS* in June 1944, unable to react effectively to a landing by covering long distances. Already affected since 1942 by the lack of fuel – at a time when allied aviation was not yet targeting oil production – the German army also suffered from a vast deficit in transport trucks and spare parts, while the majority of the 43 divisions present in Western Europe were not fully manned and lacked training. These units were not very mobile and depended heavily on the railway network for their movements.[21] Apart from being close to complete paralysis due to Allied bombing, this system had not functioned properly since 1940, having been taken over by the occupying forces for the benefit of the Reich and the Eastern Front. The transport of an infantry division (50 trains) and an armoured division (70 trains) would have required more than a week even without Allied bombing or resistance intervention.[22] In the case of Brittany, most of the eleven divisions present were static units, whose purpose was not to be moved as reinforcements; the others could only detach combat groups, at best by semi-trailer or truck, and failing that by requisitioning civilian vehicles, horses, or simply by going on foot. Far from blocking the movements of German forces, the SAS and the resistance only aggravated an already existing situation. Moreover, the most mobile units of the *Wehrmacht* and *Waffen-SS* did not necessarily seek to avoid combat with irregular forces, and were even ordered to seek it. The most striking example is that of the SS *Das Reich* armoured division, located during the landing in the Toulouse region, whose ascent was accompanied by a voluntary and bloody diversion through the Limousin.[23]

Finally, the Allied plans did not rely on any decisive action by the resistance and/or the SAS to hope to stop the reinforcements towards Normandy. The SHAEF archives

19 The chief of the 4th Battalion SAS was then Commander.
20 Zetterling, *Normandy 1944*; Leleu, *Combattre en dictature*; Foucrier, *La stratégie de la destruction*.
21 Leleu, *Combattre en dictature*, 693.
22 Zetterling, *Normandy 1944*, 107.
23 Leleu, *La Waffen-SS*, 791.

indicate that the paralysis of enemy troops was based mainly on air power, with the entry into action of strategic bombers from March 1944, then of tactical aviation in May.[24] The French intelligence services developed the "Miksche Plan", nicknamed the French Plan, which foresaw the attack on tracks, rails and bridges by the resistance.[25] This plan was integrated into the planning on 6 May, as a simple bonus to the action of the air force, far from constituting the basis of it.[26] The SHAEF later acknowledged the help provided by the resistance, without overestimating its effectiveness: "the sabotage consisted mainly of the creation of cuts in the railways, and although largely less effective in its effects than the bombardments, these caused the enemy very serious problems".[27]

At the end of this brief historiographical review, several questions remain unanswered: who really were the French SAS of *Overlord*? What was the real nature of their mission, and what were the unacknowledged or unmentionable stakes? The archives of the *Service historique de la Défense* must be used to shed new light on these aspects.

THE PARACHUTISTS, A "PROPAGANDA FORCE" OF FIGHTING FRANCE

Symbolic By Nature and By Number

The desire to create a French parachute force existed from the beginning of Free France, in the summer of 1940. In August, General de Gaulle entrusted Captain Georges Bergé, who had escaped from France, with the mission of organising a Free French Air Force (FAFL) parachute unit. On 29 September 1940, the 1st Air Infantry Company (*Compagnie d'Infanterie Aéroportée* – CIA) of the FAFL was officially created, made up of twenty-five escapees from France who had been sent to British schools to take their parachute qualifications. In March 1941, the first mission of the 1st Company took place, with five FAFL soldiers parachuted in the Morbihan and commanded by Bergé.[28]

During the following summer the 1st CIA was trained in commando methods before being attached to the British 1st SAS Brigade as the French Squadron. The French paratroopers took part in long-range raids against Axis airfields in Libya and attacks on Crete, setting fire to about hundred aircraft. When the campaign ended at the end of 1942, the French paratroopers had written the first chapter of their young history, while leaving half of their strength on the field of their exploits, and their two successive leaders (Bergé and then Captain Augustin Jordan) as prisoners.[29]

The existence of the air infantry of the FAFL is a symbolic and political logic, defined by General de Gaulle: to position French soldiers on all the fronts where one fights, and in all the specialities of arms. The aim was to show that France was in combat, present alongside the Allies, until the final victory. An FAFL staff note of 18 February 1941 makes this clear: the air infantry is "a propaganda force with the maximum number of combatants effectively

24 IWM P/417/10/5/1, *The Joint Plan*, April 15, 1944, 18.
25 UEA, SZ/AEAF/7/4, *Railways "French Plans"- 6th May 1944*.
26 Foucrier, *La stratégie de la destruction*, 248-254.
27 UEA, SZ/AEAF, *The Overlord rail Transportation plan / Bombing Plan*, 1944.
28 SHD AI 4 D 60, "Historiques d'unités 1943-1944, *Les chasseurs parachutistes*", no date.
29 SHD AI 4 D 163, "Infanterie de l'Air et régiments de chasseurs parachutistes (1941-1948), *Histoire des parachutistes de la France libre par le colonel Bergé*", April 1947.

engaged in active theatres of operations".[30] A symbolic action frequently highlighted on the BBC by the FAFL's own leader, Martial Valin.

As a 'propaganda force' for fighting France, the air infantry has a reduced military impact on the ground, to say the least. Combat losses and limited rallies in England prevented the creation of large units, far from the British and American airborne division and corps models. In April 1944, the French paratroopers based in the United Kingdom were brought together in the 4th Air Infantry Battalion (*Bataillon d'Infanterie de l'Air* – BIA), made up of the original core of the 1st CIA, and the 3rd BIA formed in Algeria and detached across the Atlantic in November 1943. The 3rd BIA had a strength of 493 officers, non-commissioned officers and airmen, and the 4th BIA 481, making a total of 992 men.[31] A figure to be placed in perspective of the more than 25,000 allied soldiers of the three airborne divisions planned for D-Day (82nd and 101st American Airborne Divisions, 6th British Airborne Division)[32].

Standing Out in the Allied Fighting Mass

The use of French airborne units in preparation for *Overlord* posed a problem for the General Staff of the Air Force, commanded by General René Bouscat based in Algiers, and his deputy General Martial Valin based in London. These 'propaganda' formations were to play an important symbolic role, being the first to come into contact with the French population. However, the 3rd and 4th BIA were trained, equipped and commanded by the Allies – as was the case with the FAFL in general, which had no operational command. Although it could boast a core of paratroopers who had graduated from the French schools of the African Army, the 1st RCP remained entirely maintained by the Americans and was under direct Allied command. The latter has no plans to create a large French airborne formation, due to a lack of manpower and operational needs, which the EMAA is well aware of:

We could probably envisage the loan of American transport means for a given operation, but our allies are experiencing serious difficulties in this domain, and it is very doubtful that they would agree to increase them by lending us planes and gliders. The constitution of a large independent airborne unit cannot therefore be envisaged for the moment.[33]

The French parachute units were thus totally subject to the goodwill of the Allied High Command for *Overlord*, the SHAEF. One of the main fears at the EMAA was that these formations would be drowned in the anonymity of the three large allied airborne divisions, and parachuted with them at the same time and place – in Normandy. The chief of the 4th BIA, Major Pierre-Louis Bourgoin, summarised this apprehension in a report written in October 1943:

The large parachuted or airborne units have a precise role: to intervene in huge,

30 SHD 4 D 56, FAFL/État-major/2e Bureau, *Note*, February 18, 1941.

31 SHD AI 4 D 163, "Infanterie de l'Air et régiments de chasseurs parachutistes (1941-1948), *Situation d'effectif hebdomadaire de l'infanterie de l'Air*", April 7, 1944.

32 A third unit, the 1st RCP created in the summer of 1943 in North Africa with 1500 men, was then based in Sicily and constituted the only French unit present on this island. Still in training, it will not be hired before the Vosges campaign in October 1940.

33 SHD 4 D 164, "Parachutistes – Infanterie de l'Air, *Etude sur les grandes unités aéroportées*", September 29, 1943.

organised, highly armed masses on important strategic points or on the enemy's rear. [...] They had considerable means at their disposal: enormous numbers of men (the American airborne division had 8,476 men), heavy automatic weapons, artillery and engineers. Each unit can live an independent life and fight an independent war. What do we have to compare? Two incomplete battalions whose heaviest armament is the 80 mm mortar. These battalions engaged in a foreign division will be drowned, will accomplish an obscure, anonymous task.[34]

In January 1944, SHAEF informed the French Air Command in Britain of its intention "to use French parachute units in liaison with the Resistance in accordance with the desire expressed by the French Commander-in-Chief".[35] This was a relief to French military leaders, with the prospect of the air force infantry fighting in the vanguard of the Allied forces, and therefore in a distinct manner, and in an area other than Normandy – in this case Brittany. This was a way of escaping the anonymous mass of more than 150,000 soldiers planned to attack on D-Day in Normandy, and of creating an indirect 'effect' desired by Commander Bourgoin, by recalling the experience of desert warfare:

Thus two French divisions incorporated into the British 8th Army, despite the hard work they were doing at El Alamein and Mareth, remained ignored by everyone, while the isolated, independent Leclerc column aroused general enthusiasm.[36] Is this not an example of the moral effect that can be produced by a French grouping that fights distinctly?[37]

A 'moral effect': the expression is bound to come back in the EMAA archives. For the military nature of the French paratroopers on D-Day was coupled with an unspoken, if not secret, civilian mission of which the main people involved were not necessarily aware.

Moral Soldiers on Display

According to Bourgoin's conception of the use of French special forces, the French paratrooper had to be a fighter who stood out from the crowd, representing a France that was fighting and regaining possession of its territory, with the incidental help of the Allies:

Our intention is to use the French paratroopers and commandos in the future French campaign for two different purposes, and with maximum efficiency. Firstly, for military purposes: thanks to the strictness of their selection and training, and the diversity of the missions they will have to carry out, these elements will render services to the armies on the line that cannot be expected of them. Secondly, their moral role. This will be no less important, since everywhere on the front lines of all armies, involved in all operations, they will leave the French with the impression that France is ridding itself of its chains, that its liberation is not a handout offered by generous allies, but a real conquest of the French over the invaders. These men will be both elite fighters and agents of national propaganda in the noblest sense of the word; and at the same time as they will make their compatriots

34 SHD AI 4 D 39, "3e bureau, Rapport du commandant Bourgoin, *Notes sur un mode d'emploi éventuel des parachutistes français*", October 5, 1943, 3.

35 SHD 4 D 164, "Parachutistes – Infanterie de l'Air, Lettre du commandant supérieur des troupes françaises en Grande-Bretagne, le général d'Astier, au Comité de la Défense nationale", February 4, 1944.

36 The "Leclerc Column" refers to the force formed in Chad by Philippe de Hautecloque in December 1940, engaged in Libya, Fezzan and Tunisia, before becoming 2nd Armored Division in August 1943.

37 SHD AI 4 D 39, "3e bureau, Rapport du commandant Bourgoin, *Notes sur un mode d'emploi éventuel des parachutistes français*", October 5, 1943, 3.

rediscover the joy of being free, they will make them proud to be French.[38]

The parachutists thus had the vocation to act as guides to the resistance fighters, advising them, giving them the necessary impetus and dynamism to train them for combat. According to Bourgoin, this mission required intelligence, initiative and high patriotic feelings, as well as a neat physical appearance, which could only be accomplished by Frenchmen of metropolitan origin. "Everything that is Negro, Malagasy, Lebanese, Arab, North African Jewish, must be rigorously proscribed from our units", declared the chief of the 4th BIA. A racist assessment by definition, also underway at the same time within General Leclerc's 2nd Armored Division, and remarkably prefiguring the great 'whitening' of the French army in the autumn of 1944.[39]

'Moral fighters' on a mission to represent the French population, the paratroopers were not, however, 'political soldiers at war' on the opposing model of the *Waffen-ss*.[40] Even if these men embodied the ideas of the French Committee for National Liberation, there was no question of indoctrination or official directives on the expected moral line of conduct. Their mission was indirect, if not unconscious, but nonetheless political in nature, with the strategic desire of the CFLN and primarily of De Gaulle to control the resistance and enthrone the future Provisional Government of the French Republic as quickly as possible.[41] This combined ambivalence and imprecision did not fail to challenge the first concerned, as Lieutenant Botella of the 4th BIA testifies:

These instructions were obviously dictated by the fear of seeing the Resistance federate independently of the Provisional Government or split into dissident fractions with political objectives and by the concern to strengthen France's position at the time of the peace negotiations. We did not understand the significance of this; playing a political-military role did not appeal to us and, above all, we were aware that we were neither educated, nor trained, nor organised, nor equipped for such a task. The double mission imposed on the battalion, as well as the way it was carried out, had therefore been strongly criticised from the outset.[42]

Bourgoin's report, addressed to Chief of Staff Bouscat on 5 October 1943, made a strong impression on the EMAA in Algiers.[43] When the latter integrated the two French parachute battalions into the British army in preparation for *Overlord* in March 1944, he gave his orders to his deputy Valin, using Bourgoin's expression: "Eliminate from the parachute formations those who are physically and morally unfit."[44] This order was well received by the French air force headquarters in London and applied in practice. The transfer of the French battalions to the SAS posed serious practical problems, however, against a background of permanent political rivalries between former FAFL and African Army personnel.

---

38 Ibid., 4.
39 Maubec, "La 2ème division blindée française," 49.
40 Leleu, *La Waffen-ss*.
41 Jackson, *De Gaulle*, 263-282.
42 Quoted by Olivier Porteau, SHD AI 4 D 163, "Infanterie de l'Air et régiments de chasseurs parachutistes (1941-1948)".
43 SHD AI 4 D 39, "3e bureau, Lettre du commandant Bourgoin au général Bouscat", October 5, 1943.
44 SHD 4 D 164, "Parachutistes – Infanterie de l'Air, Lettre du chef d'état-major général Air, le général Bouscat, au commandant français de l'Air en Grande-Bretagne, le général Valin", March 3, 1944.

INTEGRATION WITHIN THE SAS: POLITICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

A Genesis Against a Background of Tensions Between London and Algiers

At the beginning of 1944, the War Office organised a new international SAS brigade, based on its two 1st and 2nd SAS Regiments with proven experience in the Mediterranean since 1941. French forces were asked to join the brigade in the form of the 3rd SAS Regiment from the 3rd BIA, and the 4th SAS Regiment from the 4th BIA.[45] The transition of these units to regimental level implied an increase in manpower of 50 officers and 300 non-commissioned officers and men, a reserve that the French Air Commander in Britain, General Valin, did not have.[46] At the end of January, the latter turned to his direct superior in Algiers, urging him to send the necessary troops. General Bouscat, surprised to learn of the War Office's decision through his subordinate, made it known that he "was not in a position to provide the requested reinforcement", but only twenty-five paratroopers.[47] Rather than create two SAS regiments with men who did not exist, Bouscat proposed to form a single one, fully manned. This response was not well received in London, where tempers flared, starting with the head of the British airborne troops, General Frederick Browning, who was "moved" by these Franco-French considerations, and by the head of *Overlord*'s ground forces, Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, who was not very eager to be patient. General d'Astier, the senior commander of French forces in Britain, addressed the National Defence Committee in Algiers:

> "General (sic?) Montgomery is receiving me on 12 February next and has informed me that he will discuss this matter with me. It could be resolved, it seems, in a satisfactory manner, either by calling on volunteers from the Army, or by transferring to Great Britain one of the battalions in Fez."[48]

In fact, the 1st RCP was stationed in the Algiers region, at full strength – almost 1,500 men. The transfer of one battalion would be enough to meet London's request, whereas, according to Bouscat himself, the Oujda parachute school had 150 personnel in training at the time.[49] However, the latter declared himself subordinate to the Mediterranean Theater of Operations, United States Army (NATOUSA), with his 1st RCP attached to the 82nd American Airborne Division, which was about to reach Sicily. Unless ordered directly by SHAEF, Bouscat did not have to disband his regiment.

Underneath this structural alibi lies the (poorly) concealed division between London and Algiers that was prevalent within the French Liberation Army, symbolised by Valin and Bouscat. The former was the architect of the Free French Air Force, of which he had been the leader for three years. Although he was not a Gaullist from the start (he only

45 Prime *Les Commandos SAS*, 86-89.

46 SHD 4 D 164, "Parachutistes – Infanterie de l'Air, Lettre du commandant supérieur des troupes françaises en Grande-Bretagne, le général d'Astier, au Comité de la Défense nationale", February 4, 1944.

47 SHD 4 D 164, "Parachutistes – Infanterie de l'Air, Lettre du chef d'état-major général Air, le général Bouscat, au commandant français de l'Air en Grande-Bretagne, le général Valin", February 7, 1944.

48 SHD 4 D 164, "Parachutistes – Infanterie de l'Air, Lettre du commandant supérieur des troupes françaises en Grande-Bretagne, le général d'Astier, au Comité de la Défense nationale", February 4, 1944.

49 SHD 4 D 164, "Parachutistes – Infanterie de l'Air, Lettre du chef d'état-major général Air, le général Bouscat, au commandant français de l'Air en Grande-Bretagne, le général Valin", February 7, 1944.

joined London in the spring of 1941), Valin became one of his most loyal supporters over the years. The FAFL's air infantry was composed mainly of escapees from France, "formed of volunteers of 'Gaullist' sentiments", as a *Comité Français de la Libération Nationale* (CFLN) intelligence note puts it:

> "[They] are impatient not to have participated in any engagement so far and to see the moment of their intervention constantly postponed. [...] The French paratroopers in Great Britain have the impression of abandonment because, for example, the oldest non-commissioned officers in this formation are being denied advancement because of their manifestly expressed feelings. They were in fact dependent on the Air General Staff in Algiers."[50]

The EMAA in Algiers was indeed reluctant to meet the demands of London. Despite the merger of the FAFL and the African Army in the summer of 1943, the fault lines between the two formations remained sharp. For his part, General Bouscat only joined the Allied camp in 1942 with the African Army, after having secretly tried in vain to get himself employed in Vichy – a fact that he was careful not to mention.[51] Bouscat did not appreciate his deputy Valin, who did not mind. Bouscat was a higher-ranking officer and a better interlocutor with the Allies, and he sought to restore the independence of the Air Force, which had been hard won and imperfectly achieved in the 1930s.[52] Bouscat could not accept to let its 1st RCP be butchered for the benefit of the ex-FAFL. He was supported by the CFLN and de Gaulle, who were reluctant to send men to reinforce an Operation *Overlord* in which the French had no say in the planning and, even more seriously, the administration of the liberated territories. However, the need to be present at the landing, or rather at the allied vanguard, with the 'moral' mission of the parachutists, remained.

> From this nebulous imbroglio emerged a shaky compromise, conceded by the CFLN and acted upon by Bouscat on 3 March 1944:
>
> The goal was to:
>
> - To set up a fully manned SAS-type regiment with the most qualified personnel. This regiment will be the 2nd Regiment of parachute fighters.
>
> - To constitute with the remaining trained personnel the strength of the 1st Reinforcement[53].

The "full strength regiment" refers to the 4th SAS regiment, referred to by the French army as the 2nd RCP, in order to keep at least a symbolic distance from its integration into the allied SAS brigade. The "1st reinforcement" announced the future 3rd SAS regiment, or 3rd RCP, which was in the process of being formed and would not be fully operational until July 1944, too late for the start of *Overlord*. London and Algiers were satisfied with this arrangement, which left the French paratroopers present on two distinct fronts, in accordance with the policy desired by General de Gaulle.

---

50 SHD 4 D 164, "Parachutistes – Infanterie de l'Air, *Note de renseignements sur le moral des Formations parachutistes françaises en Grande-Bretagne*", February 29, 1944.

51 Foucrier, *Général Martial Valin*.

52 De Lespinois, "Unité d'action ou dualité."

53 SHD 4 D 164, "Parachutistes – Infanterie de l'Air, Lettre du chef d'état-major général Air, le général Bouscat, au commandant français de l'Air en Grande-Bretagne, le général Valin", March 3, 1944.

The "Elite" of the French Liberation Army?

The French SAS were by nature high-level fighters, having passed through the ruthless selection process of the parachute school in Ringway, England, and the one in Largo, Scotland, run by the Polish 1st Independent Parachute Brigade. As Bourgoin points out, their special role in Operation *Overlord* set them further apart from other military formations, with a physical and 'moral' selection process that ruled out any non-European elements of appearance and/or poor presentation. The leader of the 4th SAS also demanded other qualities from the SAS, which put them even further above the average: "We need a lot of officers, a lot of radios, a lot of firemen, a lot of mechanics. We also need men from all over France, people who speak German and English, because more than any other, we will be obliged to guide ourselves alone, everywhere".[54] In his final order of 3rd March 1944, General Bouscat took up Bourgoin's proposals and went further by using a symbolic term to describe these extraordinary men: "I insist once again on the urgency of these achievements which, if they do not allow us to carry out the initial project of setting up two regiments, assure us of the certainty of the complete organisation and supply of an elite formation."[55]

'Elite': a term that has nothing to do with the world of fighting France, where its leader, General de Gaulle, has an ambiguous relationship with this notion. He himself came from a provincial Catholic and intellectual elite, as shown by the over-representation of writers and teachers in his family environment.[56] Throughout his career, de Gaulle maintained a certain respect for the administrative elites, whom he saw as a guarantee of the efficiency and continuity of the state.[57] His relationship with the economic and political elites proved to be much more distant, especially after the shock of 1940, when very few representatives of finance deigned to abandon their businesses to join him in London, as did the elites of the Third Republic. As a military leader, de Gaulle's relationship with the notion of elitism was at first uncertain. In his book *Vers l'armée de métier*, published shortly after Hitler's accession to power, the cavalry, his weapon of affection, holds a special and high place in his analysis.[58]

The modern conditions of military action demand from warriors an increasing technical skill. This material, which the force of things introduces into the ranks, requires the gift, the taste, the habit of serving it. This is a consequence of evolution, as inevitable as the disappearance of candles or the end of sundials. The time of the elite soldiers and selected teams has come.

This thought, however, was tempered by his desire to see each army unit cultivate its own elites, both leaders and rank-and-file men, distinguishing themselves by their training, their valour and their actions in combat. Until the victory of 1945, Gaullian discourse remained marked by the idea of seeing the resistance and the Free French armed forces as the nation's elite, where the country's other economic, political and intellectual

54 SHD AI 4 D 39, "3e bureau, Rapport du commandant Bourgoin, *Notes sur un mode d'emploi éventuel des parachutistes français*", October 5, 1943, 8.

55 SHD 4 D 164, "Parachutistes – Infanterie de l'Air, Lettre du chef d'état-major général Air, le général Bouscat, au commandant français de l'Air en Grande-Bretagne, le général Valin", March 3, 1944.

56 Jackson, *De Gaulle*, 38-41.

57 Nord, *Le New Deal français*, 325-374.

58 De Gaulle, *Vers l'armée de métier*, 254.

elites had by and large not moved beyond the defeat of 1940.[59] A general notion, which according to de Gaulle does not, or no longer from 1940 onwards, apply to any particular unit of the French Liberation Army forces.

The use of the term 'elite forces' to describe the French SAS thus appears as a paradox in the Gaullist paradigm. The explanation, as mentioned earlier, comes from the punctual and symbolic need to have an ad hoc force for *Overlord*, above all in representation of the interests of fighting France.

Controlling the Paratroopers: an Inter-Service Quarrel

Beneath the tumultuous relations between the staffs in London and Algiers, there was another, less perceptible, source of conflict, but one for which the French SAS of *Overlord* was a catalyst. Since their creation in December 1936, the parachutists have historically belonged to the Air Force. Very few in number (601st and 602nd Companies), they were only used in corps franc actions during the 'phoney war', and did not have the opportunity to be engaged during the Battle of France. The 1st Air Infantry Company formed in London from 1940 onwards remained under the command of the FAFL, just as the survivors of the 601st and 602nd Companies founded the nucleus of the 1st RCP from 1943 onwards, dependent on the reconstituted Air Force[60].

The exposure of the French SAS in the spring of 1944 was the trigger for an inter-armed forces quarrel that poisoned relations between the Army and Air Force until the end of the war. The fire was lit by General Antoine Bethuart, Chief of Staff of the National Defence, in a letter addressed in the middle of the battle in June 1944 to the Air Commissioner, Fernand Grenier:

> "Since their creation, the French parachute units [...] have been attached to the Air Force. In the American and British armies, these units are part of the Army.[61] [...] The majority of paratroopers come from the Army. The training of paratroopers is primarily infantry-based, aiming to make each man an elite infantryman. The general training concerning acclimatisation to air transport and parachuting requires only a small number of sessions and does not require attachment to the Air Force. Paratroopers are generally employed on land as part of a land operation, in conjunction with infantry units. [...] Given the recruitment, training requirements and conditions of use of these units, and given the interest that exists in the field in modelling our organisation on that of the Allies, the question may arise, at least for the current period, of temporarily attaching the French parachute units to the War Department."[62]

This desire to attach the parachutists to the land forces was ardently opposed by the Air Chief of Staff, Bouscat, the great organiser of the resurrection of the Air Force, and by his deputy Valin, administrator of the two SAS regiments in England. If Fernand Grenier let the affair vegetate, his successor, the charismatic and shady communist Minister of the Air

59 Jackson "De l'appel de Londres," 36-37.
60 SHD AI 4 D 60, "Historiques d'unités 1943-1944, *Les chasseurs parachutistes*", no date.
61 A *de facto* attachment for the US Army, which did not have an independent Air Force until 1947.
62 SHD 4 D 164, "Parachutistes – Infanterie de l'Air, Lettre du chef d'état-major de la Défense nationale, le général Béthouart, au Commissaire à l'Air, Fernand Grenier", February 23, 1944.

Fernand Tillon, took things in hand. Faced with the pressing and repeated demands of the Chiefs of the Army, the latter wrote an official letter of reply to Marshal Alphonse Juin, the new Chief of the General Staff of the National Defence, at the end of the year:

"I have the honour of informing you that I have an unfavourable opinion on this subject. [...] The parachute units were trained by the Air Force. The cadre was provided by the Air Force. The traditions of the paratroopers were acquired in the Air Force. The personnel from the Air Force who initially formed and then led the fighter-paratrooper formations into battle would feel justified bitterness at being removed from their home army. [...] It does not seem appropriate to dissociate the command of parachute units from the services it uses for the implementation of these units. Consequently, it seems to me judicious that the parachute units remain attached to the Ministry of the Air."[63]

Minister Tillon's opinion, clear and unambiguous, prevailed until the victory of May 1945, given the urgency of the operations. However, the pressure of the land chiefs finally won out shortly after the end of the fighting, with the transfer of the two SAS regiments to the army in August 1945. The climax of the paratroopers with *Overlord* also marked their delayed takeover by the ground forces.

CONCLUSION

What remains of the French SAS of *Overlord*, once the myth has been deconstructed? A few hundred combatants in a battle involving more than two million soldiers, but whose courage is in no way to be questioned. Parachuted into enemy territory, quickly surrounded and besieged, more than 200 of them were killed or wounded during the summer, i.e. a third of the troops.[64] As daring as they were, these men did not prevent the 150,000 German soldiers present in Brittany from reaching Normandy, the vast majority of whom would not have been able to do so, even if they had been ordered to, due to a lack of mobility. Their mission was above all to supervise the resistance, which was only partially achieved, and to help it rise up, with the final outcome being a failure.

Having become popular and mythical heroes after the war, the French SAS were above all heralds of fighting France, thought of as a propaganda force on a mission. Establishing contact with the resistance (or above all controlling it), showing the population (and the Allies) a France that was alive and fighting in the vanguard, embodying the ambassadors of the GPRF in the process of regaining possession of its lands and the administrative apparatus of the country: such was the 'moral' mission that doubled the military objective of the parachutists, which was certainly less flamboyant and, perhaps, less avowed. Heralds thrust into the light of history, these elite fighters, with their moral and physical senses, were also a catalyst for the unspoken fault lines running through a French army that was still imperfectly recomposed after 1942, riddled with tensions between London and Algiers and inter-army jealousies. So many milestones remained in the shadows, with a history in 1944 that was still in its infancy of this new military component of the French army,

63 SHD 4 D 164, "Parachutistes – Infanterie de l'Air, Lettre du ministre de l'Air, Charles Tillon, au chef d'état-major de la Défense nationale, Alphonse Juin", December 19, 1944.

64 Dufour, *Chasseurs-parachutistes*, 40.

promised to become increasingly popular during the wars of decolonisation in Indochina and Algeria.

ARCHIVAL SOURCES

Service historique de la Défense (SHD - Vincennes)

Sub-series 4 D, "*Seconde Guerre mondiale – Forces aériennes libres et Forces alliées*".

AI 4 D 39, 3e bureau, "Rapport du commandant Bourgoin, *Notes sur un mode d'emploi éventuel des parachutistes français*", October 5, 1943, 4.

4 D 56, FAFL/État-major/2e Bureau, *Note*, February 18, 1941.

AI 4 D 60, "Historiques d'unités 1943-1944, *Les chasseurs parachutistes*", no date.

AI 4 D 163, "Infanterie de l'Air et régiments de chasseurs parachutistes (1941-1948), *Histoire des parachutistes de la France libre par le colonel Bergé*", April 1947.

AI 4 D 163, "Infanterie de l'Air et régiments de chasseurs parachutistes (1941-1948), *Situation d'effectif hebdomadaire de l'infanterie de l'Air*", April 7, 1944.

4 D 164, "Parachutistes – Infanterie de l'Air, *Etude sur les grandes unités aéroportées*", September 29, 1943.

4 D 164, "Parachutistes – Infanterie de l'Air, Lettre du commandant supérieur des troupes françaises en Grande-Bretagne, le général d'Astier, au Comité de la Défense nationale", February 4, 1944.

4 D 164, "Parachutistes – Infanterie de l'Air, Lettre du chef d'état-major général Air, le général Bouscat, au commandant français de l'Air en Grande-Bretagne, le général Valin", February 7, 1944.

4 D 164, "Parachutistes – Infanterie de l'Air, Lettre du chef d'état-major de la Défense nationale, le général Béthouart, au Commissaire à l'Air, Fernand Grenier", February 23, 1944.

4 D 164, "Parachutistes – Infanterie de l'Air, *Note de renseignements sur le moral des Formations parachutistes françaises en Grande-Bretagne*", February 29, 1944.

4 D 164, "Parachutistes – Infanterie de l'Air, Lettre du chef d'état-major général Air, le général Bouscat, au commandant français de l'Air en Grande-Bretagne, le général Valin", March 3, 1944.

4 D 164, "Parachutistes – Infanterie de l'Air, Lettre du ministre de l'Air, Charles Tillon, au chef d'état-major de la Défense nationale, Alphonse Juin", December 19, 1944.

AI 8 Z 300 (1), oral testimony of Sergeant Djamil Jacir, June 30, 1982.

AI Z 23332, "Communiqués du général Valin pour 1943, *Comment on écrit l'histoire*", no date.

Imperial War Museum (IWM - London)

P. 417 - 10/8, Kingston McCloughry, *The Transportation Plan.*

P/417/10/5/1, *The Joint Plan*, April 15, 1944, 18.

University of East Anglia (UEA - Norwich)

The Zuckerman Archive, AEAF *Planning 1943-44.*

SZ/AEAF/7/4, *Railways "French Plans",-May 6, 1944.*

SZ/AEAF, *The Overlord rail Transportation plan / Bombing Plan*, 1944.

REFERENCES

Audigier, François. *Les prétoriens du Général: Gaullisme et violence politique de 1947 à 1959*. Reims: Presses universitaires de Reims, 2018.

Clément, René. *La bataille du rail*. Paris: Comptoir français de diffusion, 1946.

Crawford, Steve. *The SAS Encyclopedia. The Definitive Companion of the World's Crack Regiment*. London: Sidwick & Jackson, 1996.

Flamand, Roger. *Paras de la France libre*. Paris: Presses de la Cité, 1976.

Foucrier, Jean-Charles. *La stratégie de la destruction*. Paris: Vendémiaire, 2017.

Foucrier, Jean-Charles. *Général Martial Valin: l'inconnu des FAFL*. Paris: Perrin, 2023.

Gaujac, Paul. *Histoire des parachutistes français*. Paris: Société de production littéraire, 1975.

De Gaulle, Charles. *Vers l'armée de métier*. Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1934.

De Gaulle, Charles. *Mémoires de guerre*. Paris: Plon, 1989.

De Lespinois, Jérôme. "Unité d'action ou dualité: l'organisation du haut-commandement aérien pendant la Drôle de guerre." *Nacelles* 10 (Spring 2021).

Deplante, Henri. *La liberté tombée du ciel (1939-1945)*. Paris: Ramsay, 1977.

Dufour, Pierre. *Chasseurs-parachutistes (1935-2005)*. Paris: Lavauzelle, 2005.

Eisenhower, Dwight D. *Croisade en Europe*. Translated by Paule de Beaumont. Paris: Nouveau Monde, 2015.

Harismendy, Patrick, Le Gall, Erwan. *Pour une histoire de la France libre*. Rennes : Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2012.

Jackson, Julian. "De l'appel de Londres au discours de Chaillot.", In *De Gaulle et les élites*, edited by Serge Bernstein, Pierre Birnbaum and Jean-Pierre Rioux, 35-56. Paris: La Découverte, 2008.

Jackson, Julian. *De Gaulle: une certaine idée de la France*. Translated by Marie-Anne de Béru. Paris: Seuil, 2019.

Kessel, Joseph. *L'armée des ombres*. Alger: Charlot, 1943.

Kessel, Joseph. *Le bataillon du ciel*. Paris: Gallimard, 1947.

Larcan, Alain. "De l'élitisme selon le général de Gaulle, avant 1940." In *De Gaulle et les élites*, edited by Serge Bernstein, Pierre Birnbaum and Jean-Pierre Rioux, 17-34. Paris: La Découverte, 2008.

Launay, Stéphane. "Quand l'armée française rencontre Hollywood: le tournage du film Le Jour le plus Long." *Revue historique des Armées* 275, no. 2 (2014): 71-82.

Leleu, Jean-Luc. *La Waffen-SS: soldats politiques en guerre*. Paris: Perrin, 2007.

Leleu, Jean-Luc. *Combattre en dictature: 1944 – la Wehrmacht face au débarquement*. Paris: Perrin, 2022.

Maubec, Jérôme. "La 2ème division blindée française au Maroc (août1943 – mai 1944). Créer, organiser et régler le devenir d'un outil politique et militaire." M.A. diss., Montpellier III University, 2015.

Muracciole, Jean-François. *Les Français libres: l'autre résistance*. Paris: Tallandier, 2018.

Muracciole, Jean-François. "La France a contribué à la victoire des Alliés." In *Les Mythes de la Seconde Guerre mondiale*, edited by Jean Lopez and Olivier Wieviorka, 323-346. Paris: Perrin, 2018.

Nord, Philippe. *Le New Deal français*. Paris: Perrin, 2010.

Pascual, Fanny. "La Brigade du Special Air Service pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale.

Institutions, individus, et mythes." PhD diss., Montpelier III University, 2007.
Porteau, Olivier. "L'action combinée du 2ème régiment de chasseurs-parachutistes et de la Résistance bretonne dans le dispositif stratégique de l'opération Overlord." In *Pour une histoire de la France libre*, edited by Patrick Harismendy and Erwan Le Gall, 107-124. Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2012.
Portier, David. *Les Parachutistes SAS de France libre (1940-1945)*. Paris: Nimrod, 2010.
Prime, Christophe. *Les Commandos SAS dans la Seconde Guerre mondiale. Paris*: Tallandier, 2013.
Ryan, Cornelius. *The Longest Day*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1959.
Tenenbaum, Elie. *Partisans et Centurions: Une histoire de la guerre irrégulière au XXe siècle*. Paris: Perrin, 2018.
Zetterling, Niklas. *Normandy 1944: German Military Organization, Combat Power and Organizational Effectiveness*. Winnipeg: J.J. Fedorowicz Publishing, 2000.

Unreliable Allies

Yugoslavs in the Ranks of the British Commandos During the Second World War

Blaž Torkar

INTRODUCTION

The word 'commando' is of Portuguese origin, and was used for the first time during the Boer Wars in 1899-1902. The Boers did not have a regular army to fight the British, so they started to develop irregular guerrilla units. The word 'commando' denoted the entire military system in the future South African republics. Later, during the First World War and in the post-war period, cases in certain conflicts can be observed where the armies of some countries implemented tactics similar to Boer tactics, and at the end of the 1930s, the first studies of Boer tactics were conducted. From the mid-1920s and within the framework of the British military forces, the first attempts were made to organise special units which would be able to travel very long distances for a month at a time in the desert conditions of Africa independently of new supplies of fuel and water. The tactics of commandos and, consequently, the terminology linked to the basic concept of 'commando', were revived by the British more concretely in 1940. The rapid successes of Nazi Germany forced them to reorganise and set up new intelligence services intended for irregular operations and, almost simultaneously, special military formations – commandos. These became skilled amphibious units trained for special operations and unconventional warfare which carried out surprise incursions into enemy-occupied areas, while acting as elite, shock-assault units tasked with occupying and holding bridgeheads, covering landing during raids, and providing specially trained forces for cover operations.[1]

In 1940, the Battle of Britain and the evacuation of British soldiers at Dunkirk forced the British to form special units, which the new British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, who himself participated in the Boer Wars, personally advocated. Churchill also ordered special operations to be organised along the enemy coast, stretching from Norway to Spain. These were the beginnings of the Combined Operations Headquarters. Its leadership was based in the Admiralty's facilities, despite the fact that the new units were intended to also cooperate with the other two branches of the British Armed Forces, the Ministry of War and the Royal Air Force.[2]

In July 1940, the commandos were officially titled Special Service troops, with the unfortunate acronym SS (which was abandoned as late as 1944). No. 1 Commando was made up of independent troops fighting in Norway, while the Southern, the Western and the Scottish Commands contributed two commandos each, and the Eastern Command, the London District and the Home Division one each. The Northern Command was also expected to contribute a commando, bringing the total to eleven. In August 1940, the Northern Ireland Command provided an additional commando, No. 12, while No. 14 Commando was established in October 1942. By that time, a volunteer commando had been formed from the ranks of the Royal Marines. Initially, it was simply called the Royal Marine Commando, but was then renamed No. 40 Royal Marine Commando, and was later followed by eight other Royal Marine Commandos. The characteristic symbol of the commandos was the green beret, which remains their symbol to this day.[3]

The British also established Long Range Desert Group (LRDG) units in 1940, with

1 Holmes, *The Oxford Companion to Military History*, 213-214.
2 Wynter, *Special Forces*, 241.
3 Messenger, *Commandos*, 17-19; Dear, *Ten Commando*, 1-2; Van der Bijl, *Commandos in Exile*, 1-4.

the aim of carrying out reconnaissance missions and incursions into enemy-occupied territory. They were initially formed for desert operations, but were also used in other areas. In the same year, the Special Boat Service (SBS) Commandos were formed to carry out reconnaissance missions and incursions with small military vessels into enemy-occupied territory. A year later, the Special Air Service (SAS) was established, which was among the most effective during the war and remains Britain's most elite special operations unit.[4]

The fundamental difference between the commandos and the operation of the special intelligence services (like the British Special Operations Executive (SOE), the Inter-Services Liaison Department (ISLD), and the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS), was that commandos carried out special operations, particularly sabotage, in the shortest possible time and then retreated, while the members of SOE, ISLD and OSS mostly remained in the field. In the context of special and military missions and operations, the latter represented a link between the Allies and resistance movements or the Partisans. This means that their function – in some cases more, in other situations less – was also political, and at the same time, unlike the commandos, they collected intelligence data. They also collaborated fruitfully with the commandos on several occasions, especially in reconnaissance, and the organisation of ambushes and sabotage.

THE FORMATION OF NO. 10 COMMANDO AND NO. 7 YUGOSLAV TROOP

With the support of the governments of occupied countries operating in exile in London, the British Armed Forces began to establish No. 10 Inter-Allied Commando in the spring of 1942. It was a special international commando unit, as it included many volunteers from European nations, also Yugoslavs, the majority of whom were Slovenes. Lieutenant Colonel Dudley Lister took command on 2 July 1942 and, with the help of his staff, began to collect volunteers from numerous European countries, so that by the end of the war eight units had been formed. The first and eighth units were French (No. 1 Troop and No. 8 Troop); the second was Dutch (No. 2 Troop); the third was "mixed" (No. 3/x Troop) and consisted of German, Austrian, Hungarian, Czech, Jewish and other refugees of left-wing political orientation; the fourth was Belgian (No. 4 Troop); the fifth Norwegian (No. 5 Troop); and the sixth was a field unit (No. 6 Troop). Later, on 4 May 1943, a seventh unit was formed, which was Yugoslav (No. 7 Troop). There were also talks about the establishment of a Japanese commando unit, but they were never brought to fruition, since the war had finished beforehand.[5]

Each of No. 10 Inter-Allied Commando units was based in a pre-selected small place in Great Britain, and was therefore isolated from the other groups. The command of No. 10 Inter-Allied Commando wanted to prevent contact between members of individual units of different nationalities, which ultimately had a positive effect on training and morale. The local population warmly welcomed the members of different nations. The Poles from

4 Wynter, *Special Forces*; Perat, *Odločitev v puščavi*, 53-57; Mortimer, *Stirling's Men*; Richards, *Secret Flotillas*; Owen, *The Long Range Desert Group*; Hargreaves, *Special Operations in World War II*.

5 TNA DEFE 2/45, D. S. Lister, Lt. Col.: *Formation of 10th (Inter Allied) Commando, Provisonal Progress Report*, July 7, 1942; Intelligence Summary, May 4, 1943; TNA DEFE 2/977, No. 10 (Inter-Allied) Commando, May 1946, 1.

No. 6 Troop stood out with their goodwill and generosity, and had a special way of welcoming high-ranking guests in their ranks:

> "They had a custom too, of showing their affection and welcome by catching hold of the visitor and throwing him up in the air, catching him and repeating this operation. The first dance they had this honour of first turn fell to the Colonel. He seemed to enjoy it, but the Adjutant, wearing a kilt endeavoured to leave before spotted. No luck. Immagine the delight of all visitors, when he was seen to be tossed high, desperately clasping his arms around his knees in an effort to keep his kilt in the dignified position."[6]

No. 10 Inter-Allied Commando units comprised from 25 to 100 men, and, unlike other British Commandos, carried their own heavy calibre weapons. No. 10 Inter-Allied Commando did not fight as a concentrated group, since its units were most often provided as a reinforcement to other units of British Commandos to carry out specific actions of a special nature. After carrying out numerous raids in Norway, France, Madagascar, the Mediterranean and Southeast Asia, these units saw heavy fighting in Italy and in the west from Normandy to the Baltic.[7]

The British also wanted to form a special unit within No. 10 Inter-Allied Commando for the needs of military operations in the Mediterranean and the Adriatic. For this reason, Lieutenant Colonel Lister was tasked with forming No. 7 Mediterranean Troop on 15 February 1943, which was later renamed No. 7 Yugoslav Troop. The British were initially reluctant to include the Yugoslavs in the ranks of the Commandos, as they were predominantly counting on the Italians. For example, one of the reports of No. 10 Inter-Allied Commando, dated 10 April 1943, stated that Captain John Coates was having great difficulties in forming No. 7 Troop, which was undoubtedly related to the fact that the British initially wanted to form a Mediterranean troop comprised of Italian volunteers. Finally, due to the Italians' lack of interest, they began to recruit Italian-speaking Slovenes and Istrian Croats (from Primorska and Istria), owing to their great motivation to join the commandos. The SOE also got involved in the search for suitable volunteers for No. 7 Yugoslav Troop with Captain Coats and Lieutenant James Monahan. With the permission of the Yugoslav government-in-exile, the SOE began to recruit Yugoslav volunteers from the ranks of the Yugoslav Royal Guard Battalion to join the British Commandos.[8] When the Yugoslav Troop was founded in May 1943, the leadership was convinced that everything was well planned out.

THE YUGOSLAV ARMY IN EMIGRATION AND COMMANDOS

After the Axis Powers attacked Yugoslavia on 6 April 1941 the Yugoslav government fled the country. They went to Jerusalem via Athens, from there to Cairo, and further on to London. Ever since their short stop in Jerusalem, some individuals were in constant contact with important SOE members. While disputes, quarrels and conspiracies ensued among

6 TNA DEFE 2/977, No. 10 (Inter-Allied) Commando, May 1946, 5.
7 Van der Bijl, *Commandos in Exile*, 8-17.
8 Ibid., 16-17.

government members and politicians, and some others who had managed to escape on the one hand, plans began for the reorganisation of the Yugoslav Army, which would help in the fight against the occupiers on the other. The British in general immediately demonstrated willingness to help the government-in-exile. Numerically, not many Yugoslav soldiers and officers made it out of Yugoslavia, and there were many problems in the process.[9]

The government-in-exile, together with the representatives of the British special operations service, soon began to consider special operations. In June 1941, the SOE handed over a memorandum on the possibility of future operation and cooperation to the president of the Yugoslav government-in-exile, General Dušan Simović.

So there was talk of commandos from the very beginning of the war. This continued as the war progressed, specifically among Yugoslav politicians and some other prominent individuals in emigration, who were aware of the importance of specially trained military units, often called legions. The context suggests that these would have had at least some characteristics of commandos, and would have been especially important in the fight for the borders; all the more so because something similar – but with opposite intentions regarding the future demarcation between Yugoslavia and Italy – was being planned by influential Italian anti-Fascist circles in emigration. Yugoslav volunteers would be collected throughout Africa, in Argentina, the USA and elsewhere. The members of the Yugoslav Committee from Italy, especially Ivan Rudolf, Ivan Marija Čok and Miran Rybář, worked hard to this end. Franc Snoj and Izidor Cankar also considered the usefulness of such military groups.[10]

In parallel, some individuals in the USA were engaged in proposing to the authorities the establishment of special military groups, which would consist of members of occupied countries. At the beginning of February 1942, the influential writer Louis Adamič strongly advocated the establishment of an American Legion, which would consist of small and mobile units of Yugoslavs, Greeks, Bulgarians, Italians, Jews and Albanians, who would fight as commandos under the command of American officers against the Axis Powers.

It is very likely that there were more similar initiatives, but what is most interesting is this: even though the ideas differed somewhat, and the use of the term commandos and their true role was partially inconsistent (and not everyone necessarily imagined the commandos' special methods of operation correctly), the basic meaning was obvious, i.e. the Allies could benefit from the establishment of special military units which would be composed of the representatives of occupied countries, partly following the model of legions from the First World War. There would be several advantages: such units would be highly motivated to return 'home' and contribute to the common fight against the occupiers; they would have much-needed knowledge about the specifics in the field, such as, for example, the knowledge of local languages and socio-cultural backgrounds; they would provide psychological and moral support to resistance movements, in the sense that the latter would not feel forgotten about abroad; and, concerning territorial claims, they ultimately hoped to contribute to the common victory over the Axis Powers in this way, and consequently gain the sympathy of the Allies in future decisions. With regard to these,

9 E.g. Plenča, *Međunarodni odnosi Jugoslavije*, 52-61; Vilhar and Klun, *Narodnoosvobodilni boj Primorcev*, 120-122; Bajc, *Iz nevidnega na plan*, 68-70.

10 Bajc, *Iz nevidnega na plan*, 72, 103-106, 168, 173, 194.

there was the problem of opposing wishes of the other adversaries of the Axis Powers; in the case of the Yugoslav-Italian border, Italian anti-Fascist circles strove to keep the border unchanged, or to have it changed only slightly.

During this time, a search for suitable candidates to send to occupied Yugoslavia took place, which was anything but easy. The SOE and the ISLD also had problems with recruitment[11], which became even more complicated when it came to commandos, even though in the fall of 1942 it seemed that they could still recruit some suitable individuals. The reviewed documentation of the British Special Operations Administration also provides information that regarding operations in Yugoslavia, great hopes were placed on the possibility of finding suitable candidates in Canada in the autumn of 1942. There was even talk of 250 volunteers, who were mainly of Croatian origin, with some Slovenes and Serbs among them. From the selected volunteers, the top 100 would be chosen and form a special group of commandos. They would be stationed in the Middle East, where they would be trained. In November 1942, it was predicted that the group of one hundred would be ready within a year. The commandos would then probably be parachuted in. They would only carry out actions in the field to a limited extent, since they would primarily have to provide assistance to resistance groups. Given the course of events, these predictions proved too optimistic. Soon, the SOE leadership in Cairo began to consider not integrating these volunteers into the commandos, but rather forming individual groups of them, so they would be available for SOE missions. In early December, the SOE headquarters in London also warned about the communist orientation of the volunteers from Canada, which would deem them unsuitable for special operations.[12]

YUGOSLAV ROYAL GUARD BATTALION, AND GATHERING THE YUGOSLAVS FOR BRITISH COMMANDOS AND SPECIAL OPERATIONS SERVICES

When considering the SOE memorandum from June 1941, it is clear that the Slovene Italians it refers to were in fact Slovenes from Primorska and Croats from Istria and Dalmatia, who were first forcibly mobilised into the Italian Army and then captured by the British at the end of 1940. Even before the occupation of Yugoslavia in April 1941, they began to be separated from other Italian prisoners, and their actual operation began to develop in the summer. These were the members of the Yugoslav Royal Guard Battalion.

As it has already been discussed in detail several times[13] – and partly contrary to what is written in books about the Overseas Brigades – the Guard Battalion was formed in Egypt in June 1941, when the Yugoslav government-in-exile began to recruit the first volunteers with the help of the Yugoslav Committee from Italy. The unit was mainly made

11 Ibid., 174-186.

12 TNA HS 5/877, D/HH2 [one of SOE leaders for the Balkans, William S. Bailey] to D/H 18 [leader of the SOE Yugoslav Section in Kairo, Basil Davidson] (102/29): *Jugoslav Recruits in Canada*, November 17, 1942; D/H 18 to DSO(b) [SOE leaders/administration in Kairo for the Balkans and part of the middle East] (102/29/18/62), November 17, 1942; TNA HS 5/877, DSO(b) to b.1. [SOE Yugoslav Section] (B/MDH/1/341), November 23, 1942; TNA HS 7/240, War Diary: Americas, July 1942-June 1944, 58.

13 Especially Bajc, *Iz nevidnega na plan*, 75-106, 197-215; Torkar, "Slovenci in Jugoslovanski," 151-157; Bajc, "Jugoslovanski odbor iz Italije."

up of people from Primorska and Istrian Croats, who were former Italian soldiers and, as prisoners of war, began to join the ranks of the battalion voluntarily. The committee played an important role in the recruitment, especially Rudolf, who ensured the maintenance of high morale and a good atmosphere among the members of the unit. Within the framework of the most important objective set by the committee, which was to change the border with Italy in favour of Yugoslavia, Rudolf and his colleagues (especially Chairman of the committee Čok) planned to form effective military units in emigration, so that they could be deployed to conquer the borders of Primorska and Istria when the time was right.

The unit, which numbered 850-1,000 well-trained soldiers at its largest (thanks to the Yugoslav Committee from Italy, a total of 4,500-5,000 volunteers were collected from various camps during the war), operated as part of the British Armed Forces in the Middle East throughout its existence. The leadership of the latter demanded from the Yugoslav government-in-exile that the soldiers of the Guard Battalion have no restrictions in fighting against any enemy, which the government-in-exile and the battalion leadership opposed. Above all, the use of volunteers against the Italian Army was controversial and very risky; indeed, if any of them were captured, they could easily be accused of desertion by the Italian side, which would be very dangerous for their relatives back home. The British eventually allowed these restrictions, so the Guard Battalion did not participate in military conflict, except in March 1942, when they fought as part of the British Army in Libya. Their task was therefore mainly focused on protection. In April 1942, the battalion operated in the Halfaya Pass area, Mersa Matruh, and then joined the British 9th Army in Palestine, guarding the Haifa refineries. In July 1942, monotonous military life commenced there for many boys eager for action. Word soon began to spread among the soldiers that they could volunteer to go on British secret service missions or join the British commandos as volunteers.

It is fair to say that the battalion worked cohesively and was well trained, especially when it was commanded by Slovenian Lieutenant Colonel Milan Prosen. In mid-1943, Colonel Franc Stropnik took over the command, but he was no longer able to calm the tension within the unit, as the situation had changed significantly. In late 1943 and early 1944, the Guard Battalion began to fall apart, as its soldiers were losing trust in the Chetnik leader Dragoljub 'Draža' Mihailović and the propaganda of the Yugoslav government-in-exile, and tended to support Tito's Partisans instead. The latter were being increasingly portrayed by the media at the time as the only effective resistance movement in Yugoslavia. Large part of the Guard Battalion eventually joined the Overseas Brigades. During the difficult task of gathering volunteers in numerous African camps (with some colleagues of the committee also collecting them elsewhere), the ISLD and the SOE came to Rudolph's aid many times, since they were interested in training the most capable volunteers for the missions. And this was what indeed happened.

There were several differences between the Yugoslav members of the ISLD and SOE, and the Yugoslav commandos. Both British services had been recruiting Yugoslav candidates long before this occurred with the commandos. The SOE began to gather volunteers from the Yugoslav Royal Guard Battalion as early as December 1941 in the Egyptian city of Agami near Alexandria, and sent them on missions to occupied Yugoslavia in 1943-1944.[14]

14 Bajc, *Iz nevidnega na plan*, 187, 225-228.

With regard to the recruitment of Yugoslav commandos, some publications on the Overseas Brigades state that the British began their search for candidates for the navy, aviation and commandos among the Yugoslavs in the Guard Battalion.[15] In June and July 1942, a small group of them volunteered to join the commandos.[16] There is no additional information about this first group.

Judging by SOE documentation, Yugoslav commandos were discussed again in the Special Operations Administration in March 1943, when British and Yugoslav representatives agreed that twenty of the best Italian-speaking soldiers from the Guard Battalion would be selected. A group of commandos would fight behind enemy lines in Tunisia under the command of an Italian-speaking British officer. At first they would wear British uniforms, which they would later swap for Italian ones to make it easier to sneak into enemy lines.[17] In mid-1943, another group of Yugoslav commandos was gathered. The selective selection procedures began on 26 May. Out of 146 members of the Guard Battalion who applied, 25 candidates were accepted, specifically 23 Slovenians and 2 Croats. The group was assigned to No. 10 Inter-Allied Commando and commanded by the Guard Battalion's Second Lieutenants Ivan Tripković from Port Said and Ivan Keraven (sometimes written Kerevan), a theology student from Lika.[18]

When selecting suitable candidates for the commandos, particular attention was paid to the fact that candidates were young, in excellent physical condition, intelligent, self-sufficient, mentally stable, good swimmers, and had a good immune system. First, candidates were interviewed or interrogated, then British officers checked their mental and physical fitness, where they predominantly looked for perseverance, endurance and courage. The fundamental principle that guided the operation of the commandos was "leadership rather than command", which allowed for each group of commandos to function as a unit.

In general, it can be said that in terms of motivation for joining an elite unit – which is one of key prerequisites for such types of combat groups – the following was the most important: the soldiers of the Guard Battalion signed up primarily because of their desire to travel to Europe as soon as possible in order to fight, together with the Allies, for the liberation of Yugoslavia and Europe.[19]

On 30 June 1943, the selected volunteers boarded a ship at Suez, which took them towards the south of the African continent to Capetown, where they had a few days' rest. From there they sailed north in the direction of the west coast of Africa to Dakar, where they had a short stop, and then further north, where they circled Ireland and landed in Liverpool on 16 August 1943.[20] From there they were sent to a commando training centre

---

15 Vilhar and Klun, *Primorci in Istrani*, 98.

16 Vilhar and Klun, *Prva in druga prekomorska brigada*, 174; Vilhar and Klun, *Narodnoosvobodilni boj Primorcev*, 196; Klun, *Iz Afrike v narodnoosvobodilno*, 205.

17 Klun, *Prekomorci*, 642; cf. Klun, *Domovina je ena*, 72; Perat, *Odločitev v puščavi*, 186.

18 Klun, *Iz Afrike v narodnoosvobodilno*, 206-208; 837-838; Orel, "Slovenski komandosi."; cf. Drešček, *Janko Drešček*.

19 Vilhar and Klun, *Narodnoosvobodilni boj Primorcev*, 196; Klun, *Iz Afrike v narodnoosvobodilno*, 205-208; Orel, "Slovenski komandosi."; Drešček, *Janko Drešček*; Van der Bijl, *Commandos in Exile*, 55; Dear, *Ten Commando*, 16.

20 Drešček, *Janko Drešček*; cf. Vilhar and Klun, *Narodnoosvobodilni boj Primorcev*, 196-197; Klun, *Iz Afrike v narodnoosvobodilno*, 207-208.

in Eastbourne, Sussex, 120 kilometres south of London.

The Yugoslavs represented one of the nationalities within No. 10 Inter-Allied Commando, and were distinguished by the Yugoslav Commando insignia on their uniforms. Formally, as Yugoslavs in No. 10 Inter-Allied Commando, they were still members of the Royal Yugoslav Army in the Middle East. The training lasted 3-4 months, depending on the group, with British and Belgian instructors. During the training, the greatest focus was given to martial arts, the handling and shooting of weapons, training with cold weapons, orientation and map reading, masking, reconnaissance, sabotage, climbing, and gaining physical fitness. Part of the demanding training was the "Harlequin" military exercise, which began on 1 September 1943. The commandos of French, Dutch, Norwegian, Yugoslav and "mixed" units were testing the competence of landing on the European continent in the vicinity of Dover, England. The exercise was assessed as successful, and the fighting spirit of all the members of the commandos was especially praised. Part of the soldiers of No. 7 Yugoslav Troop left the training in Eastbourne on 8 February, and the rest on 17 February 1944. However, there is no confirmation that all the Yugoslav commandos completed the training.[21]

The physical training of Yugoslav (and other) commandos was similar to the SOE and ISLD's demanding courses and selection.[22] The essential difference was that the intelligence services wanted to specially train at least a few Yugoslav paratroopers, who could manage extremely important communication skills in the field, i.e. transmitting/receiving with wireless radio transmitters/receivers (the Wireless Telegraph – W/T).

With the training completed, the Yugoslav commando troop was divided into two parts: the group under the command of Second Lieutenant Tripković, and the group commanded by Second Lieutenant Keraven. Tripković's group went to Italy, and Keraven's was sent to Achnacarry, Scotland, and then to Eastbourne for additional training, probably due to the insufficient competence of some members. On 6 November 1943, 15 boys from Tripković's group, together with a Belgian company, came from Eastbourne to Algiers, where they were assigned to No. 2 Special Service (SS) Brigade, commanded by Brigadier Tom Churchill. After that, the "mixed" unit (X Troop) and parts of the Belgian and Polish units of No. 10 Inter-Allied Commando were also included in the Brigade.[23]

On 23 November 1943, the units of No. 10 Inter-Allied Commando boarded a ship bound for Italy and arrived in Taranto, which was already in Anglo-American hands. The commandos took part in battles along the banks of the rivers Garigliano and Sangro, in the vicinity of Montecassino and Anzio, in the mountainous parts of today's region of Molise, near the city of Cesena in central Italy, and elsewhere. There is a fair bit of data available on the involvement of several commando groups in Italy (mainly the SAS)[24], but less information about the activities of No. 7 Troop at the time.

In mid-January 1944, the command of No. 10 Inter-Allied Commando gathered two commando groups of 65 men, one British and one Yugoslav, in the town of Molfetta. On 12

---

21 TNA DEFE 2/977, No. 3 Troop, No. 10 Commando: *A Brief History*, [n.d.], 5, 7. On the strenuous training: cf. Klun, 1978, 208; TNA DEFE 2/977, No. 10 (Inter Allied) Commando, [n.d.], 6.

22 Bajc, *Iz nevidnega na plan*, 230, 235, 237-238.

23 TNA WO 218/70, H.Q., S.S. Group, Home Forces, [n.d.].

24 Especially Fowler, *The Secret War in Italy*; cf. Carver, 2002; Mortimer, *Stirling's Men.*

February 1944, they were sent to the island of Vis[25], one of the most important Allied bases in the Adriatic Sea.

BRITISH COMMANDOS IN THE SOUTH DALMATIAN ISLANDS

The strategic importance of Vis, the Adriatic Sea and the entire Yugoslavia increased after the disembarkation of the Anglo-American Allied forces in southern Italy in July 1943. Winston Churchill wanted the British mission, which was sent to Tito in late-May 1943 and led by SOE Captain William Deakin, to also assume a political rather than just a military character. For this reason, the British Prime Minister sent an experienced pre-war diplomat in Moscow, Brigadier Fitzroy Maclean, to Yugoslavia in mid-September. As he described in detail in his memoirs, first published in 1949, Maclean joined the ranks of the SAS commandos at the beginning of the war, and fought in Africa and the Middle East.[26] He then became the chief Allied representative at Tito's Supreme Headquarters in Yugoslavia, which was a de facto recognition of the Partisan movement. Indeed, his influence over the British aid to Tito was even greater than Deakin's.[27]

In only two days since his arrival he formed the impression that the Partisans were a much more significant force than he had previously imagined. Even though some British leaders remained sceptical of his reports for at least a while, the new British direction soon prevailed. The British decided in favour of Tito mainly on the basis of the Ultra, i.e. deciphered intercepted German messages. Based on these, it was becoming increasingly obvious that the Partisans were more effective, while the Chetniks were more passive and also collaborated ever more openly with the occupiers, first the Italians and then the Germans (even though the latter initially considered Mihailović an enemy as well).[28]

At the end of that year, military support for Tito was additionally confirmed and strengthened within the framework of the anti-Hitler coalition, specifically at the conference in Tehran on 28 November-1 December 1943. Tito's movement was recognised by the 'Big Three' and promised as much help as possible.[29]

In preparation and anticipation of these decisions, Churchill established two projects within his Mediterranean plans in the autumn of 1943. The first envisaged the advance of Anglo-American forces in Italy and, with the help of Yugoslav guerrillas, an amphibious landing with the aim of seizing the Dalmatian ports. The second project was the occupation of the Dodecanese islands, and the bombing of important German oil fields in Ploesti, in order to bring Turkey into the war. In short: his plan was to invade the

25 Vilhar and Klun, *Prva in druga prekomorska brigada*, 174; Klun, *Iz Afrike v narodnoosvobodilno*, 208-209; Messenger, *Commandos*, 332.

26 Maclean, *Eastern Approaches*, 190-278.

27 E.g. Hinsley et al., *British Intelligence*, 149, 153, 155, 160; Hinsley, *British Intelligence*, 358-359; Williams, *Parachutes*, 182-185; Pirjevec, *Tito in tovariši*, 144-145; Cooper, *Cairo in the War*, 282-283.

28 Hinsley et al., *British Intelligence*, 138-142, 146-147, 150, 154-155, 159-160; Hinsley, *British Intelligence*, 357-359, 361; cf. Bennett, *Behind the Battle*, 225-229, 299-301; Cripps, "Mihailović or Tito?"; Pirjevec, *Tito in tovariši*, 135-136, 156; Catherwood, *Churchill and Tito*.

29 E.g. Hinsley et al., *British Intelligence*, 156; Hinsley, *British Intelligence*, 359; Stafford, *Churchill and Secret Service*, 317; Stafford, *Roosevelt and Churchill*, 272; Williams, *Parachutes*, 187; Pirjevec, *Tito in tovariši*, 145; Buchanan, *American Grand Strategy*, 244.

Balkans from its southernmost point. On 9 September 1943, the Chief of Staff of the US Army, General George Marshall, disapproved of the British plan to land in Dalmatia and advance through Yugoslavia to Austria, since he believed it would lead to the destruction of the Allied units. A meeting between British and American generals in the White House, and with Churchill and American President Roosevelt, decided that the Anglo-American advance through Italy should be developed, and the Balkan front only if the fighting in Italy developed favourably and a good opportunity presented itself. In short, the leading Anglo-Americans opposed Churchill's plans for a potential landing in the Balkans, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Field Marshal Harold Alexander supported the Allied advance along the Apennine Peninsula.[30]

Regardless of all this, it was important for the macro plans of the Allies – in the light of the preparations for crucial landings which took place in Normandy in June 1944 – to keep as many German divisions as possible in the Balkans, especially in Yugoslavia (as well as Greece), and simultaneously give the impression of a potential landing on the Dalmatian or Istrian coast, which would further deceive the enemy; and this was what indeed happened.[31] In addition to the reinforcements of the Partisans, the operations of the commandos represented one of the concrete forms of the Anglo-American engagement in occupied Yugoslavia.

Churchill counted on this, and on 5 February 1944 informed Tito that he had already ordered the Supreme Allied Commander Mediterranean, General Maitland Henry Wilson, to immediately establish amphibious commando units. With air and naval support and the help of the Partisans, these would attack German outposts along the Dalmatian coast. The objective was to ensure maritime communications so that tanks and heavy weapons could be sent across the Adriatic. On 13 February, Churchill sent Tito a missive concerning amphibious British forces which were to help the Partisans liberate certain Dalmatian islands. And his instructions to Wilson demanded an immediate formation of amphibious commando units which would have air and naval support. These units would help the Partisans in destroying the German *118th Jäger Division* crews on the Dalmatian islands and German ships sailing the Adriatic.[32]

Churchill's plans were probably not to Tito's liking, but he had to relent at least a bit. It was paramount to prevent the Germans from occupying Vis, in addition to certain Dalmatian islands.[33] So at the beginning of 1944, two detachments of British commandos disembarked on Vis. The first on the island were the soldiers of No. 2 Commando, who arrived on 16 January 1944. On 28 February, they were followed by the soldiers of No. 43 Royal Marines Commando, and on 5 May by the soldiers of No. 40 Royal Marines Commando. They were soon joined by other British units. All units were commanded by the 2nd Special Operations Brigade Commander, Brigadier General Tom Churchill. The British also assembled a strong crew of torpedo motor boats on Vis, which were tasked with

30 Barker, "L'opzione istriana," 10-11; Biber, "Novi britanski dokumenti o Titu," 324; Van der Bijl, *Commandos in Exile*, 55, 61; see also: Stafford, *Roosevelt and Churchill*, 243-245; Roberts, *Masters and Commanders*, 458-459; Buchanan, *American Grand Strategy*, 243-245.

31 E.g. Barker, "L'opzione istriana," 8-15; Bennett, *Behind the Battle*, 101; Friš and Bajc, "Iz Istre v Avstrijo?".

32 Van der Bijl, *Commandos in Exile*, 68; Torkar, *Prikriti odpor*, 131.

33 Hinsley et al., *British Intelligence*, 158, 167; Hinsley, *British Intelligence*, 363.

destroying German supply lines in the Adriatic.[34]

In March 1944, approximately 1,000 British soldiers from the following units operated on Vis: No. 2 Commando, No. 43 Royal Marines Commando, No. 40 Royal Marines Commando, parts of the 2nd Special Operations Brigade, units of the British Highland Light Infantry, units of the British Royal Artillery Ack Ack Battery 75mm, units of the British 111th Field Regiment, and units of the Support Regiment. They were joined by the Belgian and part of the Yugoslav troops of No. 10 Inter-Allied Commando, and the Operational Groups of the American OSS. Approximately 1,000 Partisans were also stationed on the island; they were divided into three brigades and commanded by Colonel Milić and Josip Černi.[35]

Together with the Partisans and American Operational Groups, the British commandos defended the island of Vis against German attacks, and, in coordination with the Partisans, carried out actions, patrols and diversions against German garrisons on the Dalmatian islands. Archival sources contain numerous reports and analyses of joint Anglo-American and Partisan actions on the Dalmatian islands, such as the attacks on Šolta on 18 March and 10 May 1944, the attacks on Brač on 1 June and 9 August 1944, the attacks on Hvar in late-March and on 14 September 1944, the attack on Mljet on 22 May 1944, and the reports of attacks on Korčula and Pelješac. Tripković's group of No. 7 Yugoslav Troop was stationed on the western side of Vis, in Poštna ulica of the fishing village of Komiža. Their tasks were identical to the tasks of all other units on Vis, i.e. the defence of the island and attacks on German crews on the southern Dalmatian islands. Tripković's group successfully carried out the action of destroying part of the German crew on the island of Hvar, where the Germans had approximately 200 soldiers.[36]

It was not long before the British commanders on Vis sensed that political disputes were arising within the Yugoslav commando troop, especially between Commander Tripković and the soldiers, who were Slovenes and Croats. The latter – as was the case for many others who later joined the Overseas Brigades – wanted to join the Partisans, while Tripković and Keraven remained loyal to King Peter II and the Chetniks. Tripković wanted to stay under the British command, so due to the growing association of his soldiers with the Partisans and the desire to join their ranks, he demanded that the group be transferred back to Italy.

Prior to this, Keraven's group of ten soldiers finished their training on 21 October 1943, and were sent to Glasgow on 17 February1944. From there they were supposed to travel to one of the European battlefields, most likely the Adriatic or Vis. The group ultimately never reached Vis, since Tripković prevented them from doing so. All 25 Slovenian (and Croatian) commandos then had to travel to Italy. The soldiers opposed this, and a physical confrontation with Tripković arose; he allegedly died as a result, while Keraven fled. The members of the Yugoslav Troop were transferred to Molfetta in southern Italy, where they were in partial detention with their movement restricted and their weapons confiscated.

---

34 Jenkins, *Commando Subaltern at War*, 48.

35 Ibid., 44-48, 52-53; Messenger, *Commandos*, 332-333.

36 TNA ADM 1/29610, Hudspith John Charles Demoutier, 14 April 1944; NARA, RG 226, E 144, B 68, F 598, *Report No. 16*, 1 April 1944; Ibid., F 591, *Report on Operation Flounced*, June 13, 1944; *Operation against Mljet*, May 23, 1944.

The command of No. 10 Inter-Allied Commando also opposed the soldiers' joining the Partisans, and wanted to send them from Italy back to the Yugoslav Royal Guard Battalion. Lieutenant J. Monahan noted at the time that the Yugoslav commandos were politically divided and that those who wanted to join the Partisans were deserters in the eyes of Great Britain. For this reason, British General M.J. Sturges disbanded the Yugoslav commando troop on 15 April 1944. Due to their resistance, and active support to Tito's Partisans, the soldiers were eventually sent to a penal camp in Tunis. With the help of a Partisan military mission, they came to southern Italy again in June, this time to Gravina, where they joined the Partisan ranks, with the exception of seven soldiers.[37]

Towards the end of June 1944, a group of 18 soldiers who were previously part of the commandos, arrived at the airport in Brindisi. They were incorporated into a group which numbered nearly 150 men and carried material aid to the Partisans with British transport aircraft. (Later it became part of the 4th Overseas Brigade, which was officially established on 7 September 1944, and was primarily responsible for the logistics of sending aid.) They were also specially trained for such tasks. They made their first flights on 20 June and continued until the end of the war.[38] As mentioned, seven Slovenian commandos did not join the Partisan movement. Literature on the subject only contains information that six of them remained in the ranks of the British commandos[39], but there is no information about the seventh commando.

After the war, on 1 November 1945, the British definitively disbanded No. 10 Inter-Allied Commando, and, shortly after, other commandos as well. However, this did not mean that the commando tradition was broken; quite the opposite: commandos were preserved and developed within the British formation, and within many other armed forces as well, specifically as Special Forces or Special Operations Forces.

CONCLUSION

For the needs of military operations in the Mediterranean and the Adriatic, the British formed No. 7 Yugoslav Troop of No.10 Inter-Allied Commando. They managed to recruit some Slovenian and Croatian volunteers from the members of the Yugoslav Royal Guard Battalion to supplement its personnel. In comparison with Slovenian paratroopers (the majority of whom also belonged to the Royal Guard Battalion), who were trained by the British special operations services, the SOE and the ISLD (or MI6), their path to commandos began later. Presumably, this was mainly due to the operational need of the British to initially send their special missions, which generally had to first establish contact with the resistance and, unlike the commandos, remained in the field longer. Training was otherwise similarly demanding, but a major difference was that the SOE and the ISLD mainly trained radio operators among the Slovenian paratroopers.

---

37 Vilhar and Klun, *Prva in druga prekomorska brigada*, 174-176; Vilhar and Klun, *Narodnoosvobodilni boj Primorcev*, 198-200; Klun, *Iz Afrike v narodnoosvobodilno*, 209-211; Van der Bijl, *Commandos in Exile*, 69; Dear, *Ten Commando*, 106; Drešček, *Janko Drešček*.

38 Klun, *Prekomorci*, 277-278; Klun, *Domovina je ena*, 241-242.

39 Vilhar and Klun, *Prva in druga prekomorska brigada*, 176; Klun, *Iz Afrike v narodnoosvobodilno*, 211.

Unfortunately, primary sources and publications (mainly about the Overseas Brigades) do not provide enough information about the exact number of Yugoslav commandos. It can be concluded that out of all the selected and trained commandos, at least 23 Slovenes and 2 Croats were to be sent into battle in two separate groups: 15 men in Tripković's and 10 in Keraven's (although some publications state that the latter numbered 12). The first group only fought on the Dalmatian islands at the beginning of 1944, while the second did not even do that. Problems soon arose because the majority wanted to join the Partisans and cooperate with them in the liberation of Yugoslavia. It could be said that as far as the British were concerned, No. 7 Yugoslav Troop did not fully meet their expectations. Due to these problems, the Slovenian and Croatian commandos were withdrawn from Yugoslavia, and their troop was disbanded on 15 April 1944. The British authorities transferred them, but in the end, eighteen commandos managed to be included in the sending of aid to the Partisans starting in June 1944. From September on, they belonged to the 4th Overseas Brigade, which provided supplies to the resistance movement in Yugoslavia. There is a lack of information about the fate of seven commandos. The literature concerning the Overseas Brigades only offers the fact that six of them continued on as commandos in other British units.

ARCHIVAL SOURCES

National Archives and Records Administration (NARA - College Park, MD)
Record Group 226: Office of Strategic Services (RG 226).

The National Archives (TNA - London)
Records of the Admirality, Navy, Royal Marines, and Coast guard, 1943-1944 (ADM 1).
War Cabinet and Cabinet: Chiefs of Staff Committee: Memoranda, 1939-1946 (CAB 80).
Cabinet Office: Minister of Defence Secretariat: Records, 1938-1947 (CAB 120).
Records of the Ministry of Defence: Combined Operations Headquarters, and Ministry of Defence Combined Operations Headquarters later Amphibious Warfare Headquarters: Records, 1937-1963 (DEFE 2).
Special Operations Executive: Balkans: Registered Files, 1938-1972 (HS 5).
Special Operations Executive: Histories and War Diaries: Registered Files, 1939-1988 (HS 7).
War Office: Special Services War Diaries, Second World War, 1940-1952 (WO 218).

REFERENCES

Adamič, L. *Izbrana pisma Louisa Adamiča. Ob tridesetletnici smrti*, edited by H.A. Christian. Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1981.

Bajc, G. *Iz nevidnega na plan. Slovenski primorski liberalni narodnjakiv emigraciji med drugo svetovno vojno in ozadje britanskih misij v Sloveniji.* Koper: Založba Annales, 2002.

Bajc, G. "Jugoslovanski odbor iz Italije, vojska v emigraciji in kraljevi gardni bataljon." In *Ivan Rudolf. Ob 120-letnici rojstva*, edited by I. Uršič, 91-117. Ljubljana: Muzej novejše zgodovine Slovenije, 2018.

Bajc, G., and B. Torkar. *Ivan Rudolf in padalci / Ivan Rudolf e i paracadutisti / Ivan Rudolf and parachutists.* Maribor: Vojaški muzej Slovenske vojske, 2009.

Barker, E. "L'opzione istriana: obiettivi politici e militari della Gran Bretagnain Adriatico (1943-1944)." *Qualestoria* 10, no. 1 (1982): 3-44.

Bennett, R. *Behind the Battle. Intelligence in the War with Germany, 1939-1945.* New and enlarged edition. London: Pimlico, 1999.

Biber, D., ed., *Tito-Churchill: strogo tajno.* Zagreb: Globus, 1981.

Biber, D. "Novi britanski dokumenti o Titu." *Borec* 36, no. 5 (1983), 321-335.

Bobnar, S. et al., ed. *Prekomorci. Oris zgodovine prekomorskih brigad in drugih prekomorskih enot* NOVJ. Ljubljana: Osrednji odbor za proslavo preko- morskih brigad in drugih prekomorskih enot v NOVJ, 1965.

Buchanan, A. *American Grand Strategy in the Mediterranean during World War II.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Catherwood, C. *Churchill and Tito. SOE, Bletchley Park and Supporting the Yugoslav Communists in World War II.* Barnsley: Frontline Books, 2017.

Cooper, A. *Cairo in the War 1939-1945.* London: John Murray, 2013.

Cripps, J. "Mihailović or Tito? How Codebreakers Helped Churcill Choose." In *The Bletchley Park Codebreakers,* edited by R. Erskine and M. Smith , 217-239. London: Biteback Publishing, 2011.

Davies, P. H. J. *MI6 and the Machinery of Spying.* London and Portland: Frank Cass, 2005.

Dear, I. *Ten Commando 1942-1945.* Barnsley South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Military, 2010.

Dreščček, J. *Janko Dreščček, 1925-2010, bivši komandos.* Oral testimony, collected by Ivo Leban, November 2004. A copy of the audio and video record is with the authors.

Hargreaves, A. L. *Special Operations in World War II. British and American Irregular Warfare.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013.

Hinsley, F. H. et al. *British Intelligence in the Second World War. Its Influence on Strategy and Operations.* Vol. 3, Part 1. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

Hinsley, F. H. *British Intelligence in the Second World War.* Abbridged Edition with revisions. London: HMSO, 1994.

Holmes, R., ed. *The Oxford Companion to Military History.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Foot, M. R. D. *SOE. Special Operations Executive 1940-1946.* London: Pimlico, 1999.

Fowler, W. *The Secret War in Italy. Special Forces, Partisans and Covert Operations 1943-1945.* Hersham, Surrey: Ian Allan Publishing, 2010.

Friš, D., and G. Bajc "Iz Istre v Avstrijo? Nekateri vidiki ameriških in britanskih obveščevalnih služb med drugo svetovno vojno." *Acta Histriae* 26, no. 1 (2018), 251-276.

Guštin, D. "Sodelovanje Slovencev v zavezniških vojskah ter NOV in POJ zunaj Slovenije." In *Slovenska novejša zgodovina. Od programa Zedinjena Slovenija do mednarodnega priznanja Republike Slovenije 1848-1992. Vol. 1,* edited by J. Fischer et al., 738-740 Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2005.

Jeffery, K. *MI6. The History of the Secret Intelligence Service, 1909-1949.* London [etc.]: Bloomsbury, 2010.

Jenkins, W. G. *Commando Subaltern at War: Royal Marine Operations in Yugoslavia and Italy, 1944-1945.* London: Greenhill Books, 1996.

Klun, A. *Prekomorci v narodnoosvobodilni vojni.* Koper: Partizanska knjiga, 1976.

Klun, A. *Iz Afrike v narodnoosvobodilno vojsko Jugoslavije*. Ljubljana: Partizanska knjiga, 1978.
Klun, A. *Domovina je ena. Prekomorci – borci NOVJ v Osvobodilni vojni jugoslovanskih narodov, na domačih in tujih tleh*. Ljubljana: Partizanska knjiga, 1986.
Klun, A., and V. Štimac, ed. *Boj pod Olimpom. Slovenci v NOB Makedonije, Grčije in Albanije 1941-1945*. Ljubljana, Koper, Borec: Lipa, 1984.
Kokalj Kočevar, M. "Prisilna mobilizacija Slovencev v nemško vojsko 1941-1945." In *Prekomorci. Ob 70-letnici prihoda prvih slovenskih prekomorskih pripadnikov NOVJ na jugoslovansko bojišče*, edited by I. Uršič, 31-36. Koper, Ljubljana: Pokrajinski arhiv, Muzej novejše zgodovine Slovenije, 2014.
Kokalj Kočevar, M. " Vračanje prisilno mobiliziranih v nemško vojsko." *Studia Historica Slovenica* 16, no. 2 (2016), 467-498.
Kokalj Kočevar, M. "Vermanšaft na Gorenjskem." *Studia Historica Slovenica* 16, no. 3 (2016), 677-709.
Kokalj Kočevar, M. *Mobiliziranci v nemško vojsko z Gorenjske v letih 1943-1945*. Ljubljana: Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino (2017).
Kosmač, M. "Življenje in strategije preživetja Primorcev v "posebnih bataljonih"." *Acta Histriae* 21, no. 1-2 (2013), 57-74.
Mackenzie, W.J.M. *The Secret History of SOE: The Special Operations Executive 1940-945*. London: St Ermin's Press, 2000.
Maclean, F. *Eastern Approaches*. London: Penguin, 1991.
Messenger, C. *Commandos: The Definitive History of Commando Operations in the Second World War*. London: William Collins, 2016.
Mlakar, B. *Domobranstvo na Primorskem (1943-1945)*. Ljubljana: Borec, 1982.
Mlakar, B. *Slovensko domobranstvo 1943-1945. Ustanovitev, organizacija, idejno ozadje*. Ljubljana: Slovenska matica, 2003.
Mortimer, G. *Stirling's Men. The Inside History of the SAS in World War II*.London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2004.
Orel, J. "Slovenski komandosi." *Mladika* 42, no. 2-3 (1998): 57-58.
Owen, D. L. *The Long Range Desert Group 1940-45: Providence Their Guide*. Barnsley South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Military, 2008.
Perat, J. *Odločitev v puščavi*. Koper: Lipa, 1980.
Perini, S. *Battaglioni speciali / Slav company / Posebni bataljoni 1940-1945*. Opčine: Trst, Slovensko kulturno društvo Tabor, Knjižnica Pinko Tomažič in tovariši, VZPI, 2007.
Pirjevec, J. *Tito in tovariši*. Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 2011.
Plenča, D. *Međunarodni odnosi Jugoslavije u toku drugog svjetskog rata*. Beograd: Institut društvenih nauka – Oddeljenje za istorijske nauke, 1962.
Repe, B. *S puško in knjigo. Narodnoosvobodilni boj slovenskega naroda 1941-1945*. Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 2015.
Richards, B. *Secret Flotillas. Volume II: Clandestine Sea Operations in the Western Mediterranean, North African and the Adriatic 1940-1944*. London, Portland: Whitehall History Publishing, Frank Cass, 2004.
Roberts, A. *Masters and Commanders. How Roosevelt, Churchill, Marshalland Alanbrooke Won the War in the West*. London, New York: Allen Lane, Penguin, 2008.
Stafford, D. *Churchill and Secret Service*. London: Abacus, 1997.

Stafford, D. *Roosevelt and Churchill: Men of Secrets*. London: Abacus, 2000.
Torkar, B. "The Role of the British Commandos and the Operative Groups of the American OSS in Supporting the Yugoslav Partisan Movement against the Axis Powers in the Yugoslavia from 1943 to 1945." In *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency: Irregular Warfare from 1800 to the Present*, edited by T. Brocades Zaalberg, J. Hoffenaar and A. Lemmers, 459-464. The Hague: Netherlands Institute of Military History, 2011.
Torkar, B. *Prikriti odpor. Ameriška obveščevalna služba na Slovenskem med drugo svetovno vojno*. Celovec: Mohorjeva, 2012.
Torkar, B. "Slovenci pod britansko zastavo." *Delo*, 7 June 2014, 16-17.
Torkar, B. "Slovenci in Jugoslovanski kraljevi gardni bataljon." *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 54, no. 1 (2014), 144-157.
Torkar, B. "Slovenski komandosi." *Gea* 26 (2016), 34-37.
Troha, N. "Slovenci in Hrvati v "slovanskih četah" na Sardiniji, Korziki in v južni Franciji (1944-1945)." *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 46, no. 1 (2006), 351-362.
Uršič, I., ed. *Prekomorci. Ob 70-letnici prihoda prvih slovenskih prekomor- skih pripadnikov NOVJ na jugoslovansko bojišče*. Koper, Ljubljana: Pokrajinski arhiv, Muzej novejše zgodovine Slovenije, 2014.
Uršič, I., ed. *Ivan Rudolf. Ob 120-letnici rojstva*. Ljubljana: Muzej novejše zgodovine Slovenije, 2018.
Van der Bijl, N. *Commandos in Exile: No. 10 (Inter-Allied) Commando 1942-1945*. Barnsley South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Military, 2008.
Vilhar, S., and A. Klun. *Prva in druga prekomorska brigada*. Nova Gorica: Knjižnica NOV in POS, 1967.
Vilhar, S., and A. Klun. *Narodnoosvobodilni boj Primorcev in Istranov v Afriki*. Ljubljana: Knjižnica NOV in POS, 1970.
Vilhar, S., and A. Klun. *Primorci in Istrani od pregnanstva do prekomorskihbrigad*. Ljubljana: Knjižnica NOV in POS, 1973.
[Wynter, H. W.] *Special Forces in the Desert War 1940-1943*. London: The National Archives, 2008.
Williams, H. *Parachutes, Patriots and Partisans. The Special Operations Executive and Yugoslavia, 1941-1945*. London: Hurst & Company, 2003.
Zidar, A. *Doživetja tigrovca partizana*. Koper, Trst: Lipa, Založništvo tržaškega tiska, 1987.

The Role of British Special Air Service Chaplains in the Second World War

Linda Parker

INTRODUCTION

The Special Air Service (SAS) of the British Army was formed in July 1941 by David Stirling. It was originally devised as a commando force operating behind enemy lines in North Africa but went to take part in missions in Sicily, Italy, occupied France and the Liberation of Europe.

This article will analyse the role of the army chaplains that served with the regiment in the Second World War, in France, Sicily and Italy and at the crossing of the Rhine. They served with and ministered to the men of the SAS in situations that were unique due to the novel methods and dangerous tactics employed by the SAS which called for a pastoral approach to men that was both sensitive and robust. To what extent were they regarded as essential to the operations in which they took part? To what extent was their role different from that of chaplains with mainstream army units?

After a disastrous first parachute drop-in support of Operation *Crusader* in November 1941, Major Stirling's teams achieved success in attacking enemy airfields in Libya, transported by the Long-Range Desert Group. Stirling had originally arrived in the Middle East as part of Lieutenant Colonel Bob Laycock's No 8 Commando, later called Layforce and built up a team of rugged individuals who developed great expertise in hit and run raids on enemy airfields. The motto of the SAS "who dares wins" is usually accredited to Stirling and has remained their incentive and ethos ever since. When Stirling was captured in January 1943 the unit was split into the Special Raiding Squadron under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Paddy Mayne and the Special Boat squadron under the command of Lieutenant Colonel George Jellico. The Special Raiding Squadron fought in the Allied invasions of Sicily and Italy and the Special Boat Squadron fought in the Aegean Islands and the Dodecanese. In 1944 the SAS Brigade was formed and fought in France in Operations *Houndsworth* and *Bulbasket*, Operation *Pegasus* in the Netherlands and on into Germany. In Operation *Bulbasket* 31 SAS men were captured and murdered in compliance with Hitler's commando order which had decreed in October 1942 and ordered that all Allied commandos were to be executed on capture without trial.[1]

Since the Second World War the SAS has specialised in operations and roles such as counter terrorism, hostage rescue, direct action and covert reconnaissance. Much of the information about the SAS is highly classified, and the unit is not commented on by either the British Government or the Ministry of Defence due to the secrecy and sensitivity of its operations. The Regular SAS regiment, SAS 22, has taken part in wars and emergencies In Malaya, Oman and Northern Ireland, in the Soviet Afghan war, the Falklands, Bosnia and Kosovo, the Gulf War and as part of the coalition in Afghanistan. The reserve regiments, SAS 21 and SAS 23, were prepared during the Cold War to be stay at home troops and provide resistance to a Warsaw Pact invasion of the United Kingdom. In recent years they have been deployed in Helmand supporting and training the Afghan police and in intelligence gathering.

Probably the operation which has attracted most public attention is the storming of the Iranian Embassy in London by the SAS in May 1980 when a week long siege in which

1 Asher, *The Regiment*, 252.

26 people were held hostage was brought to a close by direct SAS action, Operation *Nimrod*. The storming of the embassy was seen on live television and the coverage ensured that the SAS were acknowledged as world leaders in special operations. According to an enthusiastic BBC reporter: "The storming of the Iranian embassy made the SAS a brand name for military excellence."[2]

ARMY CHAPLAINCY

In order to examine in more detail the role of army chaplaincy with the SAS in the Second World War it is necessary to look at the background of the British Royal Army Chaplains' Department and the role of the chaplains in the Second World War. In 1919 the Chaplains Department of the British Army received the prefix 'Royal', given to it in recognition of the work it had done in the Great War, described by the king as "splendid work".[3] It became the Royal Army Chaplains Department (RAChD), and on 23 February 2019 the department gathered for a special service at the Guards Chapel, Wellington Barracks to mark the centenary of this memorable event. Paul Mason, Roman Catholic Bishop of the Forces, gave an address at the service. He talked about the sacrificial role of the army chaplain throughout the Department's history: "Pray for all those currently in service, that they will centre their lives on prayer, receive the gift of hope to inspire a positive ministry and work to engage professionally in today's army in the service of God, Queen and country."[4]

The Great War 1914-1818 had been a steep learning curve for the chaplains. Almost four-and-a-half thousand chaplains were recruited in the First World War, with 179 losing their lives on active service. Of those, three received the Victoria Cross, 67 the Distinguished Service Order and 449 the Military Cross. It is generally accepted that during the war, chaplains had found a role that went beyond both the purely material and purely spiritual, and which involved them in a variety of roles, from base camps to field dressing stations.

By the Second World War, the role of the Army chaplain had developed greatly since the Great War and their place in combat positions rather than behind the lines was not questioned. General Montgomery famously said: "I would sooner think of going into battle without my artillery as without my chaplains."[5] Their training had become much more sophisticated, including map reading, trauma care and vehicle maintenance as well as guides to spiritual and pastoral work. Chaplains were in the vanguard of the airborne forces, training with the paratroopers from the inception of the airborne regiment. They landed with the airborne forces in North Africa, Sicily, Arnhem, D-Day and the Rhine Crossing. There is no doubt that by 1944, Army chaplains had a very real function and were held in high regard in the eyes of military commanders. This chapter will examine how the actions of the chaplains who served with the SAS were to further enhance the reputation of the Royal Army Chaplains Department.

---

2 Ibid., 20.
3 Army order no. 93, 1919.
4 https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/news-and-events/news/2019/.
5 Hamilton, *Monty the Field Marshal*, 44.

CHAPLAIN IN THE SAS

Padre Ronald Lunt arrived in the Middle East in February 1941 as chaplain to No. 7 Commando, which was brigaded with David Stirling's commandos, and trained with them. He remembered doing "a lot of amphibious training" and embarking on several abortive missions in 1943. At this point Stirling asked for Lunt to be posted as chaplain to the SAS unit that he had formed. Lunt remembered: "He secured for me a posting in his unit which was training near Acre."[6] He was thrilled with the turn of events. He recalled that as Mayne's squadron was training to operate on land, rather than on small seaborne missions in which there was no room for a padre, he was allowed to stay with Mayne and his men. At this early stage Stirling obviously realised the advantages in having a padre close at hand.

Lunt accompanied the SAS to Acre in Syria, where they completed training in assault by landing craft, parachute and ski. Preparing for Operation *Husky*, the Allied invasion of Sicily in July 1943, Mayne decided that the SAS would go in by sea. They sailed in the MV *Ulster Monarch* and went in on assault landing craft at 01:00 a.m. on 10 July. Their objective was to capture and destroy the searchlights and guns at Capo Murro de Porco. The cliffs overlooked the main landing grounds to be used by the British forces, and if the guns were not silenced the invasion fleet would come under heavy fire as they approached. A wind had sprung up and the sea was very rough. Lunt was glad to get ashore as he felt very sick, and several soldiers had been sick into his helmet. The attack was a complete surprise, and the men quickly scaled their bamboo ladders, Lunt landed clutching a Thomas splint, medical supplies and the Reserved Sacrament, reflecting the varied roles assumed by chaplains in battle, to look after the wounded and comfort the dying. The padre's role on operations was usually to move on the opposite wing to the medical officer. At 5:20 a.m. Mayne fired a green Very pistol to announce the success of the attack on the batteries. Their destruction allowed the safe passage of the invasion fleet. Over 500 prisoners were taken.

Two days later the *Ulster Monarch* took them in to clear the port of Augusta, supported by fire from two Royal Navy destroyers. Intelligence reports suggested that the town had been evacuated, but the high ground that overlooked Augusta was still occupied by the enemy. As the landing craft approached the shore, one of the men remembered: "We were singing and shouting as we came in and the padre [Ronald Lunt] was with us. He told us to shut up but we were all happy go lucky and thought 'these Italians are going to be easy'."[7] Upon landing the unit came under heavy fire from the German guns above the town but succeeded in securing Augusta. Their success in this was celebrated, according to Ben Macintyre in his history of the SAS, by "a spontaneous spectacular and extremely boisterous looting party".[8] Although accounts of this are missing from Lunt's account, one of the men, Deakins, remembered Lunt "stockpiling bottles of wine presumably, as one wag commented, 'for communion'".[9]

Lunt, in a post-war account, explained the unique aspects of being a padre to the SAS: "The SAS were an irregular force and proud of it. The commanders throughout gave

6 RAChD archives, Lunt, Letters and papers.
7 Mortimer, *Stirling's Men*, 121.
8 Macintyre, *SAS*, 198.
9 Ibid.

to the padre their greatest friendship and support. Where the SAS went, he went too. There was never any question of having to ask special permission from Cairo to go on parachute training, or to accompany one's parish on operations."[10] Lunt felt that as the SAS operated in small parties, it was easier to get to know individuals well. He felt sometimes that he was regarded as an odd job man but relished the opportunities this gave him to share in the life of the unit and get closer to the men. In a post-war letter to Paul Abram, he considered: "I was, I admit always a very amateur airborne soldier, a pretty amateur chaplain, prepared to fill in a small community any gap that needed filling." He immediately proved this a too-modest assessment by admitting that one of the 'odd jobs' he was asked to do was "being sent forward by the brigadier to negotiate the surrender of a Sicilian Village". He kept up the Padre's Hours and regular services, although very rarely was there a church parade. He came to realise that in the unusual and challenging situations the men were in, it was necessary to minister to their religious needs in varied ways and with more individual care. He found that the members of the SAS were "especially responsive to spiritual things if they were put before them in a challenging way".[11]

When training in Syria, and in Sicily after the landings, Lunt described how they became hopeful that some planned operation was going to materialise, only to be cancelled at the last moment. He deemed it fortunate that much of the time he was out of contact with any divisional organisation of chaplains, even the Deputy Chaplain did not know till afterward where one had been. This aspect must have enhanced his bonding with the unit and his sense of loyalty to the SAS. On 4th September 243 men of the Special Raiding Squadron landed at Bagnara on the toe of Italy to secure the port, prevent its demolition and hold it until the main Allied force arrived. Lunt was then involved in the next stage of the war in Italy over the Apennines to Bari.

The last action he saw in Italy consisted in the taking of Termoli on the Adriatic coast, Operation *Devon*, which developed into a bitter struggle with German troops to hold it after it had been taken. Attempts to retake the town by the 16th *Panzer Division* resulted in heavy casualties. Lunt was reported as slapping the face of a man who was in hysterics, reassuring him that he was not going to die. The Special Raiding Squadron, with a strength of 207 all ranks, lost 21 killed, 24 wounded and 23 missing in this action. Shelling had resulted in horrendous injuries and deaths, with human remains scattered about: "Lunt wrapped each remains in a blanket." The role of chaplains to perform such distressing tasks to protect the morale of the men was common, as when army chaplains were tasked with clearing the remains of burnt out soldiers in the war in the desert. The bodies were buried in the public gardens: "A silent crowd of men emerged from the billets, with heads bared [...] in a quiet voice the padre read the service."[12] On Boxing Day 1943 the 1st SAS returned to England, Lunt later serving in Norway.

10 RAChD archives, Lunt, Letters and papers.
11 Ibid.
12 Mortimer, *Stirling's Men*, 156.

SAS BRIGADE

The SAS Brigade was formed in 1944, consisting of the 1st and 2nd SAS Battalions, the French 3rd and 4th SAS Battalions and the 5th Belgian SAS Battalion.

Fraser McLuskey was born in Scotland and educated at Aberdeen Grammar School and Edinburgh University, and became a minister of the Church of Scotland. After travelling in Germany, being chaplain of the University of Glasgow and driving an ambulance in the Glasgow blitz, he decided, at the age of 29, to enlist as an Army chaplain. After training at Tidworth, McLuskey's first posting was to the Northern Command, and he was disappointed not to be joining a Scottish regiment. He saw the opportunity for young fit padres to volunteer for the airborne units and after a few months he was posted to the Airborne Divisions, arriving at Hardwick Hall early in 1944. Here the instructors put them through the physical training and tests. These included road work, gym and rope work, carrying a man your own weight over a specific course and "milling" for three minutes. After two weeks he was pronounced "fit to drop". McLuskey had been expecting to be posted to the 1st or 6th Airborne Divisions, ready for the anticipated invasion of Europe, but upon presenting himself for interview at 21st Army Group Headquarters in London he was told that the only remaining vacancy for an airborne padre was with an organisation called the SAS Brigade.

McLuskey was delighted that this mysterious unit was based in Scotland and jumped at the chance of being nearer home. His initial appearance was obviously unexpected, but he was offered breakfast. He immediately felt at home in the mess, observing how young many of the officers were and how many of them had an Africa Star and the SAS version of the parachute wings. At Brigade HQ later he was told that his job would be to act as padre to the SAS Brigade, both the 1st and 2nd Battalions and also the Brigade HQ. Shortly after, the 2nd Battalion acquired a padre of its own and McLuskey became permanently attached to the 1st Battalion. Discovering that the job of the SAS was to: "If my congregation was going to celebrate the invasion by disappearing in small groups into the heart of France, then it must take me with it."[13] McLuskey felt he soon settled down well in the company of battle-hardened veterans of Sicily, Italy and Africa:

"He realised that not many of the men were enthusiastic churchmen, but that they were glad to be given the opportunity of services and seemed respectful of the church. He commented on the fact that many of them had lived much of their lives outside the orbit of the Church and the fellowship of Christian community and worship and pondered on the way the Church should handle the interest shown in Army services."[14]

Like his fellow chaplains in the SAS he was to discover the different ways in which he could provide for the men's religious needs in difficult and dangerous circumstances.

The training given to the SAS men about to go to France included physical fitness, much use of the assault course and specifically extensive training in sabotage of railways and roads, and factories and power stations. They were taught how to help the local resistance and how to camouflage themselves and their camps in the forests of the Morvan. A major requirement was to develop initiative and independence so that every individual

13 McLuskey. 1951. 48.
14 McLuskey, *Parachute Padre*, 54.

played a part. McLuskey described the tasks that were to develop these attributes. Some of the 'schemes' as they were called produced some interesting results such as the capture of a submarine, the disappearance of a car belonging to the Home Guard and the appearance of a stolen fire engine manned by a bunch of ruffians singing 'Lily Marlene'. McLuskey however observed that these exploits were of tremendous value to the new recruits preparing them for the time when they would be facing this kind of decision making and showing initiative under the constant threat of arrest by the Gestapo of the French Milice.

The 1st Battalion was soon transferred to a sealed camp at Fairford in Gloucestershire on 10 June. Operation *Houndsworth*, in which McCluskey was to be involved, was one of several missions involved in aiding the liberation of France such as Operation *Bullbasket* and Operation *Gain*. Reconnaissance parties from McCluskey's 1st SAS Battalion were dropped into France on 6 and 11 June, and it was now the turn, on 21 June, of the main party. McLuskey explained in his official report on the operation.[15]

The main objectives of Operation *Houndsworth*, in which A Squadron of the 1st Battalion was dropped into the Dijon area in Burgundy, were disrupting German lines of communication and supply, helping coordinate the French resistance and preventing German reinforcements reaching the Normandy beaches, especially the 2nd *SS Panzer Division "Das Reich"*, which was based around Toulouse. In his account of Operation *Houndsworth*, author Roger Ford explained: "The operation instructions which defined the mission made it clear that the targets of the railway lines linking Dijon and Chalons sur Saone and the Le Creusot-Nevers line further south would be of the utmost importance in the days between D+8 and D+ 24 which gave the Houndsworth party little time to establish itself and become effective."[16]

On 21 June the main body of A Squadron was to be flown in. McCluskey had obtained permission from the squadron commander, Major Bill Fraser, to drop with the operation. Although he carried no arms, he had to take the equipment for his ministry to the troops he was accompanying. He had little idea how he would function as a padre on the other side, but he wanted to be as well prepared as he could. He was allowed a small panier to put some equipment in, and packed a maroon silk altar cloth with the regimental emblem, a winged dagger on an oak cross. He also took a few hymn books, copies of the New Testament, some copies of a daybook of prayer and a few books as a little library. These were eagerly used to alleviate boredom when awaiting for action in the forest. His precious airborne set for Holy Communion he carried in his kit bag.

As the time for take-off approached, both McLuskey and the men thought about their chances of survival on this dangerous mission. The Stirling aircraft held 16 troops, and he was to jump first in the second stick, making him no 9.[17] Ian Wellsted, who had been dropped with the reconnaissance party on 6 June, described the drop: "The drop was not a great success [...] the pilot insisted on dropping the whole stick of 16 in one long line, which meant there was a mile between the first and last man. He ran up the line of lights in the wrong direction and did not signal the first man to go until he was over the last light.

15 TNA, WO218/921.
16 Ford, *Fire in the Forest*, 80.
17 Wellsted, *SAS with the Maquis*, 61.

The result was the stick being scattered for miles among the trees."[18] McLuskey realised he was coming down in trees and felt the impact as his kit bag hit the trees and then himself. He cut his harness with his penknife, fell to the ground and was knocked unconscious. He woke up in the morning being violently sick as a result of concussion, but still in possession of his kit bag. He was helped by a trooper called Mick who looked after him in his weakened state and McLuskey became aware of what SAS comradeship in action was.

The squadron eventually formed up and was driven by the Maquis to their outpost in the forest. The Maquis were rural guerrilla bands of French resistance fighters, often young men who were hiding from the German imposition of forced labour for men. They met the Maquis leader, Jean, and had lunch with 200 of the Maquis resisters. McLuskey commented: "The camp looked like a cross between a scene from Robin Hood and a Hollywood film set."[19] The drop had been on a Thursday, and on the first Sunday McLuskey tentatively suggested a service still unsure of how his ministry would work in these circumstances, and found to his surprise that everyone expected one. His service materials were found in the paniers that had landed and, two empty paniers created an altar. All 30 or so men in the camp attended that first act of worship, which had its own organ and choir. The men gathered in an informal circle, and McLuskey commented on the fact that non-churchgoers seemed happy in the service: "Few of them in different circumstances would have gone on their own accord to worship God. All that was undeniably true. It was just as true that in this forest glade they were finding the activity of worship the most natural thing in the world."[20] However, he could see no trace of 'foxhole religion'. Writing 39 years later in his autobiography, McLuskey elaborated on the thoughts going through his head at that first service: "We were engaged on a task on which we believed we could ask his blessing [...] our aim was the liberation of our fellow men from a hideous tyranny on which any life worth the name must depend." [21].

This reflects the comfort men have found in being reassured by a chaplain that what they were engaged in was morally right. Recent chaplaincy studies have raised the question of whether chaplains, in being concerned with morale become "force multipliers" and there has been controversy about the role of this aspect of chaplaincy (see below). However during the Second World it seemed accepted by most chaplains that this reassurance about the soldiers job was taken as a part of their pastoral ministry. In modern conflicts this need is still recognised by chaplains. The Revd Bill Gates, Royal Marine chaplain, touched on this conundrum and remembered a marine saying: "To have someone like Bill saying, no, what you are doing is not wrong, makes a difference."

McLuskey remembered that on the evening of Sunday, 24 June, after the service, he heard gunfire nearby and was told that the Germans had attacked the Maquis group nearby in the wood. McLuskey was put into action at the regimental aid post. The German attack was beaten off, but Sergeant Major Seekings was wounded in the head, McLuskey helping with his treatment. On the morning of 27 June the squadron started to move out in appalling rain. Bill Fraser had decided to move the camp to a valley near the village of

18 Wellsted, *SAS with the Maquis*, 61.
19 McLuskey, *Parachute Padre*, 76.
20 McLuskey, *The Cloud and Fire*, 10.
21 McLuskey, *The Cloud and Fire*, 70.

Mazignen. They had had to leave the camp in a hurry, but over the next few days managed to return to pick up some of the food and equipment left, and among the equipment rescued was McLuskey's 'church'.

An American B24 Liberator and a Halifax which were supplying the operation collided over the dropping site. The next day McLuskey went with a party to investigate the wreckage of the Liberator. The crew had all perished in their seats, but he was able to identify them by their dog tags, again performing an unpleasant task on behalf of his men. The villagers dug a grave and McLuskey read the burial service, his first in France. The remains of the Halifax were nearer the road, and the mayor of Mazignen felt he had to report the crash to the German authorities at Lornes, as failure to do so could have resulted in serious repercussions for the village if the Germans found the plane. A party of Germans arrived and took the bodies of the crew to the nearby cemetery and buried them. A few days later McLuskey went to the grave with a section of men and conducted a brief memorial service. The ceremony was packed with villagers, who were there at considerable personal risk. Deep in the forest, the grave of the Liberator crew was covered with flowers and wreaths. Captain Wiseman's account mentioned that a total of 16 men from the two planes were buried.[22]

Another RAF Halifax bomber, Y-Yoke, which was part of a group from 640 Squadron attacking a railway junction and marshalling yards, came down near Muirhead's campsite in the Bois de l'Essart, four miles west of Dijon. This crew was buried by McLuskey in a small Maquis cemetery, and he shared the ceremony with the local Roman Catholic priest from Ouroux, Pere Benoit Legrain, who had been very supportive of the Maquis. Today a service is held every year at the cemetery deep in the forest showing the regard that the local people have after many years for the actions of the SAS and the RAF that were supplying them.

His time in France had made a lasting impression on McLuskey and he looked fondly back at the time spent there: "In all the circumstances it is not surprising that so short a period came to form such a large part of our lives."[23] At his request some of McCluskey's cremated remains are buried there along with the crew of the Halifax and members of the Maquis. At the end of his life he still felt the commitment and loyalty he has shown to that SAS and the Maquis, it would seem he felt that his experiences there had shaped his consequent life and ministry.

McLuskey soon took part in one of the objectives of the operation: disrupting supplies and communications, joining a demolition party operating out of the town of Anost. His role was to guard the three jeeps with two other men. Later, with the German retreating from France to the German border, the task of the men was to make their withdrawal as difficult as possible with ambushes, roadblocks and demolition of bridges. McLuskey often took part in reconnaissance patrols to look for likely sites to set up ambushes. He acted as the driver of a jeep which ambushed a German patrol car and witnessed the ambush of a large German convoy by three jeeps from the squadron. He reckoned that many of these hit-and-run raids and ambushes were effective: "Between them they accounted for a substantial amount of German equipment and personnel and provided many a headache

22 TNA, WO 218/921 1944, Wiseman.
23 McLuskey, *The Cloud and Fire*, 78.

for the organisers of the German withdrawal. Our third role, to slow up German movement out of France, was faithfully fulfilled."[24]

Using a variety of vehicles, but with amazing regularity, Fraser McLuskey toured from troop to troop with his basket of library books, his packet of army hymnals, his SAS altar cloth and his collapsible wooden cross. Week after week he held his voluntary church parades, which everyone attended irrespective of nationality or denomination, and which brought spiritual comfort where it was needed. In this he was continuing actions of many chaplains in the First World War who found that denominationalism counted for little in wartime. McLuskey thought liturgical purists would be aghast at the regimental badge being on the altar cloth, but commented that the cloth helped to join heaven and earth for the worshippers when the altar was set up and the simple service began. He believed that the congregation found God and God found them in the forests and fields of Morvan: "The deep basic needs of men no longer overlaid by social custom and convention, stood revealed. Because one of these needs is the need of God, there was no feeling of strangeness as we stood together and said the Lord's Prayer."[25]

McLuskey put the enthusiasm for singing down to the fact that "here is an offering men can make to God, who has set music in their hearts"[26], and always carried his hymn books to camp services, choosing the hymns carefully. Obviously, the volume allowed in the singing varied with the location of the camp and the likelihood of German patrols in the area, Wiseman's camp in Dijon being of necessity the most silent.

McLuskey was able to visit the Maquis hospital from the base at Mazignen, and did so regularly and worked closely with the regimental Medical Officer, Michael Macready. On journeys further afield to visit troops, he travelled either in a jeep or a small Citroën car, which he and his batman Harry Wilson had difficulty fitting into. McLuskey developed a close relationship with his batman, a large, 6ft 4in, 13-stone former Scots Guardsman who had apparently not been assigned to McLuskey but seemed to take over the role of looking after the padre after landing in France. Indeed, Wilson became known as the "the padre's bodyguard" or "the padre's private army". He carried a Bren gun and a stock of grenades at all times in whatever vehicle they were using. When traveling by jeep, there was a manned Vickers gun for protection.

McLuskey, like many of his fellow chaplains, wondered whether the fact that he did not carry arms meant he was adding to the liabilities of the men. He felt that he had to obey the Geneva Conventions as non-combatant and not carry arms. Moreover, he felt that the men liked to see him unarmed: "They wished to see him as [a] man [of] peace – the peace which they know is the will of God for all men. For these men their unarmed padre was the symbol [that] the arms they must bear were dedicated to the cause of peace and the service of God."[27] Wellsted confirmed that McLuskey did not carry a gun, but pointed out that although the padre did not bear arms he was much of the time in places of peril, often driving one of the jeeps on ambush or sabotage missions: "The way he could handle a jeep, when he found himself inadvertently driving in an unexpected road strafe had to

24 McLuskey, *Parachute Padre*, 117.
25 Ibid., 123.
26 Ibid., 79.
27 McLuskey 1951 137.

be seen to be believed."[28] These actions of McLuskey went far to dispel the stereotype of army chaplaincy, of a chaplain only concerned with the spiritual life of his men, not their success in action.

Despite the decision to remain unarmed, McLuskey felt that he must accompany the men on their patrols and expeditions: "From my point of view there was no other way of sharing their lot. It was clear to me that my calling could only be obeyed as I identified myself in fullest measure with the little group to whom I was appointed to minister."[29] This complete identification with the commitment to the men makes him an outstanding example of an army padre in the Second World War. His obituary in August 2005 mentioned that he "went with them whenever possible as driver, ambulance man or interpreter".[30] This attitude was very much the attitude taken by the Revd Studdert Kennedy in the First World War. In a letter to his wife, the Revd TB Hardy V.C. recalled the advice given to him by Studdert Kennedy: "live with the men, go everywhere they go. Make up your mind that you will share all their risks, and more if you can do any good. You can take it the best place for a padre is... where there is danger of death."[31]

The *Houndsworth* Operation cut railways on important rail routes at least 22 times. During these operations they destroyed three locomotives and 40 goods wagons. Many enemy vehicles were damaged or destroyed. Another task in which they became proficient was locating targets for air attack. Their presence had an effect on the morale of the German army and helped delay the progress of German troops to the D-day front. The SAS troops had a difficult job to achieve, with their targets widely scattered and difficult terrain to deal with in the forest of the Morvan. It is surprising that they did not have more casualties, the count being 2 dead and 7 wounded. They were able to facilitate the arming of 3,000 *maquisards* whilst killing 220 German soldiers. They repatriated 16 Allied aircrew. The men in the SAS underwent a difficult time in the summers of 1944. Their security was precarious and their supply chain uncertain. Previously they had gone out as a equipped force to do a specific job with the hopefully returning to base when it was complete. Now they were be dropped in the darkness over enemy territory for an uncertain amount of time. The improvisation and adaptation they developed "pioneered a new way of waging war"[32], which was to provide a pattern for the SAS in future operation. "Quite literally to dare in order to win."[33]

On 5 September 1944, A Squadron returned to Britain, and until the end of the month McLuskey was transferred to C Squadron, which after a few weeks of harrying the retreating Germans travelled to Paris and flew home for leave. In Cosne, before leaving for England, he arranged a thanksgiving service and was impressed by the turnout, which included most of the squadron. McLuskey's time in France made a strong and deep impression on him. He commented on the relationship the airborne men of the SAS were able to develop with the French people. In his autobiography he looked back fondly on the time he spent in France and emphasised that the period in France became a large part of the lives of the

28 Wellsted, *SAS with the Maquis*, 106.
29 Mcluskey, *Parachute Padre*, 137.
30 *Daily Telegraph*, August 19, 2005.
31 Raw, *It's Only Me*, 21.
32 Ford, *Fire in the Forest*, 4.
33 Ibid., 4.

participants. He felt proud to have been involved with the men on every level, spiritual, pastoral, medical and practical. In all aspects of their lives. He seems to have been popular, as the award of the Military Cross for his efforts in the Morvan was widely approved.

In October he returned from leave and found himself posted with the battalion to Brussels, where plans were being made for the role of the SAS in the advance through Germany. He was assigned to a group who were using armoured jeeps to reconnoitre and act as pathfinders for the armoured cars of the Second Army, but found his job as chaplain difficult as the regiment was so dispersed widely. He did not find his circumstances as challenging or rewarding as they had been in France as the sense of close knit fellowship was inevitably lost. Mc Luskey was involved in the Rhine crossing, Operation *Varsity* in March 1945, arriving just after the main forces and taking part in the clearing up of operations, identifying wounded and clearing the battle field. A very important part of the chaplain's job in the Great War, particularly before the work of the Graves registration Unit had begun, was to note carefully the burial places of the men under their care and bring in dead from battlefields. This role continued in the Second World War.

JOHN KENT

The Revd John Kent had joined up as an army chaplain immediately after finishing serving his title as a curate in 1943. After a while with the Royal Tank Regiment he transferred to the airborne forces and was posted to the 2nd SAS Battalion. His training at Ringway was brief, obtaining his wings after a week and travelling to Monkton, Ayr, where he was introduced to the regiment and its commanding officer, Brian Franks. The commanding officer wanted Kent to hold church parades but warned him that he would never get men to come along voluntarily. Kent later observed: "In the event he turned out only to be partly right: he was right in barracks and almost wrong when I came to detachments. Whenever I tried to hold a service in barracks on a voluntary basis, I was lucky if I got a dozen, sometimes it was only 3 or 4. But if I went off with a detachment on training, whether it was a single stick or a whole squadron, I got virtually 100% attendance at anything I laid on."[34]

After D-Day the battalion moved to a tented hut on Salisbury Plain and operations began for the 2nd Battalion SAS. The nature of the operations was small in scale, in groups of between six and twelve men, and therefore they were not accompanied by a doctor or padre. When operations on a larger scale started coming in, the padre and doctor were detailed to go on operations, but most were cancelled at the last minute and neither man went on an operation. Kent saw his role in such circumstances as talking to the men before they set off and taking a short service which he believed the men found helpful. When the regiment went to Wivenhoe in Sussex Kent took the opportunity to set up some padres hours which he found "never very fruitful, but quite fun in an argumentative way".[35]

Brigadier Gerald Lathbury explained why Kent did not get to see any action as chaplain with the 2nd SAS: "1 SAS on the whole in France operated in much larger parties than 2 SAS and were therefore more accessible to the chaplain. It is therefore safe to say

34 RAChD archives, Kent, Letters and papers.
35 Ibid.

that Kent had no chance of going on operations until the crossing of the Rhine."[36] Kent had come to this conclusion himself, and as what he knew would be the last big operation of the war, Operation *Varsity*, approached he realised the need to be in action with the men was very important to him. As the SAS was no longer operating behind enemy lines, its role in the Rhine crossing was to form an advanced reconnaissance unit, using jeeps armed with Vickers machine guns. The commanding officer explained to Kent that there was physically no room for a padre on the jeep, which had a driver, a commander gunner and another gunner who was also a radio man. Kent decided to ask if he could go as a driver with the rank of private. To his surprise, the commanding officer agreed and Kent prepared to go into battle:

"I therefore stripped off pips, put an automatic [pistol] on to my belt and discarded my collar and the idiotic Red Cross card and went in functioning as a private soldier. This incidentally was a period I thoroughly enjoyed: there were times when it was frightening and there were times when there were burials and other grim duties but most of the time I really was functioning as a private soldier."[37]

He did not, of course, ask the permission of the Royal Army Chaplain's Department for his course of action. Kent's unit continued its reconnaissance role, operating in northern Germany around Hamburg and along the Elbe until the local ceasefire several days before VE-Day, by which time they were embarking for England and their next mission in Norway.

Restored to his role as chaplain, Kent left by air to Norway almost as soon as they returned from Germany. He remembered that it was by no means certain that the German forces in Norway were going to surrender, but they did, and Kent found the time there

"full of fun and interesting: full of human incident, but at the same time I was very bothered about the demoralisation of the Regiment. They had been an extraordinary band of brothers, but right at the end of the war in Germany and later in Norway they began looting [...] and the spirit of the Regiment degenerated."[38]

Kent initially had a poor opinion of this behaviour, but later realised that the issue was not a simple one: "The release of tension and of danger was bound to release also so much that had been kept under control before and all kinds of immoral behaviour were not only natural but, in a way, very necessary."[39]

The corps currently consists of a regular element, the 22 SAS Regiment, also supplemented by the 21 SAS Regiment (Artists) (Reserve) and the 23 SAS Regiment (Reserve). The regiments are all under the operational command of the United Kingdom Special Forces. As in the Second World War they are not directly recruited, usually being already members of the armed forces, particularly being drawn from the Royal Marines and Parachute Brigade. Their Headquarters is in Hereford, and the chaplains have close links with Hereford Cathedral. A major new internationally important artwork, dedicated to the SAS and funded through donations by the SAS Regimental Association, has been installed in Hereford Cathedral. It has the form of a magnificent sculpture and stained-glass window and was completed in April 2017.

---

36 RAChD archives, Lathbury, Letters.
37 RAChD archives, Kent, Letters and papers.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.

During the United Kingdom Covid lock down 2020-2021 the regular annual memorial service became a virtual memorial taken by the padre of SAS 21 and the precentor of the Cathedral. The identity of the chaplain was not disclosed in line with the secrecy surrounding SAS personnel. At these services an extract from a poem closely associated with the SAS, "The Golden Road To Samarkand" by James Elroy Fletcher was read :

"We are the Pilgrims, master; we shall go
Always a little further; it may be
Beyond that last blue mountain barred with snow
Across that angry or that glimmering sea"

The names of the recently departed men of the regiment were read out. Then the regimental collect was read:

"O Lord who didst call thy disciples to venture all to win all men to thee. Grant that we , the chosen members of the Special Air Service Regiment May by our works and our ways dare all to win all, and in so doing render special service to thee, and our fellow men in all the world. Through your son Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen."

The Revd Freddie Hughes, later to became Chaplain General, started to define this role, dividing chaplains' duty in battle into seven stages: "The approach to battle; eve of battle services; companionship at zero hour; practical service during battles; settling men down in the aftermath; burying the dead; holding memorial and thanksgiving services."[40]

TO CONCLUDE

This account of the three SAS chaplains shows how a chaplain could be successfully embedded in the most active and secret units in the British Army and play an essential part in the morale and wellbeing of those units. The concept of complete identification has been questioned by some 20th historians.[41] Chaplains have been accused as inappropriately being Force Multipliers. More recent studies, including the work of The Revd Andrew Totten have considered the question of morale, Totten going so far to suggest that "If the cause or simply the conduct of the fighting soldier were justified, why would the maintenance of his morale not be a proper object for concern?"[42]

The secrecy still surrounding the operations of the modern-day SAS regiments makes it impossible to analyse their role. It is very possible that a chaplain accompanies larger operations and is present with the men in danger. On smaller operations with no room for a padre the chaplain has a role to play in preparing people for action and dealing pastorally with men and families affected by the death or injury of friends and loved ones. An increasing awareness of Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome as a lasting battlefield injury and moral injury gives this task added importance. Moral injury occurs when an individual suffers psychological and spiritual distress as a result of betraying their deep seated moral values as a result of their actions. Chaplains also play a part in morale by acting as a moral compass to leaders and a reassurance of God's presence with all.

40 Robinson, *Chaplains at War*, 147.
41 Louden, *Chaplains in Conflict*; Marrin, *The Last Crusade*.
42 Totten, "Moral Soldiering and Soldiers Morale," 31.

Although technology, strategy and missions have changed over the years since the Second World War, the character of Special Forces, embedded in their training and ethos has not. Today's SAS soldiers would fell at home in the missions of the SAS in Africa, Italy and France and need the same pastoral and spiritual care from chaplains as their forebears.

ARCHIVAL SOURCES

Museum of Army Chaplaincy Papers deposited by the Revd P.R.C. Abram CVO *(*RACHD *archives)*
Lunt, Ronald
Kent, John

*The National Archives (*TNA*- London)*
WO 218/921, Report on1st SAS Operation covering the period 21 June to 29 September 1944.
WO 218/921, Report in SAS Operations 21 June to 29 September 1944. By the Chaplain to the 1st SAS Regiment.

NEWSPAPERS

The Daily Telegraph, August 19, 2005.

PRINTED SOURCES

Army order no. 93, 1919.
McLuskey, Fraser. *Parachute Padre.* London: SCM Press, 1985.
McLuskey, Fraser. *The Cloud and Fire.* Edinburgh: The Pentland Press, 1994.
Raw, David D. *It's Only Me – A life of the Revd Theodore Bayley Hardy* VC, DSO, MC. *1863-1918.* Gatebeck: Frank Peters Publishing, 1998.

REFERENCES

Asher, Michael. *The Regiment: The definitive story of the SAS.* London: Viking, 2007.
Ford, Roger. *Fire in the Forest: The SAS Brigade in France, 1944.* London: Cassel, 2003.
Hamilton, Nigel. *Monty the Field Marshal, 19441976.* London: Sceptre, 1987.
Louden, Stephen. *Chaplains in Conflict.* London: Avon Books, 1996.
Macintyre, Ben. *SAS: Rogue Heroes – the Authorized Wartime History.* London: Penguin Random House, 2016.
Marrin, Albert. *The Last Crusade.* London: Greenhill Books, 1994.
Mortimer, Gavin. *Stirling's Men: The Inside History of the SAS In World War Two.* London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 2016.
Robinson, Alan. *Chaplains at War: The Role of Clergymen During World War Two.* London: I.B. Tauris, 2008.
Totten, Andrew. "Moral Soldiering and Soldiers Morale." In *Military Chaplaincy in Contention, Explorations in Practical, Pastoral and Empirical Theology*, edited by Andrew Todd. London: Routledge, 2013.
Wellsted, Ian. *SAS with the Maquis: In Action with the French Resistance June–September 1944.* London: Frontline Books, 2016.

ONLINE MEDIA

Banijay Documentaries. "What It's Like Being a Commando Chaplain in Afghanistan." Accessed August 23, 2023. https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=HWyNKKKri10.

https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/news-and-events/news/2019/

Special Military Operations Conducted by the Romanian Army on the Eastern Front

1941-1944

Manuel Stănescu

INTRODUCTION

The history of the Special Operations Forces part of the Ministry of National Defence is a relatively short one. The 9/11 tragedy and, subsequently, the accession to NATO were two events that spurred the initiative to establish such a structure in the Romanian Armed Forces. The "*Vulturul*" (in translation: "The Eagle") Special Operations Battalion was created in 2003, thus becoming the first such unit of the Ministry of National Defence. The Special Operations Forces Command was set up on March 1, 2018, and starting with June 1, the School for Special Operations also started operating under its subordination.

In line with the tradition, throughout the first years of communist regime the paratroops units were considered to be units with a special character. Starting with the mid 1960s, during Nicolae Ceaușescu's regime, the units with a special character were subordinated to the State Security. An exception was made during the Romanian Revolution, but access to sources in this sense is limited. On the one hand, the information is classified; on the other hand, the investigation into the Romanian Revolution case is still ongoing.[1]

In the Second World War, on June 10, 1941, a company of paratroopers under the name of "The Special Missions Company" was established, being the only unit of its kind during the war. One year later, in 1942, it was placed under the subordination of the Paratroops Battalion, following the German model. There had been talks between Romanian and German authorities for this battalion to take part in the assault on the island of Crete, but the plan did not materialise. Based on information available at the moment, this company had no battle missions until August 23, 1944, when Romania left the alliance with Germany and accessed to the Allied Nations. On August 24-30, 1944, the company fought as an infantry unit against the German troops in northern Bucharest.[2]

As a consequence, the only active units with a special character during the Second World War were the intelligence units.

THE MOBILE ECHELON AND THE INTELLIGENCE CENTRES

Romania's participation in the anti-Soviet war implied, besides the military effort, an intense intelligence effort, as well. As such, for the intelligence coverage of the operations of the Romanian Army against the Soviet troops, the Special Intelligence Service sent a mobile echelon to the Eastern Front, which accompanied the operations army. In addition to this echelon, the Romanian armies also benefited from three intelligence and counterintelligence services subordinated to the General Staff:

1. The "A" Intelligence Centre, headed by Major Xenofon Tarnawski, headquartered in Cernăuți and active in Bucovina throughout the war.
2. The "B" Intelligence Centre, headed by lieutenant-colonel Alexandru Ionescu, active in Bessarabia during the interwar period. For the Eastern campaign, it offered intelligence support for the 4th Romanian Army in the fights that took

1 Soare, *Forțele speciale*, 347.
2 Otu, *Sub semnul lui Marte*, 168.

place in Odessa, Crimeaand Taman. In mid 1943, it was headquartered in Trisaspol.

3. The "H" Intelligence Centre, established on June 18 and headed by Major (later on, from June 1942, Lieutenant Colonel) Dionisie Bădărău, which offered intelligence support for the 3rd Romanian Army.[3]

However, the Mobile Echelon of the Special Intelligence Service, active on the Eastern Front, represented the main institution with a role in intelligence gathering for the Romanian state. The structure of this Mobile Echelon matched that of the headquarters in Bucharest. In order to carry out its intelligence missions, the echelon cooperated from the start with the 3rd Section of Operations of the General Staff of the Romanian Army, which made available to them all information related to the Romanian armies, their areas of operations, as well as the successive movements of the command posts for each army.[4]

At the orders of the Presidency of the Council and of the General Staff, the main missions of the Mobile Echelon and of its subordinated centres were the following: gathering intelligence on the Soviet armies engaged in combat, defending the rear of the Romanian Army from actions of espionage, sabotage and terrorism, and recovering any Soviet military documents found on the battlefield (maps, operational orders, instructions, directives, regulations, etc.). Also, the staff of the Mobile Echelon had to assist the interrogation of prisoners of wars, deserters and captured partisans).[5] We can thus see that there was a close cooperation between this dedicated institution, the Special Intelligence Service, and the structures subordinated to the Ministry of War, which constantly collaborated in terms of intelligence gathering.

The centres' main mission was that of providing intelligence. The most valuable "sources" were prisoners, deserters, refugees, partisans, and captured "terrorists". For the efficient exploitation of these people, the 2nd Intelligence Section of the General Staff issued instructions on interrogation techniques, which were to be used by the military intelligence units. The questionnaire was only for orientation purposes, as the interrogation process was largely dependent on the investigator's ability to extract all the information.

According to the instructions, the centre's staff had to know the language of the interrogated person well enough (as using a translator would not always reproduce exactly the ideas presented, nor did they allow to notice the state of mind of the "source", manifested during the conversation, in order to infer sincerity, doubts, the interest of the interrogated and therefore the value of the statements obtained), to show "kindness, patience, attention and interest" towards what is being related to them, even though not everything that was being said fell under the interest of the service, but to give the interrogated person the impression that they were having a conversation between "two comrades in arms". The one conducting the interrogation had to be knowledgeable about everything related to the army the prisoner or deserter was part of (in order to establish the accuracy of what was being declared), to know the administrative, political, social and economic situation of the prisoner's/deserter's homeland and, last but not least, to be educated enough to be able to dominate the interrogated person in free discussions.[6]

---

3 Moraru, *Armata lui Stalin*, 21.
4 Troncotă, *Istoria serviciilor*, 198-199.
5 Troncotă, *Glorie și Tragedie*, 57.
6 Moraru, *Armata lui Stalin*, 22.

On June 24, 1941, the 2nd Counterintelligence Bureau of the General Staff of the Romanian Army drew up a summary titled "Soviet Partisans and Their Actions behind the Front". The information in this document testified that the actions of the Soviet partisans represented a means outside the laws of war and of the principles of international law, yet methodically used by the Soviet Union. Attention was drawn to the fact that they should not be confused with "the missions entrusted to the partisans from behind the front". The careful study of the information disseminated by the intelligence services of the army and the Special Intelligence Service led to the conclusion that groups of Soviet partisans were moving with the enemy front and behind it. This was a military strategy unprecedented in the art of war. The Soviets had previously tried a similar strategy, of organising massive guerrilla forces behind the front during the Spanish Civil War, but their action had failed. This time around, the Red Army managed to create a parallel front of destabilisation of the social-economic life and a climate of insecurity.[7]

Following multiple interrogations, it was noticed that almost all prisoners and deserters would kindly offer to share all that they knew of, but this result was mostly dependent on the ability of the one carrying out the interrogation process. Compared to the methods used for interrogating soldiers, the ones used for officers involved free discussions, in which subjects that were met with hesitations or even refusals to reply were avoided. Interrogation sessions with these types of prisoners were to be put on pause, only to be resumed later, with the approach during breaks being "as humane as possible". According to the instructions, the key to success which was a condition to be thoroughly respected throughout the research of these "sources", was that of the good treatment that had to be applied to the prisoners "without depriving them of anything from their personal belongings, apart from official papers and documents".[8] The topics discussed with the interrogated person were usually of a military nature: biographical data, rank in the army, marital status of the prisoner, level of general and applied knowledge, profession, the unit to which they belonged, the history of the unit (with as many details as possible on its organisation, equipment, names of commanders etc.), date of capture, as well as other details on the war industry, morale and mood.

By the end of 1942, the number of Soviet deserters – who represented extremely valuable sources – was high enough for the intelligence services. The H centre informed that there were 3-4 deserters per day. At the same time, it required for greater care and precaution on interrogating certain types of prisoners, those part of the elite army units, which were of higher intellect, such as pilots. Investigations on those that had been ideologically radicalised and known as fanatical communists were also difficult. For example, on October 26, 1943, a certain Ivan Novohatikov was interrogated, and, in the interrogation officer's opinion, he was "a convinced communist that replied with caution to all our questions and said he did not know. Throughout the interrogation, he sat with his head bowed down and, although he was a smoker, constantly refused to take cigarettes from us."[9]

---

7 Troncotă, *Glorie și Tragedie*, 62.
8 ANMR, Dosar Armata 4, 601.
9 Moraru, *Armata lui Stalin*, 24.

Before the outbreak of the battles in Crimea, the General Staff had requested the addition of intelligence structures that would accompany the operational units, as strengthening the Romanian troops with elements specialised in intelligence gathering and synthesis was beneficial. The objective of the Romanian units was to carry out long-distance travel, to pass through areas in which numerous Soviet partisans were active in, as the only way to counteract them was based on information on the value of their forces, degree of equipment, disposition bases, and way of action. For example, at the end of February 1942 an important capture was made by the intelligence structure dispatched to the Kerch Peninsula. Teams of informants that had as mission providing data on the devices of the German-Romanian troops and the movements of units to the commandment of the 51st Soviet Army were discovered. One of the teams was equipped with a British-made broadcast station, with a range of 100 kilometres. The intelligence research on this resulted in obtaining not only essential information, but also a rich material of transmissions and ciphers.[10]

Initially, the prisoners and deserters were briefly interrogated by the intelligence officers of the units that had captured them, particularly on issues related to operative orders, on the front lines. Subsequently, they would be transferred to the above-mentioned centres, where the interrogation process would go into more details. At times, the intelligence officers that handled them first showed excessive enthusiasm in their preliminary research, breaking the instructions and torturing the ones they were interrogating. In such cases, the H centre managed with great professionalism to identify those at fault and to rule in favour of those interrogated and unjustly accused of complicity in subversive actions. On November 17, 1942, the H centre reported to the commandment of the 3rd Romanian Army on the case of a suspect, pointed out as such by a captured Soviet spy. The H centre mentioned that "wishing to create a partisan organisation, the investigative bodies of the 13th Division subjected him to the most terrible tortures (he was buried alive, boiling water was poured on his head, etc.) until he finally learned what he had to declare, he turned himself in as the head of the alleged partisan gang, at the same time indicating a number of people as members of the gang". Following interrogation directly from the H centre, "with great difficulty and only after days of interrogation," it was concluded that the person in discussion was, in fact, not guilty. In the report's conclusions, the H centre noted that:

"given the wrong procedure used by the investigative bodies of the 13th Infantry Division, and perhaps also out of the desire to come up with an event, the alleged organisation of partisans, with the mission of espionage and terrorism, was created. Anyone who would see these unfortunate ones, involved as organisers and gang members (aged over 60, disabled, crippled) would immediately realise that such people are not capable of any subversive action."[11]

Following interrogation, those that were evaluated of being of high risk, such as partisans and paratroopers, were handed over to the relevant German authorities and, more often than not, the interrogation was made in a rush, as the prisoners would be requested at once by the German intelligence services. There were cases when the agents

10 Troncotă, *Glorie și Tragedie*, 88.
11 Moraru, *Armata lui Stalin*, 25.

captured by the Romanian units were taken away by the German special services without first passing through their Romanian counterpart, which led to protests from the Romanian intelligence services.

Regarding the Romanian-German relations in the intelligence field, on the background of the coming to power in Romania of general Ion Antonescu in September 1940 and the arrival to Bucharest of the German military mission in October, the decision-makers in Berlin decided to establish an *Abwehr* residence in Romania, called "*Abwehrstelle Rumänien*". Out of its ten tasks, the 7th one referred to "instructing the Romanian intelligence service according to the methods and principles of the Abwehr, that is the close collaboration on intelligence with this service". Despite the fact that the *Abwehrstelle* residences only functioned in the *Reich* and its occupied territories, in the first part of the war Romania was the only allied state of the national-socialist Germany where such a structure was established, thus being a special case. Throughout its existence (October 3, 1942 - August 23, 1944), the *Abwehrstelle Rumänien* would represent not only the main German intelligence structure in Romania, but also the only one recognised and acknowledged by the Romanian state. The chief of the *Abwehr*, Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, arrived to Bucharest on the evening of September 7, just one day after general Antonescu had come to power, who received the admiral and assured him that Romania "would 100% satisfy the German interests".[12]

As expected, the cooperation between the Romanian intelligence services and the *Abwehr* did not go unnoticed at the superior levels of command of the SS (*Schutzstaffel*). The fierce rivalry between the SS and SD (*Sicherheitsdienst*), the intelligence agency of the SS, as well as Heinrich Himmler and Reinhard Heydrich's constant preoccupation for the expansion of the intelligence services abroad and the wish to 'recover' the territory lost in favour of the *Abwehr*, determined the two SS leaders to adopt concrete measures in establishing the SD's own spy network in Romania. Their efforts were supported by the German Ethnic Group, which on September 22, 1940, was headed by Andreas Schmidt, a young man, aged 28, who was ideologically close to the Nazi Party and the SS.[13]

The army's intelligence services also proved useful in the Battle of Stalingrad, in which two Romanian armies were involved. At the end of October, the Romanian General Staff was informed that:

"the total information received from various sources [...] led to the conclusion that the expected offensive would take place in the first part of November 1942, right after the improvement of the situation at Stalingrad. It would first be an offensive either on the Stalingrad front, or on the front south of Stalingrad, with the purpose of conquering better positions that would serve as a base for larger offensive operations that would then take place in another more sensitive sector, either in the Don River bend to break the front and advance towards Rostov, after which the forces south of Stalingrad would also act, or with an attack from the north of Stalingrad to liberate the city."

This report and many others forwarded by the intelligence services to the Romanian General staff showed that the huge losses of the Romanian Army in the Battle of Stalingrad

12 Trașcă, *Relațiile politice*, 366.
13 Ibid, 404.

(approximately 150,000 dead, wounded and missing people) had not been caused by the lack of information on the enemy, but for totally other reasons.[14]

COUNTERINTELLIGENCE

Besides the missions of intelligence gathering on the enemy, another relevant element of the intelligence work was that of blocking the enemy's intelligence services' access to the Romanian strategic services. The Romanian Army made sustained efforts between 1941-1944 to prevent sharing information that would damage the fate of the military operations or that would demoralise the troops. On September 21, 1942, the General Staff – having registered numerous cases of espionage – prohibited the personnel of the Romanian Army on the Eastern Front from hiring prisoners or "other individuals of foreign origin," as it was well-known that some military men were intimate with unknown women, many of whom later proved to be spies.

Furthermore, it was often discovered that through the correspondence that was being sent to Romania, the military would also share secret information and details on the military operations. The Romanian General Staff issued many orders on keeping the military secret, censuring the correspondence and controlling those who either left or came on the front, in order to prevent the transport of uncensored correspondence. Despite all these efforts, such cases still appeared throughout the war period. In November 1941, it was decided by the army leadership that upon going on leave of absence, the military have their bags and pockets inspected "so that they would not bring home Soviet leaflets, badges and brochures", which could have been used to demoralise the soldiers and the population. At the same time, soldiers also had to be warned of the danger of spreading Soviet insignia and manifestos, "with an accent being put on the fact that they would intentionally become agent of the enemy's propaganda".

On November 29, 1942, the Ministry of War issued circular order no. 26, which prohibited officers to "discuss among comrades or with any other person at work, on the streets, with their families, at the mess hall, in public venues or wherever they would be, any issues regarding the status of the operations, either those of our troops, or those of our allies on any front". The Ministry of War was planning on establishing a special service that would investigate and identify where the comments and rumours among the soldiers, as well as those shared by them, came from. The culprits were to be referred to the military court, based on a simple finding, and convicted of false alarm, being moved within hours to the front line. In reality, censorship of correspondence was virtually non-existent. In a mission of re-censuring the correspondence in July 1943, it was found that "in very many cases" the censoring of unit correspondence "consisted only of the stamping with the round stamp of the unit or sub-unit concerned and the signature of a sergeant, corporal or private as censor". In theory, the control of correspondence was to be handled by the intelligence officer of the respective unit, with the unit commanders being required to supervise the enforcement of letter censorship.[15]

14 Troncotă, *Glorie și Tragedie.*
15 Moraru, *Armata lui Stalin*, 268.

As the war was once again drawing closer to Romania's borders, the espionage cases multiplied. On the night between June 28/29, 1944, Ioan Reșetilov was captured. He was part of the 26th Dorobanți Regiment, a student at the Polytechnic School in Bucharest, and assigned to the Intelligence Bureau of the 2nd Infantry Division. It wasn't just desertion, it was also treason: at the time of his capture, he had the last operational order of the division on him, as well as other documents. He had decided to desert since March 1944, convinced that Romania would lose the war. His case of treason had a great impact, being handled personally by Lieutenant-Colonel D. Bădărău, the commander of the H centre. Reșetilov was sentenced to death.[16]

CONCLUSION

We would like to point out that Romania did not coordinate special operations during the Second World War. The only missions of special character were those of intelligence and counterintelligence, with the Romanian Army generally succeeding in supporting the military effort of the country on the Eastern Front. At strategic and operational level, we could say that the information delivered to the leadership of the army and that of the Romanian state had the three fundamental qualities: it was truthful, with the information being certain, as it was verified and proved with other details obtained through specific means; it was equidistant, the evaluation of the information being done without political connotations and avoiding the suggestion of solutions; and it was transmitted in time, the decision-makers, up to the level of Marshal Antonescu, having enough time to base their political decisions or measures of character military on the battlefield.[17]

On the other hand, intelligence on the enemy could not ensure, on its own, the victory in a war. The experience on the Eastern Front, a war of coalition, proved that there are other factors at least as relevant, like the loyalty of the allies, the freedom to make decisions on a tactical and strategic level, swift adaptation to the evolutions on the battlefield, the existence of strategic reserves, as well as many others. As it had always been involved only in coalition wars since the establishment of the Romanian modern state, Romania has the chance to learn from the past and to adequately answer to the evermore complex challenges in the current security context.

16 RNMA, Roll F II 1.495, Frame 366.
17 Troncotă, *Glorie și Tragedie*, 311.

ARCHIVAL SOURCES

Romanian National Military Archives (RNMA - Bukarest)
Microfilms, Roll F II 1.495, Frame 366, Dosar Armata 4 (*Dossier 4th Army*), p. 601.

REFERENCES

Moraru, Pavel. *Armata lui Stalin văzută de români* [Stalin's Army: a Romanian perspective]. Bukarest: Editura Militară, 2006.

Otu, Petre. *Sub semnul lui Marte. Secvențe de istorie militară românească* [Under the sign of Mars. Sequences of Romanian military history]. Bukarest: Editura Militară, 2016.

Soare, Vasile. *Forțele speciale. Comandouri aeropurtate* în *acțiun*e [Special Forces. Commandos in action]. Bukarest: Editura Ziua, 2002.

Trașcă, Ottmar. *Relațiile politice* și *militare româno-germane, septembrie 1940 - august 1944* [Romanian-German political and military relations September 1940 - August 1944]. Cluj-Napoca: Editura Argonaut, 2013.

Troncotă, Cristian. *Istoria serviciilor secrete românești de la Cuza la Ceaușescu* [History of the Romanian secret services from Cuza to Ceausescu]. Bukarest: Editura "Ion Cristoiu" S.A., 1999.

Troncotă, Cristian. *Glorie* și *Tragedie. Momente din istoria Serviciilor de informații* și *contrainformații române pe frontul de Est (1941-1944)* [Glory and Tragedy. Moments from the history of the Romanian intelligence and counter-intelligence services on the Eastern Front 1941-1944]. Bukarest: Editura Nemira, 2003.

Fake Guerrillas

Useful Assets in Internal Conflicts

Peter A. Kiss

INTRODUCTION

In an internal conflict the state has an overwhelming advantage compared to the non-state actor (or actors). Its informational, political, military and legal instruments and its financial resources are far superior to anything the non-state opponents can muster. As the historical record shows, these advantages do not always result in the state prevailing over its adversaries, because the non-state actor is aware of his weakness and will employ strategies to compensate for it and defeat the state by slow attrition.

In order to exploit their advantage, the security forces of the state must have real-time, actionable intelligence on the non-state actor's forces, and must be able to act on the information immediately. Special operations forces play a crucial role in collecting the necessary intelligence, and acting on it immediately, if the situation warrants. One operational concept they often employ is the deployment of fake-guerrilla teams. Such teams have usually been highly effective in collecting intelligence on guerrilla movements, leadership, organisation, logistics, and popular support. Less creditably, they sometimes bully and abuse the civilians in the operational area, in order to diminish popular support for the non-state actor, and without adequate supervision they can easily become death squads or turn into rogue forces that prey on the population.

This article offers two detailed case studies of the employment of fake guerrillas (Philippines 1946-1954 and Rhodesia 1973-1980), to show the possibilities of employing fake-guerrillas, as well as the advantages, drawbacks and pitfalls in their employment.

ADVANTAGES AND DRAWBACKS IN AN INTERNAL CONFLICT

In an internal conflict the state has a huge advantage over the non-state belligerent (or belligerents): it is superior in all indices of power. Its diplomatic, economic, political, legal, information, reconnaissance, and military assets are far greater than anything even the maximally focused efforts of the non-state warriors can muster. The regular security forces of even the weakest, poorest, worst-governed state have significantly more firepower, their tactical and operational agility is much better, and their standards of organisation and training are far higher than those of the internal enemy. (Obviously the state's advantage in power does not always translate into defeat of the non-state actor: other factors, such as lack of state capacity, societal fragmentation, elite corruption, etc. may offset it.)

However, the state has some serious disadvantages as well. One of the pillars of the government's legitimacy is that it obeys its own rules and laws. If its agents begin to act without restraint, that erodes that legitimacy in the eyes of the citizens and the outside world.[1] Dictatorships may not care much about domestic or international opinion, but even they are run by rules that restrain and constrain government action. Internal national politics also often hinder the government's counterinsurgency efforts. Furthermore, the state cannot afford to focus on the insurgency alone, because it has a million other responsibilities: maintain a stable currency, run the schools, the health care system and

1 Cilliers, *Counter-Insurgency in Rhodesia*, 127-129, 131-132.

the nation's critical infrastructure, maintain an administrative machinery that issues driver licenses, registers deaths, births and marriages, and so forth. However, its most serious disadvantage is that it has little actionable intelligence on the insurgents.

The non-state belligerents – at least in the early phases of the conflict – are much weaker than the state by all the usual metrics of power. This weakness is the source of all their disadvantages, and this is what forces them to adopt strategies that wear down the state's power by slow attrition.

However, they do have some significant advantages as well. They have a powerful cause that can mobilise popular support in time. Their cause may be based on real grievances, or it can even be an artificially created one – as long as it motivates the population. If they play their cards right, they can find international support. Initially they may lack legitimacy, credibility and popular support, but if they survive the early phases of the insurgency, their legitimacy and popular support are likely to grow. They can neutralise the government's military power by elusiveness: they hide among the people, emerge only when government forces are not in the area, and strike only when success is assured. This makes it terribly difficult to find, fix and fight them.

If the insurgency gains some traction, the government's credibility and legitimacy begin to diminish. So, obviously, the state cannot let an insurgency fester within its sovereign territory. It has to tackle it, and as a general rule it proceeds along four main lines of effort:[2]

- isolate the insurgents from population,
- restore government authority, social order & rule of law,
- influence domestic & international audiences,
- take the fight to the insurgents, attrite their forces and eliminate high value targets.

There is a general rule of thumb that has acquired almost mystic significance: defeating the non-state belligerent requires four parts political action and one part military operations.[3] I am not sure how you can quantify and compare the various categories of actions, but the principle itself is sound: political and military actions go hand in hand, and the majority of resources must be assigned to political action, because it has primacy. Note that only one of the lines of effort shown above (take the fight to the insurgents, attrite their forces and eliminate high value targets) is purely military, the others can all be classified as primarily political activities, with some police, gendarmerie or military support.

TAKING THE FIGHT TO THE ENEMY

It is rather obvious that unless the non-state actor's military capabilities are degraded, little success can be expected in the other three lines of effort. Therefore, taking the fight to the enemy is crucial, but it is easier said than done. Given the state's advantage in military power, the challenge is not fighting the non-state actor's forces, but in locating and fixing them long enough to deploy sufficient combat power against them and defeat them without excessive collateral damage.

2 Kiss, *Winning Wars*, 202-203.
3 Galula, *Counter-Insurgency Warfare*, 66.

In these circumstances, obtaining actionable intelligence and exploiting it immediately is the key - however, the usual intelligence cycle tends to be too slow: the information is out of date by the time it reaches the commander in the field. There are several ways of resolving this problem, and one of the best ways is to employ fake guerrilla teams. The concept is not new at all. I did not do a deep dive into its history, but I did learn that at least as early as the American Civil war fake guerrillas were employed by the North.

There are a number of modern examples as well. During the Algerian war the French raised a special unit, the *groupe de renseignements et d'exploitation*. Many of its members were former guerrillas who had been arrested and persuaded by their captors to change sides. The unit created its own informant networks, infiltrated the Algerian insurgent organisations collected information on their operations and fed disinformation to their leadership. The disinformation campaign caused the insurgent organisations to carry out a major purge that led to the liquidation of anywhere from 2,000 to 6,000 fighters, supporters and activists. The unit was also instrumental in the French success in the Battle of Algiers.[4] Based on this experience Roger Trinquier recommended fielding intelligence-action teams that organise their own information networks and immediately act on the information the networks provide.[5] The British colonial authorities in Malaysia and Kenya made a more refined and perhaps more effective use of fake guerrillas, called counter gangs or (somewhat pretentiously) pseudo-gangs by their organisers.[6]

In a nutshell the fake guerrillas are not double agents, not provocateurs, and not informers. They are soldiers or (less often) policemen, organised into teams of highly trained operatives who learn the habits and behaviour of the guerrillas and imitate their appearance. When they are satisfied that they can pass a thorough scrutiny, they infiltrate areas under guerrilla control, and make the locals believe that they are genuine guerrillas. Once this authentication is achieved, they mix with the population, and make contact with the genuine guerrilla forces. Their further actions depend on their assigned mission. It may be intelligence collection, or something more direct and kinetic. They may engage and eliminate the guerrilla forces they identified, or they may eliminate specific high value targets, or instigate distrust between the local population and the guerrillas.

The literature is not very extensive on fake guerrillas. Nevertheless, there is sufficient information available to study the subject in adequate depth and draw some conclusions. Some examples:

- Philippines 1891 – Macabebe Scouts
- Soviet Union 1945-49 – Soviet secret police teams in Ukraine and the Baltic States
- Philippines 1946-54 – Force x
- Kenya 1952-60 – pseudo-gangs
- Rhodesia 1964-1980 – Selous Scouts
- Punjab 1980-94 – the Cats

With the exception of the Soviet experience, there is sufficient information available on these examples. In the interest of brevity this paper shall cover only two examples in detail: the Philippine Force x and the Rhodesian Selous Scouts.

---

4 *La Bleuite*.
5 Trinquier, *Modern Warfare*, 55-62.
6 Henderson and Goodhart, *Man Hunt in Kenya*, 53-80; McConnell, *The British in Kenya*, 37-40.

THE FORCE X, PHILIPPINES 1946-54

The Philippines had been a United States colony since the beginning of the 20th century, and during World War II they were occupied by the Japanese. The Filipinos and stay-behind American forces fought a murderous guerrilla war against the occupiers, and one of the many guerrilla organisations was the *Hukbalahap* (*Hukbo ng Bayan Laban sa mga Hapon* – Anti-Japanese People's Army), organised by the Communist Party of the Philippines.

Immediately after the liberation of the Philippines, preparations for the country's independence were begun by the United States, (the colonial power). Independence was granted on July 4, 1946. The economic and political conditions were rather uncertain at the time, and the communists seized the moment to force changes in the distribution of power and economic benefits, partly through violence and partly through political manoeuvring. They began active organisation and propaganda work and launched an armed insurrection. The cause they espoused (particularly its emphasis on land reform) was based on real grievances and resonated in a large segment of Philippine society: at the height of its strength, the movement counted 15,000 armed guerrillas and 1,000,000 supportive sympathisers.

In the initial, low-intensity phase of the uprising the Philippine political elite and the government made the same mistakes as the authorities facing early-stage internal conflicts on other continents. They failed to recognise the danger of the insurgency and underestimated the strength of the *Hukbalahap* (Huks, for short). Politicians regularly intervened in ongoing counterinsurgency operations to promote their own interest. The security forces did not have the numbers, the doctrine, the training, or the equipment to suppress the rebels. They had few men on active operations, because a significant part of the personnel was tied down in stationary guard duties. Those who did go on operations could not distinguish between rebels and ordinary citizens, and often treated all civilians as potential enemies. The local civilian population feared and distrusted the security forces because the behaviour of the latter towards the civilians was little different from that of the earlier Japanese occupiers. As a result, although the security forces were not completely helpless, their activities were by no means successful.[7]

In order to improve their chances of success and take the fight to the guerrillas the Philippine Constabulary (a gendarmerie-type paramilitary force) developed the Force X concept. The concept stood on two legs:

- exploitation of the slow and uncertain communications system of the *Hukbalahap* forces between remote provinces;
- insertion of highly trained guerrilla-hunter teams, disguised as existing *Hukbalahap* units into *Hukbalahap* territory.

The Force X training had a dual focus. One was infiltration and survival: physical fitness, small unit tactics, reconnaissance, radio procedures, first aid, escape, survival, and concealment. The other was learning to behave in such a way that after a successful, unobtrusive infiltration, even the real guerrillas themselves would not suspect that they were anything but genuine guerrillas. The gendarmes handed over all equipment

7 McClintock, *Instruments of Statecraft*, Chapter 4; Valeriano, "Military Operations," 25-28, and Smith, "The Hukbalahap Insurgency."

and personal items that would have identified them as security forces personnel, and received civilian clothes, weapons, utility items and propaganda materials that had been captured from the guerrillas. They gave up haircuts, shaving, and using soap, in order to mimic the hygienic habits of the guerrillas, for whom shaving and bathing deep in the rainforest was a rare luxury. They learned the names and personal descriptions of the guerrilla commanders in the area they claimed as their point of origin. Whoever fit the description of one of the known guerrillas, assumed his identity. An important part of the training was indoctrination and learning the behaviour and mannerisms of the *Hukbalahap* guerrillas. Captured and converted guerrillas taught the gendarmes how to greet each other and seniors; how to eat and dress, how to live according to the guerrillas' agenda. All conversations were based on their assumed Huk identity: they addressed each other as comrades and brothers, and used the guerrilla ranks, pseudonyms, and nicknames used in the guerrilla units they imitated. They studied Huk propaganda publications, mastered Huk ideology, learned the Huk movement's songs, and learned to give political speeches in Huk style.[8]

When the teams were ready, they infiltrated the Huk areas. The best condition for their deployment was a guerrilla command and control system that had been disrupted as a result of security force operations and was not yet rebuilt. The teams would establish good relations with the local population and seek out the local *Hukbalahap* units and convince them that they were genuine guerrillas. Once this authentication phase was successful, they would gather information about enemy organisation, order of battle, communications, logistics, and – very important – about the local support network of officials, politicians, police, gendarmes and soldiers who cooperated with the enemy. At the most opportune moment the team would launch a devastating attack on the guerrillas and retreat to government-controlled territory.[9] Thus, the big problem of counter-insurgency operations would be partially solved: the insurgents' counterintelligence and alarm systems would be circumvented, their forces would be found, fixed and destroyed. As an added bonus, guerrilla forces begun to suspect each other,

The Force x was originally a highly trained, quite effective guerrilla-hunter unit. Its missions were threefold: locate the guerrillas, collecting intelligence, and eliminate guerrilla units. As time passed and the security forces began to gain the upper hand, intelligence collection became an increasingly important part of the Force x mission, while the violent part gradually developed from quantity kills to quality kills and the elimination of high value targets.

THE SELOUS SCOUTS: RHODESIA 1973-1981

In the 1960s, as the British Empire was gradually dissolved, Rhodesia's large white population balked at the prospect of living under majority (black) rule. After several years of fruitless political tug-of-war with Britain and the African nationalist organisations, Rhodesia declared its independence in November 1965 – and immediately became an

8 Valeriano and Bohannan, *Counter-Guerrilla Operations*, 114-118.
9 Ibid., 116.

international pariah. The African nationalist organisation soon begun an insurgency that was not successful at first: the Rhodesian security forces had little trouble suppressing it. By 1971 the guerrilla forces were thoroughly beaten, and had to be withdrawn to neighbouring countries. The nationalist insurgents changed their strategy: they mobilised the local population, mingled with, and hid among the people, and eliminated the government's informant networks. The security forces were operating in an intelligence vacuum.[10]

The Special Branch (the Rhodesian internal security organisation) as well as the Army begun to run fake guerrilla operations in order to overcome the intelligence vacuum problem. These had some success, and in 1973 a decision was made to concentrate all fake guerrilla operations in one organisation and assign responsibility for them to the Army. It raised a special operations unit, the Selous Scouts.[11] Although it was designated as a regiment, its beginnings were quite modest: a mixed company of black and white soldiers. By the end of the war the Selous Scouts expanded to some 1,800 men, many of them former guerrillas who had been captured and persuaded to serve the Rhodesian government.

The Selous Scouts training was similar to that of the Force X: an arduous selection course that emphasised advanced military and survival skills and learning from turned African nationalist guerrillas how to behave like the genuine guerrillas. The Scouts had a problem with the white officers and NCO: even with the best disguise they had grave difficulties passing for an African. The solution was to have the whites lead the missions from an overwatch position: remain at a distance from the action, while the African members of the team made contact with the local population and subsequently with the guerrillas.[12]

The original mission of the Selous Scouts was gathering intelligence. They infiltrated the areas dominated by the nationalist organisations, made contact with the local tribal population, and made them believe that they were genuine guerrillas. This authentication required patience – it could take several days, or even some weeks. Once their bona fides were established, the fake guerrillas could finally approach the genuine guerrillas, mingle with them, share stories of hardships, sing revolutionary songs, drink home brewed beer – and pick up as much information as they could. Once they pinpointed the enemy bases and camps, they directed conventional forces into the area to strike them, and passed on to their headquarters such intelligence as they had gathered. Unless the team's true nature was discovered, it could remain in the area for a long time and repeat this process several times.[13]

A more aggressive mission was the hunter-killer team that pretended to be a guerrilla unit returning from a long and successful mission to their base. They would follow a previously discovered infiltration route to the Mozambique border, gather information and liquidate the insurgents they encountered on the way. Especially in the early years of the fake guerrilla program the Selous Scouts would conduct operations with the sole purpose of sowing distrust between the population and the insurgents, and between rival

10 Cilliers, *Counter-Insurgency in Rhodesia*, 11-14.
11 Reid-Daly and Stiff, *Selous Scouts*, 65-73.
12 Cilliers, *Counter-Insurgency in Rhodesia*, 125.
13 Ibid., 124.

insurgent groups.[14]

As the years went by, mission-creep set in, especially after the Rhodesian armed forces begun to conduct deep strikes beyond the borders of neighbouring states. The Selous Scouts were called on to conduct deep penetration reconnaissance patrols far beyond the Mozambique border, capture prominent figures in the nationalist organisations in Botswana and Zambia, and conduct commando-style raids on guerrilla bases. The Selous Scouts were good at these kinetic operations, but they lost their original focus on obtaining actionable intelligence.

In spite of this mission creep, the Selous Scouts was a highly successful organisation. They were the best source of actionable intelligence, and were credited with inflicting more casualties on the guerrillas than any other unit in the Rhodesian security forces. In fact, they were so successful, that when the African nationalists did come to power in 1981, the only unit, whose disbandment they demanded was the Selous Scouts.

CONDITIONS OF SUCCESS

Since every insurgency is a special, unique case, there is no single to-do list that would guarantee success when all its items are checked off. Nevertheless, these two examples already provide some clues as to the conditions that must be met, in order successfully to exploit the fake guerrilla concept.

High Standards of Training

This requirement probably needs no explanation. Special operations require highly trained individuals, and fake guerrilla operations are probably as special as you can get. The men must be physically fit, strong and resilient to deal with the demands of guerrilla life. They must also possess fighting skills of a very high order. As an example, the training program of Force x's successor unit (Charlie Company) covered the following areas:[15]

- Basic military skills (first aid, personal hygiene, care of weapons and equipment, camouflage, scouting and patrolling, etc.).
- Physical Training (contact sports, unarmed combat, cross-country running, swimming, rope climbing, and gymnastics.
- Weapons (including jungle knife; bow and arrow; brass knuckles).
- Marksmanship (specialisation on sniping and firing from the hip).
- Pathfinding and tracking (study of animal and human tracks; elimination of tracks and spoors, etc.).
- Map reading and making terrain sketches (terrain appreciation and exercises).
- Elementary astronomy (identification of constellations, directions during darkness; dead reckoning, etc.).
- Jungle and field craft (local vegetation and materials for human comfort, food resources, medical values, etc.).
- Escape and evasion (methods applicable in the locality).

14 Ibid., 126-128.
15 Bohannan, "Unconventional Operations," 65-66.

- Caches and field storage (methods to cache food, weapons, radio sets and military equipment).
- Pyrotechnics (types and kind of pyrotechnics, uses; deceptions, etc., field expedients, etc.).
- Explosives and demolitions (including improvised devices).

In addition, the men received lectures of Huk propaganda, customs, habits and practices. They learned to dress, speak and behave like Huks, under the constant critical supervision of ex-Huks, who furnished around the clock coaching and instruction. Training activities commenced at sundown and ended at noon the next day. Field exercises took place during hours of darkness. Outdoor lectures were given during daylight hours.

A training program following these general lines (and, obviously, tailored to the local conditions) prepares the men both for the difficulties inherent in the authentication process, for the violence of combat if authentication fails, and for the aftermath of a violent encounter.

Involve Captured Guerrillas

Fake guerrilla operations will be unsuccessful, unless some captured guerrillas are turned against their erstwhile comrades and are made an integral part of the program. This is actually easier than one would assume.[16] Very frequently the insurgent fighters' commitment to the cause is not very strong. Many were press-ganged into the insurgent organisation. Others find the demands of guerrilla life too arduous. Yet others have a highly developed instinct of self-preservation, and willingly change sides in order to avoid punishment. And simple monetary rewards are sufficient for some. Applying a good balance of carrot and stick (decent treatment, medical care if the captive is wounded, care of his family, vs. the threat of serious punishment for past involvement with the insurgents) is usually enough to make them join the government's side and remain loyal to it.

The turned guerrillas can provide a wealth of up-to-date information on current insurgent operations, the personal profile of guerrilla commanders and prominent figures of the insurgency, the communications system, codes and passwords, and generally about tactical and security procedures. They can also participate – often lead – operations against their former comrades. The Selous Scouts were particularly successful in employing former guerrillas. On some occasions, when a larger guerrilla team was captured, it would be augmented with a few Scouts and reinserted into its original area of operations within a few hours, without the locals and the genuine guerrillas realising that a fundamental change had taken place.[17] Even when a turned guerrilla's operational usefulness ends (when his former comrades realise that he changed sides), he still remains a useful asset: he makes an invaluable contribution to the training of the fake guerrilla force. The intelligence service of the security forces can discover the ideological foundations of the guerrilla movement, the details of its training programs, its customs and traditions. These are all valuable raw materials for training the fake guerrillas. But the turned guerrillas are intimately familiar with the minute details of their movement, and as a sort of postgraduate

16 Molnar, Tinker and LeNoir, *Human Factors Considerations*, 135-154, Henderson and Goodhart, *Man Hunt in Kenya*, 53-80, 53-55, 65-67.

17 Cilliers, *Counter-Insurgency in Rhodesia*, 128.

training program they can teach the fake guerrillas to think, behave and act as genuine guerrillas – which is essential for authentication.

Authentication

The insurgent forces have a constant (and well-founded) fear of infiltration by government agents, therefore the first major hurdle every fake guerrilla team must overcome is authentication: to be accepted by the local population, and subsequently by other guerrilla groups in the area as genuine guerrillas. Thorough training in insurgent ideology, customs and behaviour (especially when turned guerrillas are employed as instructors) goes a long way and may allay suspicion initially. However, even a small, unforeseen detail may trigger the suspicion of the genuine guerrillas. As an example, during the first operation of the Force x the good condition of the team's weapons and its ample supply of ammunition led the guerrillas to suspect the team.[18]

The fake guerrilla team may have to adopt extraordinary measures to be fully accepted. Calling down a security fore strike close to its own position or fighting a sham battle with a regular unit of the security forces may go a long way to establish the team's bona fides.[19] But in order to be fully accepted, the team must behave in a manner typical of guerrillas – engage in activities that may endanger other security forces and the civilian population. Care must therefore be taken to ensure that, in the interests of realism, the fake guerrillas do not go too far in their role-playing, do not cause significant damage or loss to the government forces, or set an example for real guerrillas to follow. Rhodesian security forces ran into this problem on several occasions. For example, in 1974 a sham attack against a protected village seemed so successful that it was imitated several times by other insurgent groups – without prior coordination with the village Guard Force unit, of course.

Avoid Friendly Fire Incidents

Unless the regular security forces are informed about the presence of fake guerrillas in their area of operations, friendly fire incidents are likely – especially if the regular unit is aggressive in performing its duties. The solution is to have the regular forces suspend operations in designated areas for a certain period of time – freezing the area. This may cause friction between the organisation mandating the freeze and the unit commander, unless he is informed of the reason: he is responsible for everything that takes place his area of operations, and may resent being told to stand down, without an adequate explanation.

However, operational security requires that the existence of a fake guerrilla program and the operations of the teams be kept secret. Need to know must be the principle being followed here, and a battalion commander may not be among those who need to know.

18 Valeriano, "Military Operations," 39; Edwards, *Fighting the Huks*, 18.
19 Cilliers, *Counter-Insurgency in Rhodesia*, 128; Valeriano, "Military Operations," 36.

DECISIONS TO MAKE

The use of fake insurgents raises some questions that need to be answered before the first such group is raised. Training, organisational form, chain of command, operational control and support structure largely depend on the answers to the questions. There are no clearly correct or clearly incorrect answers to these questions. The general nature of the conflict, the current social and political circumstances determine the most appropriate goals and organisational form of the pseudo-guerrilla subunits, the best way and time for their deployment.

Intelligence Collectors or Strike Force?

This is not an either-or question. Fake guerrilla teams are suitable for both tasks. Their ability to operate in guerrilla areas without arousing suspicion and gather intelligence not obtainable by any other means supports the emphasis on the favouring the intelligence collection mission. However, the teams' ability to circumvent the security arrangements of the guerrillas and engage them in combat solves the basic problem of counterinsurgency: finding, fixing and fighting an elusive foe. Teams returning from a strike mission bring with them valuable information even if their primary mission was not intelligence collection. This supports the emphasis on the strike function.

The original purpose of both the x operations in the Philippines and those of the Selous Scouts in Rhodesia was the collection of actionable intelligence. Their secondary function was to attack the guerrilla forces, if circumstances dictated it. The circumstances of the conflict in both cases resulted in a gradual but significant change. It is therefore important to be aware of the risks and benefits of both alternatives. It must be decided which one is more important and it must be accepted that time and circumstances may dictate change.

Who Should Be in Control?

A decision must be made as to whether the fake guerrilla force should be under the supervision and control of the armed forces, the police or an intelligence organisation. It is of no practical significance whether these functions are performed by soldiers, police officers or intelligence officers, but from an administrative point of view it is most appropriate (because it encounters the fewest obstacles and cuts across the fewest bureaucratic lines of responsibility) for one organisation to oversee the operations. Again, there is no perfect, one-size-fits-all answer.

Because fake guerrillas are covert forces, it makes sense to subordinate them to police or intelligence organisations: these know the basics of conspiracy work, they are experienced in performing covert operations, they can ensure the safety of their covert staff, and they are accustomed to processing large amounts of raw intelligence. However, covert police and intelligence operations are mostly carried out by individual informants or agents, while fake guerrillas operate in units (sometimes surprisingly large units), and the armed forces have more experience in overseeing, moving and supporting large units than the police or the intelligence services. The Selous Scouts, for example, grew to 1,500 by

the end of the war - few police organisations would be able to oversee and provide logistics support to a unit of this size.

In the Philippines overall responsibility for suppression of the uprising was the responsibility of the Army, while the fake guerrilla operations were controlled by the Philippine Constabulary. This did not cause significant friction, because all security forces were subordinated to the Army. In Rhodesia the control of the Selous Scouts did cut across bureaucratic lines, and this led to occasional friction between the Army (responsible for administrative and logistics support) and Special Branch (exercising operational control).

Ethics, Law and Order

There is a risk that fake insurgents may take advantage of their special position (lack of direct supervision, secret identity), and violate the law either for their own benefit or in order to carry out the task successfully. It is difficult to decide which causes more damage to the government's cause. Serious violations have taken place in both conflicts analysed here, as well as in other internal conflicts. Even if operational expediency seems to justify a serious violation of the law, in the long run it tends to be counterproductive because it causes serious damage to the government's claim to legitimacy. The government is responsible for guaranteeing public safety, and not only enforcing the law, but also obeying it. This is one of the pillars of its legitimacy, and the grossly unlawful conduct of the security forces is incompatible with it because it undermines the legitimacy of both the government and the security forces, and it puts an invaluable propaganda weapon into the hands of the enemy.[20]

In fake guerrilla operations, therefore, special attention must be paid to the behaviour of the security forces: not only must their conduct be law abiding, but it must also be seen as such. Command emphasis, adequate training, close supervision, and appropriate disciplinary action when violations do occur are the measures that can prevent (or at least reduce to a minimum) unlawful behaviour. Otherwise, enemy propaganda will use every instance of questionable conduct.

However, at the same time it must not be forgotten that an insurgency is an existential threat that cannot be averted by laws tailored to peaceful everyday life. It is therefore necessary to develop and, if necessary, continuously amend the rules on engagement, the procedures for dealing with persons suspected of engaging in suspicious conduct, and the rules for the treatment of detainees.

THE FUTURE

Although NATO and partner nations are shifting their focus to total defence, insurgencies are not impossible within the NATO footprint, especially in the states threatened by Russian revisionism.

The battlefield of today's asymmetric conflicts is the densely populated urban environment, where non-state actors need much smaller numbers and much smaller support infrastructure than they did in the rainforest, the desert, or the mountains. They

20 Cilliers, *Counter-Insurgency in Rhodesia*, 128-129, 131-132.

can disappear into the anonymous and faceless crowd and easily find concealment in the concrete jungle of residential areas. They don't even have to turn to the environment for food because the shopping centres in the cities touch each other. Their mobility is provided by public transport. By observing some basic communications security rules they can use public communications systems – landline and mobile phone networks, the Internet, or even radio frequencies designated for civilian traffic. In a modern big city, the daily communication traffic is so high that short, seemingly innocent conversations or properly coded emails rarely alert the security forces' surveillance network. The road traffic is so high that it is almost impossible to filter out small guerrilla groups if they follow some basic conspiracy rules. Elements of infrastructure and economic activities are so closely intertwined that previously proven control procedures are inapplicable – isolation of the guerrillas from the civilian population will be much more difficult to achieve than before. The needle has become significantly smaller, the haystack has become significantly larger, and the methods previously used to find the needle are hardly applicable.

At the same time, the hierarchical organisational structure, strong central control, and strict ideological and behavioural discipline characteristic of the earlier, authoritarian ideology movements has given way to self-organising networks. A common narrative that does not give enough cohesion to the movement has replaced the strict ideology. The self-organising and constantly changing network model has made it impossible to reliably eliminate and filter out impostors. Some misunderstood news and suspicious events are enough for the groups to start accusing each other of treason and engage in civil warfare. The conditions of modern asymmetric conflict thus place an even greater emphasis on effective and timely reconnaissance than before, and not only provide an opportunity to perform fake guerrilla operations, but actually mandate them.

REFERENCES

Bohannan, C. T. A. "Unconventional Operations." In *Counter-guerrilla Operations in the Philippines, 1946-1953.* Seminar on the Huk Campaign Held at Ft. Bragg, N.C., 50-72. 1961. https://smallwarsjournal.com/documents/picounterguerrillaoperations.pdf

Cilliers, J. K. *Counter-Insurgency in Rhodesia.* Beckenham: Croom Helm Ltd, 1985.

Edwards, B. *Fighting the Huks: Lessons Learned from a Succesful Counter-Insurgency Campaign.* Maxwell AFB: Air Command and Staff College, 2006.

Galula, David. *Counter-Insurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice.* New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964.

Henderson, Ian and Philip Goodhart. *Man Hunt in Kenya.* Toronto: Bantam Books, 1988. First published 1958 by Doubleday (New York).

Kiss, Peter A. *Winning Wars amongst the People: Case Studies in Asymmetric Conflict.* Dulles: Potomac Books, 2014.

McClintock, Michael. *Instruments of Statecraft: U.S. Guerilla Warfare, Counterinsurgency, and Counterterrorism, 1940-1990.* New York: Pantheon Books, 1992. EPUB version.

McConnell, John Alexander. *The British in Kenya (1952-1960): Analysis of a Successful Counterinsurgency Camapaign.* Monterey: Naval Postrgraduate School, 2000.

Molnar, Andrew R., Jerry M. Tinker and John D. LeNoir. *Human Factors Considerations of Undergrounds in Insurgencies.* Washington D.C.: Department of the Army, 1965.

Reid-Daly, Ron and Peter Stiff. *Selous Scouts – Top Secret War.* Alberton: Galago Publishing, 1982.

Smith, Robert Ross. "The Hukbalahap Insurgency." *Military Review* 6 (1965), 35-42.

Trinquier, Roger. *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency.* London: Pall Mall Press, 1964.

Valeriano, Napolean D. and Charles T.R. Bohannan. *Counter-Guerrilla Operations: The Philippine Experience.* New York: Praeger, 1962.

Valeriano, Napolean D. "Military Operations." In *Counter-guerrilla Operations in the Philippines, 1946-1953.* Seminar on the Huk Campaign Held at Ft. Bragg, N.C., 25-39. 1961. https://smallwarsjournal.com/documents/picounterguerrillaoperations.pdf

DOCUMENTARIES

La Bleuite: l'autre guerre d'Algerie. Mari, Jean-Paul, dir. France Télévisions and Public Senat. Documentary film. 2017.

73rd Infantry Regiment

First Spec Ops Unit in Communist Czechoslovakia (1949-1954)

Matej Medvecký and Miloslav Čaplovič

INTRODUCTION

The Czechoslovak tradition of Special Forces is deeply rooted in the Second World War airborne squads program run by the military intelligence service. After the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, former president Edvard Beneš and other politicians declared the ambition to restore the country and later on succeeded in gaining international recognition for Beneš lead Czechoslovak government in London exile. During the war, the country established the first parachute units in Great Britain. Its members were trained to act behind the enemy lines and were specialised especially for intelligence gathering, sabotage, operations to eliminate high-profile targets, deep reconnaissance and finally some of them to incite armed resistance. The most notable actions include the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich, carried out by Jozef Gabčík and Jan Kubiš.

Due to the successful war-time experience, Czechoslovakia established its first paratrooper units in 1947. The 71st Infantry Battalion "Czechoslovak paratroopers" was build according to the Czechoslovak wartime experience, though only as a compromise between various factions within the armed forces. The training of soldiers serving in the unit was inspired by British commandos[1] focusing on performing diversion and sabotage tasks. At the same time, the unit was trained to be able to perform tactical tasks in cooperation with the Czechoslovak ground forces and later on it became a corner-stone of the Czechoslovak People's Army airdrop brigade.

At the turn of 1949-1950, due to the widespread expectations of possible military conflict between the East and the West, Czechoslovakia adapted a new concept of building up a massive airborne force with the purpose to be able to strike on tactical-operational level.[2] Apart from these units designed to act as a relevant fighting force, a special operations airdrop unit was established by 1 October 1949 under the code-name Military Training Facility Chlum.[3]

THE MILITARY TRAINING FACILITY CHLUM

Based on the agreement of the commanders of both Czechoslovak military intelligence services – the 2nd Department (intelligence) and the 5th Department (counterintelligence) of the Main Staff – in summer 1949 the Military Training Facility Chlum (MTFCh) was ordered to train small airborne squads to perform intelligence and diversion tasks. The first 20 men were trained in an 8-months long training program in 1949, even before the Military Training Facility Chlum was founded. The training facility was located in the abandoned village Jablonec within the military training district Mimoň, north of Prague.

The unit itself consisted of 4 officers, 8 professional NCOs and 140 NCOs and men of compulsory military service. As commander, Captain Michal Ďurkaj (intelligence officer

1 For further information see: Marek, *Hedvábný hrot*, 36-37; Švrlo, *Slovenskí vojenskí výsadkári*, 70-73.

2 Šolc, "Změny v koncepci výstavby," 123-126.

3 From the documentation it is not clear when exactly the name "Military Training Facility Chlum" was changed to "73rd Infantry Regiment". However there is no doubt that since 1950 the unit was called "73rd Infantry Regiment". Therefore, the term "Military Training Facility Chlum" is used in the study only when speaking about establishing the unit. Later on, the name "73rd Infantry Regiment" is used.

from the 2nd Department) was appointed. A counterintelligence officer 1st Lieutenant Vladimír Krejčíř served as his deputy. The other two active officers were commander of one of the two companies: signals skills instructor Lieutenant Antonín Šiška and Lieutenant Zelinka, who was the only person with completed airborne training. Soon political commissar Staff Captain Fiedler joined the officer corps. As soon as winter 1949, Krejčíř was appointed as a commander. Final changes within the commanding posts took place in 1953 when at 18 October 1953 Major Josef Kubišta was appointed as commander (he took over the post in mid-December 1953) and Major Vladimír Krulich took over the post as chief of staff of the 73rd Regiment. Further changes included deputy for political issues 1st Lieutenant Karel Dolejš (appointed at 24 October 1953) and 1st Lieutenant Josef Štursa as deputy for supplies.[4]

The work and training program of the unit was very soon affected by the political situation in Czechoslovakia. A great purge was under way to cleanse the public sector from "enemies of the people". Thousands were arrested within all spheres of society, the armed forces included. There, the purges affected mostly officers who were – according to communist doctrines – a real or possible threat to the new regime. In communist Czechoslovakia, a special political campaign was launched against people who served in Czechoslovak units fighting in the West. These were mostly pilots and other personnel who served in the Royal Air Force or soldiers of the Czechoslovak armoured brigade that fought in France and Low countries in 1944-1945. Such was the case of commander of the unit Captain Ďurkaj who was a former member of the armoured brigade. As intelligence officer who previously served at the 2nd Department of the Main Staff Ďurkaj was arrested for political reasons one day before Christmas 1949 after two months on the commander's post. That meant that together with Lieutenant Zelinka, who was dismissed in November 1949, half of the officers had to leave the unit for political reasons.

While the reason for establishing the MTFCh/73rd Infantry Regiment seems to be rooted in the escalation of international tensions and expectations of a possible inter-bloc war, the subordination of the newly established unit to intelligence and at the same time to counterintelligence may seem surprising. Mixing cadres of two intelligence services who were to spend several months training together may be considered a bad option for keeping high conspiracy standards. The main task of the unit was defined as to train small airborne squads out of soldiers of compulsory military service who in case of a military conflict would be able to perform special tasks behind enemy lines. However, the unit consisted of two companies: one was called "schooling" and the other one "commanding". While it seemed logical to train members of the airborne squads (company subordinated to the intelligence) and at the same time train groups that could be used for hunting of such squads (company subordinated to the counterintelligence), subordination to two intelligence services at the same time in reality resulted in misunderstandings over competences between both services and reflected their unequal position within the Czechoslovak intelligence community.

There is another surprising circumstance that needs to be mentioned. Since the 1949

4 ABS, Fund IDGS, box 228, Záznam o provedené kontrole a pomoci bojové a politické prípravy u 73. pěšího pluku ve dnech 3 3. - 5. 3. 1954 [Report from Control and Help to Fighting and Political Preparation by 73rd Inf. Regiment Carried Out on March 3-5, 1954], A, 2.

reorganisation of the Czechoslovak airborne troops there were two special operations companies established within the airborne troops and these two units existed until autumn 1952 when the decision was taken that only the Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff was to be responsible for such tasks. Until then, the existence of these two 'competing' units affected the training program in a negative way and – as seen from the often quite visible lacks of supplies – especially the part subordinated to the intelligence as the position of counterintelligence within the frame of the Ministry of National Defence was up to 1951 (when it was transferred to the Ministry of Interior) much stronger.

During the first years of its existence the 73rd Infantry Regiment in the end did not succeed in training the planned number of trainees. The first term was expected to produce 30 squad members while there were only 20 in reality. In 1951 the planned number of soldiers who were expected to pass the training was set to 80 for the company subordinated to the military counterintelligence. However, in reality there were only 10 soldiers to pass the training in total.[5] Even when the training program started with enough trainees, many were not able to finish it and in many cases left the training program during the first month. There were many reasons for it. 1st Lieutenant Krejčíř, who served as commander of the unit, in his final report entitled *Historie 73. peš. pluku* (The History of the 73rd Infantry Regiment) described what he considered as basic reasons for the failures of cadets: total incompetence, reluctance and unsuitable political attitudes. All three seem surprising for cadets of an elite unit where the entry criteria were defined as voluntary application, interest in special operations, physical preconditions, moral and intellectual preconditions, sufficient education, ability to decide and live under a false identity.[6]

Though, there seem to be more. Despite being trained for difficult tasks, the 73rd Infantry Regiment was left very much on its own. In the village Jablonec soldiers had to face severe conditions: they lived in wet houses with rotten or damaged door and window frames. The village itself was prior to assignment as space for living abandoned for few years. Kitchen, washrooms and water supply were finished only by the end of year 1949. This means that first term of trainees had to undergo an 8-month long training without it and the second term had to do without basic hygiene for at least one month. Only in 1952, the unbearable situation was solved by the transfer of the unit to the village Mníchovo Hradiště.

A chance to improve the situation occurred only in 1951 when military counterintelligence was subordinated to the State Security and transferred to the Ministry of National Security. Since then, the 73rd Infantry Regiment was fully subordinated to the Intelligence Department (since autumn 1951 Intelligence Directorate) of the General Staff and there were changes at the commanding posts. In the training year 1950-1951 out of 80 trainees 30 men were chosen for the part subordinated to Intelligence Deptartment/Directorate. Out of them 14 very soon turned out to be a bad choice. From the rest only 7 men finished the full training year. Out of these 7 soldiers 3 served directly at the Intelligence Department/Directorate. In the following training year, most trainees were chosen from among participants of NCO schools for reconnaissance units and schools for

5 Ibid., Nedostatky v doplňování žáků školní roty 73. p. pl. Z. s. [Shortcomings in Replenishment of Trainees of the Schooling Company of the 73rd Inf. Reg. of the Intelligence Directorate].

6 Ibid., Výběr frekventantů [Selection of Trainees].

reserve officers. The 73rd Infantry Regiment stopped being dependent on airdrop forces of the Czechoslovak Army and got a traning facility of their own. In this training year, soldiers were practicing airdrops from planes for the first time as until 1951 they jumped only from balloons. Less than half (32 out of 72 candidates) finished the full course, but in the end the Intelligence Directorate would be able to use only half of those successful in case of war because one of the successful candidates was arrested for raising suspicions of being a foreign spy and this person cast shadows of suspicion on several others.

THE TRAINING PROGRAMME AND TASKS

At this point it is necessary to provide a short insight into what operational tasks were members of the squads trained for. After landing, the squad was expected to establish a staff and two groups – fighting and auxiliary. Fighting should fulfil tasks in the sphere of propaganda, sabotage (targeting especially factory workers) and military (especially guerrilla activities and organisational tasks related to lay preconditions for or incite a potential uprising).[7] The auxiliary group was to be responsible for receiving material or personnel and for issues related to finances, intelligence activities and counterintelligence or recruitment. This was a model organisation of a squad consisting of no more than 8 men but the structure could vary depending on circumstances. All members were to be responsible for handling a single task and know each other only by a code name. Once dropped in hostile territory, the commander (called as "organiser") was expected to set up a headquarters where the rest of the group could visit him unnoticed or under a trustworthy legend. He was to be the only person responsible for the use of a radio with the signals operator. Soon, the group was expected to – carefully and with regard to basic rules of psychology and intelligence – recruit locals, prepare sabotage operations or intelligence reports. Specific tasks of the squad affected the exact number of members, their needed skills, equipment as well as the time needed for preparation.[8]

In September 1952, the soldiers of the 73rd Infantry Regiment participated – together with other units – in large scale manoeuvres. The participating group formed 4 intelligence squads[9] acting in favour of the "blue side" of the military exercise. All groups succeeded in establishing radio contact with the headquarters and in gathering information on transports of the "red side", at first by means of visual reconnaissance and later also with help of indiscreet red soldiers. A lesson learned from the exercise was that groups needed more than three days to prepare before being send to action (at least five and the last day should be dedicated to preparation of material and resting). Another important lesson showed that in case of groups consisting of more than five men these should be able to fulfil diversive related tasks without losing the ability to continue performing the main task. In the course of the exercise, one of the squad was able to capture the commander of the red side General František Bureš and therefore it was recommended to be able to manage aerial transport of

7 Ibid., Osnova konspirat.-zprav. výcviku [Outline of the Conspiration-Intelligence Training].
8 Ibid., Zpravodajské výsadky – úkolování [Intelligence Tasked Airdrop Squads - tasking], August 22, 1949.
9 Ibid., 73. pěší pluk, Hlášení o cvičení 952 [73rd Infantry Regiment, Report from Exercise 952].

high profile POWs.[10] The exercise identified setbacks and failures, too. Members of squads failed to understand basic tactical rules and in praxis were not able to recognise individual types of heavy weapons on expected level or even failed to stick to basic conspiracy rules, e.g. they always used the same path to reach the hideout so the path became visible soon. After the exercise, the head of the Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff, General Antonín Racek, wrote: "the first exercise when the intelligence squads of the 73rd Inf. Regiment participated showed us that – despite some minor mistakes – this kind of reconnaissance is important for gathering of information and in some cases it might even be one of the main sources of information".[11]

Regarding the training, the first squads were trained according to manuals used by the Czechoslovak Army during its stay in Great Britain during the Second World War (adapted British commando manuals). The arrest of Captain Ďurkaj left the unit in the hands of his deputy who in 1954 commented on this period: "The deputy took over the command but he did not understand the training program and had no written plans nor experience. The training thus lacked expertise and often turned to playing Indians."[12] Krejčíř at the same time stated that since he lacked written training plans he used only the program for training military counterintelligence written on one paper of A4 format. His statement is quite surprising as the documentation related to the first 22-weeks long training course held in 1949 is still present in the surviving archival sources related to the 73rd Infantry Regiment.

This latter training program included 6 topics within 22 weeks. Trainees spent six weeks learning basic intelligence and conspiracy principles[13] with additional two weeks of coping with certain situations, based on experiences during the Second World War with a special regard to methods used by the Gestapo and means to counter them.[14] Ten weeks were dedicated to radio communication, two weeks to training of air drops and one week to both sabotage operations and practice of gained knowledge and skills. The curriculum seems to be very precise and provides exact number of hours to be spent on individual topics. The document anticipates further extension of the training with a special focus on languages, intelligence and conspiracy related topics, martial arts, driving as well as gaining more information on a possible target country. After the training, soldiers who passed it were expected to stay in squads for the rest of their compulsory service for conspiracy reasons and later on be available to the military intelligence. Interestingly, the description of the training program strongly reminds the training program of the first post-war

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 ABS, Fund IDGS , box 228, Historie 73. peš. pluku [The History of 73rd Inf. Regiment], April 10, 1954.

13 It included body training (including box, jiu jitsu and hurdling), pistol and submachine gun shooting, Morse alphabet, political education, foreign languages, general information on foreign countries, ciphering, work with invisible ink, work with photography and microphotography, general principles of personal security while living under false identity, intelligence (what is relevant, evaluation), propaganda, counterintelligence basics and practical training (solving model cases).

14 Trainees learned to use maps, including foreign special maps, trained orientation outdoor, ability to master own arms and equipment, learned preparatory steps before operation, how to behave during flight, how to establish contact and behave in different model situations, trained marching in night and orientation during the night or learned about activities of Czechoslovak airborne units during the Second World War and methods used against them by gestapo. Ibid., Spec. zaměřený konsp. zprav. kurs [Course Specially Focused on Conspiracy and Intelligence].

Czechoslovak airdrop unit, the 71st Infantry Battalion set in 1947 as described by Jiří Šolc in his book Červené barety[15] (Red berets) with the exception of training intelligence related skills that were missing in the 1947 training program.

Once the unit was subordinated to the Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff, the training process improved and new programs for military and political education were prepared. In the training year 1952-1953 60 soldiers completed the training and all were considered as suitable for action in case of mobilisation. Therefore, as Major Vladimír Krejčíř stated, by the end of the 1952-1953 training year there were 86 men (reserve soldiers) who passed the training and were ready for action. The low number was a result of the weak initial three years and further reduction due to sustained injuries or the fact that some soldiers kept ties to politically "undesired company". During the 1952-1953 training year intelligence related topics became the main topic and the commander admitted the necessity to intensify teaching of foreign languages:

"Teaching of languages was identified as major setback as in case of some politically reliable students there seems to be a very little hope to learn what is expected. To eliminate insufficient knowledge of languages the selection process must change. In the upcoming years it would be necessary to learn data of conscripts who know a language of a capitalist country with the help of MNO-OMS[16] manage their deployment to certain units and after one-year training these men could be transferred to 73rd Inf. Regiment."[17]

The year 1953 brought further training changes. The new "Regulation for Intelligence Airborne Squads" was enacted. The document was divided into three parts: general (which included the preparation period and technical questions related to crossing the front lines), intelligence activities behind the enemy lines and, the last part, issues related to training of intelligence airborne squads in peace and war (though the 'war part' was not prepared at all). Much was based on lessons learned during the Second World War but the general expectations were that contemporary airborne operations would look like differently: "Presumably, the deployment of airborne squads for special tasks will be done under 'opposite' situation. That means the base would be in home and airborne squads would operate in foreign environment. This situation brought changes in basic concepts in comparison with the last war."[18]

This "opposite" situation brought not only benefits. During the Second World War, Czechoslovak intelligence/sabotage airborne squads were forced to undergo a risky flight all over the hostile German territory to the drop into occupied homeland, what meant, despite the deadly effectiveness of German security forces, a possibly friendly environment for covert operation with lots of contacts. In case of East-West war in 1950s, squads of the 73rd Infantry Regiment would have to take shorter and much less risky flights to the drop into territory, what meant the possibility to use lighter planes or even make landings behind enemy lines possible. Transport of the airborne units could be camouflaged into bombing missions and protected by fighters. It was no longer necessary to transport squads in night

15 Šolc, Červené barety, 65-70.

16 Ministerstvo národnej obrany – organizačno-mobilizačná správa [Ministry of National Defence – Organisational and Mobilisation Directorate].

17 ABS, Fund IDGS, box 228, Historie 73. peš. pluku [The History of 73rd Inf. Regiment], April 10, 1954.

18 Ibid., Situace, za které bude pravděpodobně prováděno vysazování parašut. se zvl. úkoly v týlu nepřítele [Most Probable Conditions Expected during Special Operations Airborne Units Behind Enemy Lines].

or take the year's season into consideration. Weather forecasts could be more accurate thus limiting the number of missions cancelled due to bad weather conditions. Operations performed from Czechoslovak territory would also increase the probability of a possible return of squads once their mission was accomplished – they could either be picked up behind enemy lines or cross the frontline on their own. Also the radio-connection could work better as due to shorter distances lighter transmitters were sufficient that were at the same time harder to localise. When comparing with the drops realised during the Second World War, the main difference and disadvantage was that squads would have to operate in a foreign and most probably hostile environment. Squads were expected to have a very limited range of operations and to face numerous difficulties, including acquiring provisions and fake personal documents.[19] As a result, their task was to be limited in time providing them real chance for return. Soldiers were expected to know the language of the country and the intelligence service had only a very limited amount of contact persons/addresses at disposal.

The training curriculum was further extended in winter 1953-1954. It should last for 5 months with over 1,100 teaching lessons. All trainees were divided into two groups: "searchers" (meaning operatives) and transmitter operators. Operatives spent most of their time in training topics as intelligence (170 hours), signals (124), political education (115) and languages, (106) while the rest of the time was devoted to topics such as skiing, physical and shooting exercises, working with maps, photography, driving etc. Transmitter operators spent most of the time training signals (254 hours), intelligence (100) while the rest of the topics were very similar to first group, except that they omitted topics such as work with camera, aerial reconnaissance photographs or the organisation of the American army.[20]

We may also take a look at some topics in more detailed manner. During the topic called "Intelligence Airborne Squads" trainees were informed how individual tasks were divided, on equipment, crossing the front line, cipher communications, preparation and period before taking off for a mission, parachute drops, necessary activities after landing, establishing contact with the contact address, searching and marking a landing area, organisation of activities behind enemy lines, cooperation with illegal or guerrilla groups, gathering of intelligence and evaluation of intelligence.[21] Another topic was called "Tactical intelligence" and within 55 hours the trainees were briefly taught to understand the importance of intelligence and knowledge on foreign armies in war, general rules of military security of armies, tasks of reconnaissance and bodies responsible for methods used for this task, reconnaissance in night and in different types of terrain, methodology of interrogation of POW's, reconnaissance of types of units and of "political reconnaissance".[22] At that time instructors had several foreign manuals available, the preserved documentation mentioned a British and a French one. No Soviet manual is mentioned.

---

19 Ibid.
20 Ibid., Rozvrh hodin pro zimní období výcviku /5 měsíců/ [Class Schedule for Winter Training Term /5 Months/].
21 Ibid., Zpravodajské výsadky [Intelligence Airborne Units].
22 Ibid., Taktické zpravodajství [Tactical Intelligence].

DEFICIENCIES

These changes were adopted four years after the establishment of the unit as a consequence of weak results of the previous training years and as a way to improve the quality of training and performance of the squads. The commander of the regiment declared the ambition to attract the best physically and professionally preconditioned candidates. In the training year 1952-1953, the regiment could only pick candidates out of a cadre of reconnaissance NCO schools. In the following year they were allowed to choose from among students of NCO schools of infantry regiments what meant a larger base of cadres, but candidates often did not meet physical or political reliability preconditions.[23] Therefore, commanders of the 73rd Infantry Regiment demanded the right to choose directly from the mass of conscripts who were to serve the first year in NCO schools (though not only infantry but also artillery, engineering, signals, chemical) to get specialist training.[24] However, this request was never fulfilled.

The changes were to be implemented in training year 1953-1954.[25] In his order from November 1953 the commander Major Kubišta stated that apart from positive changes, checks and exercises uncovered where the regiment was falling behind expectations. Officers lacked important skills regarding tactics as well as clerk work, they did not pay enough attention to preparation and in some cases even could not serve as example in behaviour, outlook and morale. Commanders were not able to achieve the desired level or morale among subordinated soldiers and in some cases were not able to fulfil the training plan. For those reasons, Major Kubišta demanded to put more emphasis on training of all officers and NCO's.

As a consequence of the weak results of the regiment, the commander of the Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff General Antonín Racek ordered series of controls, including control of combat and political awareness of the regiment.[26] Controllers noted that the regiment consisted of 201 people, 49 less than planned. Commanding officers were criticised for inadequately planning activities or even for not executing those already planned. Commander Major Kubišta and other members of the headquarters faced criticism for lack of emphasis on planning and inconsistent controls as well as overall inadequate performance. The controllers also noted a bad personal relation between former commander Krejčíř and his successor Kubišta.[27] Another control revealed failures in work with classified documents. In April 1954 another control of combat and political readiness of the regiment took place headed by deputy commander of the Intelligence Directorate Colonel Karel Rovanský. In his report, he stated an inadequate level of training

23 Performed by military counterintelligence. Ibid., Prověření vojáků z. s. pro výcvikový rok 1954/1955 /školní rota/, máj 1954, koncept [Screening of Soldiers of the Intelligence Directorate for Training Year 1954/1955 / Schooling Company, May 1954, Draft].

24 Ibid., Nedostatky v doplňování žáků školní roty 73. p. pl. Z. s [Shortcomings in Replenishment of Trainees of the Schooling Company of the 73rd Inf. Reg. of the Intelligence Directorate].

25 Ibid., Výcvikový rozkaz vel. 73 peš. pluku číslo 1 [Exercise Order of the Commander of the 73rd Inf. Regiment No. 1], November 10, 1953.

26 Ibid., Záznam o provedené kontrole a pomoci bojové a politické prípravy u 73. pěšího pluku ve dnech 3. 3. - 5. 3. 1954 [Report from Control and Help to Fighting and Political Preparation by 73rd Inf. Regiment Carried Out on March 3-5, 1954].

27 Ibid., Plánování bojové přípravy [Planning of Fighting Preparations].

and criticised commanders for looking for excuses instead of solutions.[28] He also noted a lack of emphasis on political education and other setbacks.

In May 1954 a subsequent series of controls was executed and these showed some improvements.[29] Major shortcomings occurred mainly in the sphere of preparatory work, vigour of officers and in knowledge about Western armies, especially the American army. Despite these improvements, soldiers were in some cases not able to perform exercises correctly, especially in shooting, tactical preparedness or in preparations for airdrops; the officer did not insist on making a step after landing but spent more time on training roll falls "used in capitalist countries".[30] In the end, the condition of the regiment was evaluated as being below the required standards.[31] Colonel Rovenský concluded that commanding officers of the regiment were responsible for the unsatisfactory condition of the regiment and ordered to make necessary improvements and to prepare a complex analysis of the results of the controls and to prepare a plan for the elimination of the shortcomings. Further controls in July brought unsatisfactory results once again.[32]

THE DISSOLUTION

Not surprisingly, based on the order of the minister of National Defence from 13 August 1954 the unit was disbanded by the end of November 1954.[33] The act of disbanding the unit seems to be first of all a reaction to the unsatisfactory results and the conviction that a new unit has to be established under complete different circumstances. But the army realised very soon (in 1955) that it completely lacked able reconnaissance squads to act behind enemy lines.[34] Therefore, the Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff in 1956 initiated the establishment of the 22nd Special Operations Reconnaissance Company with its headquarters in the eastern Slovak city Sabinov.[35] The Slovak name of the unit was "*Rota zvláštneho určenia*" (literally translated as "Special Assignment Company") which was inspired by Soviet praxis. As first commander 1st Lieutenant Alois Klindera was appointed.[36] I contacted him during my research via e-mail asking him if his superiors shared with him lessons learned from the experiences of the 73rd Infantry Regiment. In his answers to my inquiries, Mr. Klindera wrote:

"I have read about the 73rd Inf. Regiment that you mentioned only later, during my assignment as commander I did not notice any traces of the unit. I do not even remember

---

28 Ibid., Výcvikový rozkaz zástupce náčelníka zs/GŠ č. 1 [Training Order of Deputy Commander of the Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff], April, 10. 1954.
29 Ibid., Zápis o provedení jarní prohlídky bojové a politické přípravy u 73. pěšího pluku ve dnech 4. - 7. 5. 1954 [Report from Spring Control of Fighting and Political Preparation by 73rd Inf. Regiment on May 4-7 ,1954].
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid., Závěr [Conclusion], May, 7 1954.
32 Ibid., Hlášení o cvičení v terénu školní roty 73. peš. pluku ve dnech 7.-15.7.1954 [Report of Outdoor Exercise of the Schooling Company of the 73rd Inf. Regiment on July 7-15, 1954], July 16, 1954.
33 Ibid., box 229, Zápis o ukončení likvidace 73. pěšího pluku [Record of Finishing the Liquidation of the 73rd Inf. Regiment].
34 Jirásek, *Historie českých speciálních sil*, 46.
35 See: Dufek, *Vojenský útvar*, 20; Klindera, "Zvlášní určení," 25.
36 See: Klindera, "Zvláštní určení," 23- 27.

officers you mentioned in your e-mail.[37] My superiors at that time did not provide me any information, instructions or advices and in my opinion they were expecting a complete failure. I wrote all outlines of combat and political preparation myself and these documents were never reviewed. Only when the unit succeeded in fulfilling these outlines it attracted some attention from officials of the Department of Military Reconnaissance of the Intelligence Directorate who dedicated more time to the unit. I was myself fired from the 22nd Special Operations Reconnaissance Company due to improper class background of my wife in May 1958. One year later the Intelligence Directorate once again had the desire for my services but that is a complete different issue. People responsible for conceptual work at that time had only a very limited knowledge on American army and this lack of knowledge had a negative effect on goals of training and training praxis of the later battalion and regiment for special operations."[38]

Later on, Czechoslovakia special operations airdrop units had a fascinating development and were considered to be a real elite of the country armed forces. Successors of these units even survived the communist regime and its late cadres stood by the establishment of contemporary Slovak Special operations forces.

CONCLUSION

The first intelligence airborne unit in Czechoslovakia did not manage to train a cadre for intelligence and sabotage airborne squads. The Czechoslovak Army invested lots of money and energy into a costly project but at the same time – in my opinion – they did not invest enough to make this investment worthy. From the beginning, the unit itself suffered from childhood diseases, lack of specific training goals, equipment and most of all backing of superiors as well as from the gnawing political climate of the newly established communist regime of a Stalinist type and the omnipresent hunt for political and class enemies. Apart from political reasons, the Intelligence Directorate had failed to prepare conditions under which soldiers of the regiment would be able to fulfil their tasks. From the surviving documentation, one may get the impression that the service did not really care about its subordinate regiment and at least in years 1950-1953 left the commanders of the regiment on their own without showing much (or any) interest in its development.

As surprising may be seen the fact that the 73rd Infantry Regiment seemed to have had no ties with the Soviets (at least there is nothing mentioned in the documentation). I consider this unusual as in the years of the existence of the unit, and especially since 1950, Soviet advisors were attached to basically all relevant institutions. Especially in the army, there were hundreds of Soviet advisors who – not surprisingly – not only provided Czechoslovak colleagues with their expertise but first of all were responsible for enforcement of Soviet interests. Due to the Soviet habits (e.g. Soviet often preferred verbal orders), it is often not easy to trace Soviet influence, especially in the sphere of security and intelligence forces and in the army. Though even in the documentation of intelligence

37 I asked about two commanders of the 73rd Inf. Regiment Maj. Krejčíř and Maj. Kubišta.
38 Klindera to Medvecký, September 29, 2015.

services Soviet advisors are at least mentioned as present, in case of the 73rd Infantry Regiment there seems to be no trace at all.

ARCHIVAL SOURCES

Archiv bezpečnostních složek [Security Services Archives] (ABS – Prague)

Fund Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff of Czechoslovak People's Army (Fund IDGS), box 228.

Fund Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff of Czechoslovak People's Army (Fund IDGS), box 229.

Ministerstvo národnej obrany – organizačno-mobilizačná správa [Ministry of National Defence – Organisational and Mobilisation Directorate].

REFERENCES

Dufek, Jiří. *Vojenský útvar 7374. 7. výsadkový pluk zvláštního určení* [Military Unit 7374. 7th Special Operations Airborne Regiment] Cheb: Svět křídel, 2013.

Jirásek, David. *Historie českých speciálních sil.*

Klindera, Alois. "Zvlášní určení. Historie speciélních jednotek." In Dana Minkewitzová *et al.*, *Paradesantní jednotky „meče armády hrot". Historie a současnost výsadkového vojska* [Airborne Units "Sword's Point of the Army". History and Present of the Airborne Units] Mělník: Ministerstvo obrany ČR, 2002.

Marek, Jiří. *Hedvábný hrot. Československé, české a slovenské speciální, průzkumné a výsadkové jednotky*. [Velvet Point. Czechoslovak, Czech and Slovak Special Reconnaissance and Airborne Troops] Prague: Naše vojsko, 2006.

Šolc, Jiří. "Změny v koncepci výstavby výsadkového vojska československé armády po roce 1948." *Historie a vojenství*, no. 3 (1998): 103-132.

Šolc, Jiří. Červené barety. [Red berrets] Prague: Naše vojsko, 1998.

Švrlo, Peter. *Slovenskí vojenskí výsadkári 1939 – 2004*. [Slovak Military Airbornes 1939 – 2004] Bratislava: Magnet Press Slovensko, 2005.

DIGITAL SOURCES

Alois Klindera, e-mail written to Matej Medvecký, September 29, 2015.

Organisational Evolution of Bulgarian Special Forces

80 years Historical Development

Jordan Baev

INTRODUCTION

This article is based on newly available archival sources from Bulgarian state, military and intelligence archives, in particular, from Military Intelligence Service's records. According to the actual legal regulation, the Bulgarian Intelligence and Security archival records have been declassified up to July 1991. However, the Bulgarian Special Operations Forces (Bulgarian SOF) records at the State Military History Archive (DVIA) are almost entirely accessible up to 2001. Some official Ministry of Defence references, reports, doctrinal documents and normative government acts for the next twenty years (2001-2021) were used as well. The initial years of airborne units' history (1943-1975) was studied by General Ivan Mechkov in his PhD dissertation of 1998[1], while a brief review of Bulgarian SOF evolution was proposed at the multivolume history of the Bulgarian Land Forces.[2] The author of this publication also discussed some issues of Bulgarian SOF organisational evolution in the second volume of his history of Bulgarian military intelligence services.[3]

The history of the Bulgarian Special Forces could be divided in three different periods, all of them closely linked with the participation of Bulgaria in different military alliances. Thus, their development and reorganisation were determined in some way by the doctrinal views and development of Special Operations Forces of the leading allies – Nazi Germany, Soviet Union, and the United States of America. The necessary comparative analysis on the influence of the leading concepts, training and SOF tasks over the build-up and reorganisation of the Bulgarian Special Forces requires to reveal that historical practice and legacy of the Soviet and US armies.[4] However, unlike some thorough and critical expert analyses about the lessons learned from the rich history of US SOF in the last eight decades – from the times of the Office of Strategic Services in the Second World War till the United States Special Operations Command nowadays[5] – the Bulgarian national historiography and expert evaluations does not offer such "historical case studies" so far.

WORLD WAR II LEGACY

After the Salonika Agreement between Bulgaria and the Balkan Entente in July 1938, which removed the arms restrictions of the Paris Peace Treaty of 1919, strong reforms of the Bulgarian Armed Forces started. In 1940 the task to form a separate paratrooper unit within the Air Force was discussed for the first time inside the new "Regulations for the activities of the Army General Command". The establishment and experience of such new units within the leading European armies was carefully examined meanwhile. For instance, an analytical report on eventual "landing operations of the Soviet troops in the Black Sea region" was evaluated by the Bulgarian Black Sea Defence Staff, which required urgent preparation of defensive measures at the Black Sea coast.[6] Most probably, the initial

1 Mechkov and Kostadinov, *Parashutnata druzhina*; Mechkov, *Balgarskiyat SPETSNAZ*.
2 Tsvetkov ed., *Istoria*.
3 Baev, *Istoria na balgarskoto*.
4 Kolpakidi and Sever, *Spetsnaz Rossii*; NATO, AJP-3.5A; NATO, AJP-3.5.
5 Robinson, Long, Jackson and Orrie. *Improving the Understanding*.
6 DVIA, Fond 23, Opis 1, File 789, 301.

intention to create such airborne unit in 1941 was postponed for one year by financial reasons.

In March 1942 a selection process of applicants for the new Parachute Company was announced – from about 5,000 candidates almost 500 were initially selected. Following a government decree of 25 November 1942 287 servicemen were sent next month in two groups for a special three-month training at the *Luftwaffe*'s Paratroops School 3 (*Fallschirmschule 3*) at Braunschweig-Broitzem. Exactly in that time a similar new Romanian paratrooper unit was established with German support, while the British expeditionary corps in Northern Africa started special training of smaller reconnaissance and sabotage groups of Polish and Greek servicemen.

On 18 March 1943 the Commander of the Bulgarian Air Force General Ayranov issued an order for establishing a Parachute Battalion – the first ever assault combat force in the Bulgarian Army. It was composed of a headquarters, three light parachute companies, one heavy parachute company, a pioneer-assault company and a transport squadron with a total staff strength of 1251 officers, non-commissioned officers and soldiers. In May 1943, the airborne squad from the Parachute Battalion conducted a demonstration parachute landing with Junkers-52 aircraft, which received an excellent rating by the General Command. The paratroopers continued their training under the guidance of German instructors. A group of 347 new young soldiers joined the service at the end of 1943 after a special training at the *Luftwaffe*'s Paratroops School No. 3, which was transferred to an airfield near Kraljevo in Serbia. In February1944, according to the confidential Order N-114 of the Chief of the Air Force, a non-commissioned officer school was formed at the airborne company. The purpose of the school was to prepare junior command staff for platoon commanders. Its personnel were mainly trained to act as airborne troops, using infantry statutes for offensive and defensive combat. The principal difference between the Parachute Squad and the infantry squads was: the special parachute training, the availability of special equipment and the saturation with automatic weapons.

Ironically, the first battle actions were against the *Wehrmacht* troops of Army Group "E" in Yugoslavia in October 1944. The Parachute Squad participated in combat operations as part of the First Bulgarian Army from 18 October to 23 November 1944. The Parachute Company was used primarily as an assault unit on the most difficult sectors of the First Army's front. A total of 56 soldiers, sergeants and officers died, and 151 were wounded. Later, two platoons from the Parachute Squad participated as part of the First Bulgarian Army in the fighting on the territory of Hungary in February-April 1945, performing reconnaissance and security tasks and, for the first time, participating in the fortification of a water barrier when repelling the German offensive near the river Drava.

The combat actions of the Parachute Company were highly appreciated by the representatives of the allied troops. In a secret telegram to the Allied Headquarters in Bari on 26 October 1944 the chief of the British military mission in Bulgaria, Major General Walter Oxley, noted: "I was impressed by the spirit, discipline and morale of the troops I saw." This excellent assessment General Oxley repeated in a summary report to the British Imperial Headquarters on 14 December 1944.[7]

---

7 TNA, FO 371/43630, p. 3-5, 66-68.

The commander of the Parachute Squad was Captain Lubomir Noev (promoted to the rank of Major after the fierce battles in October 1944), who was killed on Hungarian territory in April 1945. After the end of the Second World War, the Parachute Squad was re-based in December 1945 at Bozhurishte Airport near Sofia, while two years later at the airport near Stara Zagora in Southern Bulgaria.[8]

COLD WAR LEGACY

By Order of the Minister of Defence of 9 February 1951 the 6th Parachute Reconnaissance Battalion, consisting of three companies with a total of 220 servicemen, was reassigned by the Air Force to the General Staff, directly subordinate to the Operational Reconnaissance Division of the Military Intelligence Directorate.[9] The Bulgarian General Staff was inspired by the example of the Soviet armed forces, where in 1950 the formation of peacetime units with "special purpose" (*Spetsnaz*) began for subversive-reconnaissance actions in the deep rear of the enemy during the initial period of the war. The parachute-reconnaissance battalion was relocated from Stara Zagora to Pleven in North Bulgaria. However, due to the Geneva Agreements of 1954, the battalion was disbanded in November 1954[10] following similar steps in the Soviet armed forces. Meanwhile, three new parachute battalions were established within the "first echelon" divisions within the Third Bulgarian Army in the South Eastern part of the country close to the borders with Turkey.

In 1953, for the first time Bulgarian military intelligence officers were sent for operational-tactical training at the "*Vystrel*" military school in Solnechnogorsk near Moscow. The ability to send officers to Soviet military and intelligence schools expanded after the establishment of the Warsaw Pact. The head of the Military Intelligence Directorate (RU-GSh) annually sent proposals for operational-tactical training of *Spetsnaz* servicemen at the "*Vystrel*" Army School. For instance, by Government Order No. P-601 of 21 April 1956 twenty Bulgarian officers were sent to that Soviet military school.[11]

In the period 1957-1961, special intelligence underwent a rapid development. The creation of such military formations in the late 1950s and early 1960s in the Warsaw Pact armies was a similar response to the formation of elite airborne and sabotage reconnaissance units "commandos" in NATO armies. Since the early 1960s, Bulgarian military intelligence services had begun to pay increasing attention to the establishment, armament and training of special commandos units in the Turkish and Greek armies. In top secret information from 24 October 1962 (during the Cuban missile crisis), the Bulgarian Minister of the Interior General Diko Dikov informed the Minister of Defence General Dobri Djurov about the active preparation of "sabotage, intelligence and other subversive actions on the territory of the socialist countries" by the leading NATO allies. One example of this was the creation and training of "special forces" in Fort Bragg to wage

8 DVIA, Fond 1091, Opis 1, File 12.
9 DVIA, Fond 23, Opis 1, File 1044, 14-15.
10 DVIA, Fond 1091, Opis 1, File 31.
11 Archive COMDOS, Record Group "VR", Fond MF, Opis 809, File 72, p. 24; TSDA, Fond 136, Opis 83, File 543, 1-5.

psychological, subversive and anti-guerrilla warfare.[12]

On 1 October 1957, the 6th Training Parachute-Reconnaissance Base (UPRB) was re-established, consisting of three platoons. By Ministerial Order No. 8 of 4 December 1957, the UPRB was stationed in Krushuna near the city of Lovech. By Order of the Chief of General Staff of 14 September 1958, the base was moved to Oryahovo, and from 6 October 1960 it was stationed in Chelopechene near Sofia. On 13 May 1961, the airborne base was renamed the 86th base and was reassigned to the "Special Intelligence" Department at the Military Intelligence Directorate. At that time, the parachute reconnaissance base consisted of two companies, each with three parachute reconnaissance groups and one sabotage reconnaissance group. With a new Order No. 297 of the Chief of General Staff of 1 December 1961, the base was relocated to Musachevo in 22 km distance from Bulgarian capital.[13]

Order No. 193 of the Chief of General Staff of 4 March 1959 decreed the formation of another parachute reconnaissance unit "for action in the enemy's deep rear" for the needs of the Air Defence and the Air Force. The main task formulated was: "reconnaissance of enemy air bases and airfields, nuclear weapons depots, launch sites of missile weapons".[14] A small unit was established also in 1958 at the Navy Staff near Varna; however, it was disbanded in 1963 and re-established again in 1970. In 1959, parachute reconnaissance and sabotage companies were formed as well at the headquarters of the First, Second and Third Armies in Sofia, Plovdiv and Sliven. With another order of the Director of the General Directorate of Civil Aviation of 15 September 1961, it was required that the planes of the Bulgarian civil aviation and the Voluntary Organisation for Defence Assistance be equipped with equipment for the descent of teams of paratroopers.

An important step in the development of the Special Forces was the formation by Ministerial Order No. UK-0388 of 19 October 1964 of the 68th Parachute Intelligence base in Plovdiv with a staff of 158 servicemen. By Order No. 0010 of the Chief of General Staff of 12 February 1965, the 68th and 86th PRBs were reorganised into separate Special Force units. The 86th base in Musachevo had a staff of 170 servicemen. In operational terms, it was envisaged that the 86th base and the First Army reconnaissance company will act in case of war in the southern direction against Greece, while the 68th base and the paratrooper companies at the Second and Third Armies – in the southeastern direction against Turkey.[15]

At the beginning of the 1960s, changes were also made in the training of the special parachute-reconnaissance units with a uniform program and curricula, holding summer and winter camps and participation in multilateral command-staff and troop exercises. In July 1965, during a summer camp near Varna with the participation of 120 paratroopers from the 68th and 86th "*Spetsnaz*" bases, group night parachute jumps into water with Mi-4 helicopters were carried out for the first time. In 1963, the task was set for the Bulgarian foreign intelligence service to periodically present reports on the doctrines, structure, armament, deployment and training of the established Special Forces of the United States, West Germany, Turkey and Greece. In the period 1965-1972, in parallel with the armed

12 Archive COMDOS, Record Group "M", Fond 1, Opis 10, File 80, 152-166.
13 DVIA, Fond 1544-A; Mechkov, *Balgarskiyat SPETNAZ*.
14 Archive COMDOS, Record Group "VR", Opis 212, File 1, 1-2.
15 DVIA, Fond 1544-A, Fond 2723.

forces the foreign intelligence created and trained three reconnaissance and sabotage groups with 17 intelligence officers, whose goal in case of war was to be transferred "to the enemy's rear" to destroy communications and energy sources (oil pipelines).

In the prepared normative documents in the early 1970s, the idea of dividing military intelligence at the beginning of the wartime period into two directorates was launched: the "first-echelon" operational-tactical intelligence directorate at the frontline command and the "second-echelon" strategic agent intelligence directorate at the territorial command of the Bulgarian Army. In accordance with the operational plans of the Warsaw Pact's Joint Air Force Command, in the event of war, the Bulgarian Armed Forces formed a front-line operational tactical unit. In view of the necessary preparations for the creation of a military command already in the peacetime period, which would grow into a field command of the troops at the beginning of hostilities, in the spring and summer of 1973 the idea of building a unified command structure in land forces was approved. Despite some resistance from the General Staff, the view of the Minister of Defence, General Dobri Djurov, prevailed for establishing a Land Forces Command outside the General Staff structures. Thus, for the first time in the modern Bulgarian history, the Land Forces command was subordinated directly to the Minister of Defence, and not to the General Staff.

On 1 October 1973 an Intelligence Directorate for operational-tactical intelligence was formed within the Land Forces Command. In the structure of that directorate four departments were established. The 68th and 86th UPRB-*Spetsnaz*, stationed in Plovdiv and Musachevo, respectively, were operationally subordinated to the new "Special Intelligence" department.

However, the special airborne training was organised by the Fourteenth Department of the Military Intelligence Directorate at the General Staff through the *Spetsnaz* units. Since the beginning of the 1980s, parachute jumps have been held with new Bulgarian-made UP-9 parachutes on the territory of a large number of military airports – Kondofrey, Bozhurishte, Dobroslavtsi, Krumovo, Graf Ignatievo, Chesnigirovo, Sliven, Balchik, Varna.[16]

By a Ministerial Order of 1 October 1975, the 68th and 86th bases formed the new 68th Parachute Reconnaissance Regiment "*Spetsnaz*" in Plovdiv, consisting of two battalions, three separate companies and one sabotage and reconnaissance detachment. The regiment was subordinated to the "Special Intelligence" Department at the Land Forces Command' military intelligence directorate.[17] In 1975, separate parachute reconnaissance battalions were formed also within the three Bulgarian armed corps.

When preparing scenarios for command, staff, and army exercises, the operational staffs typically used the intelligence reports and analyses about the larger NATO exercises, like *Display Determination* and *Autumn Forge*, and emphasised liaising with air, radio and special intelligence units. In the course of military exercises, along with directive documents and "combat reports", periodic intelligence reports were prepared, which included sections on the "military-political situation", the military-technical and economic potential of the "probable adversary", the deployment of its armed forces and the location of weapons of mass destruction.

Western experts' analyses noted that the bilateral and multilateral Warsaw Pact

16 Archive COMDOS, Record Group "VR", Fond MF, Opis 505, File 23, 34; Manev, *UP-9*.
17 DVIA, Fond 2723.

command and staff exercises became regular after the appointment of Marshal Andrei Grechko in July 1960 as Commander-in-Chief of the Warsaw Pact Allied Forces, although they did not reach their spatial scale and intensity parameters of NATO's annual *Falex/Wintex* or *Autumn Forge* exercises. Christopher Jones, for instance, listed in his analysis 71 major exercises for the period 1961-1980. The information of the US expert was quite incomplete and inaccurate. He listed for these twenty years the participation of Bulgarian armed forces in only 14 exercises, of which just four on Bulgarian territory. At the same time Jones claimed that after 1963 the Romanian Army did not participate with its units in joint exercises, which does not correspond to historical facts.[18]

The first strategic exercise involving troops and headquarters from all Warsaw Pact member states was *Soyuz-63*. In the 1970s and 1980s, ten more "*Soyuz*" series exercises were held, several of which involved Bulgarian troops and staffs. Other major strategic front-line command and staff exercises under the Warsaw Pact Allied Command led most often by the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Forces (Marshal Ivan Yakubovski since 1967, replaced in January 1977 by Marshal Viktor Kulikov) were *Zenit*, *Granit*, *Brotherhood of Arms*, *Friendship* and *Shield*. In each of those larger exercises *Spetsnaz* troops played a significant role. The parachute reconnaissance staffs played a specific role in the preparation and conduct of the exercises in coalition and national format. Units of the 68th and 86th parachute-reconnaissance bases achieved high results in a number of command and staff exercises. For instance, in the larger Warsaw Pact *Brotherhood of Arms* multinational exercise in 1970 on East German territory they successfully performed for the first time complex night landings. These results were unequivocally confirmed in the largest joint exercise on Bulgarian territory *Shield-82* and in subsequent staff exercises in the second half of the 1980's like *Balkan-87*.[19]

In June 1971, a special gratitude was received from the Minister of the Interior for the results of the parachute-reconnaissance units that participated in an operational-tactical exercise together with the units of the Ministry of Internal Affairs "for the liquidation of sabotage-reconnaissance groups" of the probable adversary.[20] Aviation maintenance and provision was negotiated through the Air Defence and Air Force Headquarters with the command of the 26th Reconnaissance Air Regiment, and usually provided for the use in airborne operations and tactical landings of 70-80 transport helicopters and aircraft – MI-8T, AN-2, IL-14.[21]

After the August 1967 larger operational-tactical exercise *Rhodope-67*, the organisation in September 1982 of the joint operational-strategic exercise *Shield-82* was the largest exercise with troops and staffs from all Warsaw Pact armies on Bulgarian territory. For the first time, such a large-scale exercise of the "*Shield*" series was held on Czechoslovak territory in the fall of 1972 with the participation of troops from Poland, the GDR, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and the USSR. This was followed by *Shield-76* in Poland (comprising 35,000 servicemen) and *Shield-79* in Hungary (with the participation of nearly 25,000 servicemen).

---

18 Jones, *Soviet Military Doctrine*.

19 DVIA, Fond 2723, Opis 5, File 7; Opis 11, File 7; Opis 12, File 7; Opis 13, File 7; Opis 14, File 6; Fond 2786, Opis 15, Files 9-12.

20 Archive COMDOS, Record Group "VR", Fond MF, Opis 00547, File 20, p. 203-204.

21 Archive COMDOS, Record Group "VR", Fond MF, Opis 01990, File 1662, p. 103-107.

Over 60,000 servicemen from the armies of the Warsaw Pact countries with impressive combat equipment (16 rocket launchers, 800 tanks, 1,100 armored personnel carriers, over 1,000 guns of various calibers, 500 aircraft and over 100 naval vessels) participate in Shield-82. The last two major military exercises of the "*Shield*" series were held in September 1984 in Czechoslovakia and in May 1988 in Poland.

The last "*Balkan*"-type exercises took place in May 1991, with the main difference in the exercise scenario of previous years being that the front-line defensive operation did not turn into a counteroffensive to seize the Black Sea Straits, but ended in repulsing the eventual enemy troops to the Bulgarian state border.[22] *Spetsnaz* units also participated in a large number of national and army operational-tactical command and staff exercises, such as *Omurtag, Preslav, Maritsa, Trakia, Tundzha, Strandzha.* The last conducted command and staff exercises of this type at the end of the existence of the East European alliance were *Maritsa-90* (First Army), *Trakia-90* (Second Army) and *Strandja-90* (Third Army) under the leadership of the Land Forces Command.

POST-COLD WAR EVOLUTION

By Ministerial Order No. 468 of 30 July 1993, the 68th Parachute Reconnaissance Regiment was transformed into a Special Forces Parachute Reconnaissance Brigade. Later, a separate battalion for psychological operations was assigned to the brigade. The department for special intelligence in the Land Forces Command was transferred to the Military Intelligence Directorate with Colonel Vasil Atanasov as its chief, and the 68th *Spetsnaz* Brigade passed under direct subordination to the strategic military intelligence directorate.[23]

In the summer of 1998, the corps parachute reconnaissance battalions were disbanded and on 1 September 1998 the 18th Parachute Reconnaissance Regiment was formed in Sliven, subordinated to the Intelligence Directorate at the Land Forces Headquarters. Under the command of the Land Forces Intelligence Directorate (J-2) were also the 15th Army Regiment for Electronic Warfare in Gorna Oryahovitsa and an armored reconnaissance regiment in Chirpan.

Bulgarian SOF units took part in exercises and special training on the territory of Bulgaria or some NATO countries in accordance to the participation in the new "Partnership for Peace" initiative. For example, in 1994 officers from 68th "*Spetsnaz*" Brigade participated in a joint training course with the Second battalion of Tenth US Special Forces Group (subordinated to Special Operations Command Europe, SOCEUR) at Fort Carson, Colorado. In August 1995 an airborne company from the 68th Brigade participated in a joint "commandos" exercise in Rentina, Northern Greece, while in the spring of 1996 servicemen form the brigade took part in another joint airborne exercise at the Airborne and Air Transport School of the *Bundeswehr* in Altenstadt, Germany.[24]

The necessity for replacement of the previous principle of "volunteering" with sending of specialised formations trained to adequately respond to real combat situations

22 DVIA, Fond 2786, Opis 17, File 47, p. 115-117.
23 DVIA, Fond 2723, Opis 17, Files 25 and 28.
24 TSDA, Fond 136, Opis 91, File 684.

was becoming increasingly important at the end of the 1990s, when Bulgarian military contingents were sent to their first missions abroad to join NATO peace support operations. In the annual report on the activities of the General Staff' Intelligence Directorate for 1999, its head Lieutenant-General Angel Katsarov noticed that a parachute company from the Third Parachute Battalion at the 68th Brigade (prepared to participate in NATO peacekeeping operations), was sent for training in the Netherlands and Germany, and for Year 2000 training was planned in the United States and Greece.[25]

At the end of April 1998, representatives of the Bulgarian Land Forces' intelligence directorate (led by the deputy head of directorate, Colonel Valery Lazarov) participated in a special conference in SHAPE (Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe), where they received the latest NATO intelligence doctrines and other normative documents adopted according to the NATO STANAG (standardization procedures and agreements) system. Among the documents received were the "Doctrine for Amphibious Operations" (ATP.8) and six standardisation directives for agreed procedures in joint operations of special forces – STANAG 3689, 3922, 3978, 5000, 5046, and 6024.[26] Information from Lieutenant-General Angel Katsarov on 19 June 1999 underlined that a total of 37 NATO standardisation documents were received at the General Staff' Military Intelligence Directorate, among them STANAG 2022, 2149, 2936, 3277, etc.[27]

The NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP) for Bulgaria started a complete overhaul of the structures of the Ministry of Defence and the General Staff and the formations in the Armed Forces. The implementation of a large-scale military reform brought about a very significant change in the appearance of the military intelligence agencies, a key element of which was their transfer from the General Staff to the Minister of Defence. This was one of the first steps in the subsequent policy of integrating the military leadership into the structures of the Ministry of Defence. During the reorganisation of the Bulgarian Army in 2000, on the basis of the "Special Intelligence" Department at the Land Forces, the Command of Special Forces was formed. In 2001, the Command of the Special Forces was renamed the Command of the Special Operations Forces under the command of Brigadier General Atanas Samandov. The 18th Parachute Reconnaissance Regiment in Sliven was also subordinated to that command with a new name – 1st PRR. The reorganisation of the 68th Brigade "Special Forces" included the training of the 1st battalion according to the NATO doctrinal standards, while the two other battalions were trained and equipped as "Commando" forces. In 2002-2003 a new training SOF centre "Tsrancha" was established and fully equipped, located in about thirty km from the 68th Brigade Headquarters in Plovdiv.

Following the approval by the Bulgarian Parliament of the new "National Security Concept" in 1998, next year the first "Military Doctrine" was approved too (The "Military Doctrine" was re-edited in February 2002, and on its basis the General Staff of Bulgarian Armed Forces approved in 2002 the first "Defensive Strategy of the armed forces"). In 2000-2001 some new operational doctrines were elaborated at the General Staff with application of the leading principles, standards and terminology of the actual NATO joint

25 DVIA, Fond 23, Opis 15, File 18, 237-241.
26 Ibid., 91, 105.
27 Ibid, 217-218.

doctrines. Such normative documents were "Doctrine 3.01 on Operations Other Than War" (29 November 2000) and "Doctrine 3.0 on Joint Operations" (22 February 2001), where the tasks of the Special and Psychological Operations were mentioned in brief. However, the declared intention for elaboration of "Doctrine of Special Operations" (NP-3.5) was not realised in the next two decades due to the frequent changes of the prospective operational plans for development of the armed forces made successively by each next government.

Unfortunately, without any logic in 2006 the Command of SOF was reorganised into "Special Forces" department at the Land Forces Headquarters. The 1st Parachute-Reconnaissance Regiment in Sliven was also disbanded while a part of its personnel was moved to the 3rd Battalion of 68th Brigade in Plovdiv.

One of the large-scale military exercises with the participation of Special Forces formations in those years was *Mountain Guard* in 2002. Together with the 68th Brigade, other formations of the Land Forces – the 1st Armored Reconnaissance Regiment and the 101st Mountain (Alpine) Brigade – were also part of the exercise. Bulgarian SOF participated in a number of international exercises on foreign soil after the admission of Bulgaria to NATO in March 2004. Since 2007, a tactical group of the 68th Brigade for special operations with readiness to perform special tasks in the collective defence system of NATO was certified annually. Under the leadership of the General Staff, in 2003 at "*Svoboda*" unit in Chirpan started specialised courses for training officers, sergeants and soldiers to participate in missions abroad.

Soon after the start of the multinational mission in Iraq, in April 2003 the first Bulgarian infantry battalion was formed. Ministerial Order No. 034 of 21 July 2003 approved the composition and the personnel of the First Infantry Battalion. Positions were offered to 495 servicemen, 35 of whom subsequently refused, leaving 460 people in the battalion. The structure of the battalion included a "light infantry platoon" with special training from the 68th "Special Forces" Brigade with a total of 45 servicemen. After a surprising attack against the battalion base in Karbala on 27 December 2003 four Special Forces servicemen were killed, while more than twenty were wounded. A special commission was formed by a decree of the Minister of Defence for a critical assessment of the situation. On 9 February 2004 the commission delivered a secret "Report to clarify the incident with the Bulgarian infantry battalion of the multinational brigade in Iraq" (the report was declassified on media request in January 2014). Two of the most important recommendations were to increase the quality of special training, and to include within the next Bulgarian contingents abroad groups of military intelligence officers for field reconnaissance and protection of the personnel.

A "light infantry platoon" of the 68th "Special Forces" Brigade was sent again with the Second Infantry Battalion, consisting of 464 men. The Bulgarian military contingent was stationed in January 2004 at the Kilo base in Karbala and found itself in an even more tense military-political situation than the first battalion. As the commander of the second battalion, Lieutenant-Colonel Petko Lilov, confirmed later, in six months the Bulgarian servicemen had been the subject of 63 armed incidents. At the end of March 2004, Muqtada al-Sadr's insurgents (the so called "Mahdi Army") organised an armed uprising and between 4-7 April managed to capture almost the entire city of Karbala. On 8 April 2004, intelligence units reported on an impending attack on the City Hall, the only central building under the control of Polish and Bulgarian troops. On the same night, real fighting broke out, the

first ever real war battle of Bulgarian troops since the World War II. The same day, in an interview with the media in Sofia, the director of Bulgarian Military Intelligence Service, Lieutenant-General Plamen Studenkov, announced that in the recent days, the military intelligence has been sending daily information about increasing threats to the security of the Bulgarian military contingent in Karbala. A few days later, in another interview on 17 April, General Studenkov warned of a new destabilisation of the situation and direct risks for the Bulgarian battalion, including the use of a new element – "ambush actions". It was during an organised ambush and shelling with grenade launchers when returning to the Kilo base on the morning of 23 April another Bulgarian serviceman was killed. The "Special Forces" unit within the Second Bulgarian Infantry Battalion in Iraq took part in two special operations with US SOF units – *Iron Cordon* and *California*.

The composition of the Third Infantry Battalion with commander Lieutenant-Colonel Mikhail Popov, who held various command positions in the 1st Reconnaissance Regiment in Sliven and the 68th "Special Forces" Brigade, was determined by Ministerial Order No. 422 of 5 July 2004. It was relocated from "Kilo" base in Karbala to "Eko" base in Diwaniya. The Forth Infantry Battalion, stationed in Iraq from December 2004 till May 2005, was also commanded by a "Special Forces" senior officer – Dimitar Shivikov. In the next few years all those commanders with experience in special multinational operations in Iraq were promoted to command positions in Bulgarian SOF – Colonel Petko Lilov served in Eritrea and Afghanistan and became head of the highest readiness Tactical Group within the 68th Brigade, while Brigadier General Mikhail Popov was promoted to commander of the "Special Forces" brigade (2013-2015).

The participation of Bulgarian SOF servicemen in the NATO peace support mission ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) started in August 2003, when an officer of "psychological operations" battalion was sent to Multinational Brigade "East" in Kabul.[28] From 2006 till 2014 a Bulgarian SOF platoon was sent for protection of the airport at the capital of Afghanistan. Colonel Dimitar Shivikov served as commander of the Bulgarian Second Company in Kabul (March-August 2010). A reconnaissance platoon from 68th "Special Forces" Brigade was part of the Second company in Afghanistan. Bulgarian SOF officers participated as well in the NATO mission in Kosovo (Kosovo Force, KFOR), the European Union mission ALTHEA in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and several United Nations' and OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe) observers' missions outside Europe.

In February 2017 the 68th Brigade was reorganised again and formed a new unconventional warfare branch of the Bulgarian armed forces. In 2018 the mountain battalion within the 68th Brigade was transferred again to 101st Mountain Regiment. 65th Naval Reconnaissance Detachment became a main component for the establishment of the Tactical Naval Group for special operations at the Black Sea area. Following a new change of the "Law for Defence and Armed Forces"[29] the last reorganisation of Bulgarian SOF troops happened in November 2019 with a government decree for establishment of Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), located in the city of Plovdiv. Among the arguments for the proposed change of the law, the Bulgarian government defined two

28 DVIA, Fond 23, Opis 15, File 24, 65, 80.
29 *Darzhaven Vestnik*, No. 42, May 23, 2019.

main reasons: "In accordance with the obligations assumed to the Alliance, it is necessary to fulfill the commitments for the development of the Bulgarian forces for special operations. The formation of JSOC is also conditioned by the need to use the forces for special operations in peacetime tasks performed in response to contemporary risks and threats to national security." With this transformation, "it will be possible to quickly adapt to the rapidly changing military-political situation during crises, conflicts and unforeseen circumstances".[30]

The principal tasks of JSOC were defined in accordance with the "Allied Joint Doctrine for Special Operations" (AJP-3.5A): military support (wide spectrum of actions for joint special operations), special reconnaissance, direct actions, counterterrorist operations, and additional tasks (counter operations against insurgent activities, hybrid threats, illegal transborder human traffic, WMD spread, etc.). Soon after the establishment of JSOC, finally in 2021 the first national NP-3.05 "Doctrine for special operations" was approved. It was synchronised with the latest version of NATO AJP-3.5B of August 2019 (Both NATO AJP-3.5B and national NP-3.05 are classified as "restrictive"). In an interview for a specialised Bulgarian military website in February 2022 the Commander of JCOS Major-General Yavor Mateev declared: "This Doctrine provides the criteria, prerequisites and conditions for Special Forces to be formed, to prepare jointly, to plan their use, to conduct operations according to modern NATO standards." [31]

In the first two decades of 21st century Bulgarian Special Operations Forces participated in various large scale multinational exercises, some of them on Bulgarian territory. The commanders and officers of the Brigade regularly were sent to special courses at Fort Bragg in the USA and the CTOE (Special Operations Troops Centre) in Lamego, Portugal. Among those annual SOF exercises were *Thracian Summer*, *Platinum Lion*, *Courage*, *Balkan Spirit*, etc.

On 26 January 2022 at the Joint Special Operations Command HQ, in the presence of the Deputy Chief of Defence the annual analysis of training, military order and discipline in 2021 was delivered. It was presented by the Commander of the JSOC, Major General Yavor Mateev, who reported the year 2021 as full of dynamics in terms of exercises – national and international. The experience gained, especially during the multinational exercise of the NATO Special Operations Forces *Trojan Footprint South-21*, the certification exercise of the Component Command for Special Operations of the NATO Response Force (NRF) *Steadfast Jupiter 21*, and the certification exercises of the SOF of neighbours Greece and Romania have increased the training of personnel, the operational capabilities of the formations and has led to synchronisation with the model of planning and conducting joint operations with the armies of NATO member states. General Mateev underlined that the Special Operations formations have the necessary capabilities to successfully carry out their main tasks – special intelligence, direct actions, military assistance and countering terrorist threats. However, the planned project intentions until 2026 were not reflected in the approved budget of the Command, they were financially unsecured. The percentage of capital expenditures from the general budget does not correspond to the necessary financial resources for maintaining and developing the defence capabilities of the Special Forces formations. Drawing on the experience gained from joint exercises and certifications and the lessons

30 National Assembly normative document 902-01-16, Sofia, April 3, 2019.
31 www.otbrana.com, accessed February 11, 2022.

learned from these reports, it was crucial to overcome the application of double standards as soon as possible with regard to the organisation, staffing, preparation, planning and conduct of special operations. Some of the main conclusions and recommendations of his report General Mateev announced publicly a few days later in an interview for a specialised military website (www.otbrana.com).

Trojan Footprint 22 (TFP-22) began on 2 May and concluded on 13 May 2022, with U.S. Special Operations Forces, proactively working and training together with NATO allies and European partners across Southeastern Europe, the Baltics and the Black Sea Region to demonstrate their collective military readiness to deploy and respond to any crisis that may arise. It was the most significant military exercise for SOF ever displayed, and was part of *Defender Europe* 22 exercise. TFP-22 included more than 3,300 participants from thirty nations, doubling in size from the previous year and making it the largest SOCEUR exercise to date. "One of our priorities is building resilience against adversary efforts to undermine democratic processes and values," underlined Major General David H. Tabor, Commander SOCEUR. *Trojan Footprint* was closely affiliated with several other exercises that are taking place at the same time, including *Black Swan* in Hungary, and *Skorpion* in Poland. "Such exercises are extremely important for gaining interoperability and training the capabilities of our Special Forces with those of the Allies," Bulgarian Defence Minister Dragomir Zakov told reporters on 13 May 2022. However, he added critically: "The land component is quite well developed, but the air and sea components must be developed, for which we are committed to NATO".

CONCLUSION

On 18 March 2023 the Bulgarian Special Operations Forces celebrate the 80th anniversary of their foundation with the establishment of the first airborne unit in the national armed forces. The three different epochs in Bulgarian SOF organisational evolution display various lessons learned. Some common conclusions, however, could be summarised from that long and rich operational history. The best training and highest operational readiness for immediate actions in irregular warfare and dynamically changing security environment can be reached only in case of an adequate policy of the state and military leadership, including strong logistic and financial support and the elaboration of an efficient toolkit of doctrinal and normative code, synchronised with the actual policy and practice in the allied joint coalition format. Otherwise, the improvised short-term decisions and guidance will lead to steps back and disappointing results, despite the qualified selection and training of the human personnel.

ARCHIVAL SOURCES AND OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

Архив КОМДОС (Archive COMDOS, Centralized Archive of the State Commission for disclosing of State Security and Military Intelligence Dossiers (1944-1991) - Sofia)
Record Group "VR" (Military Intelligence Records), MF (Microfilm collection), Opisi 212, 505, 809, 00547, 01990
Record Group "M" (Ministry of the Interior Records, Fond 1 (Secretariat and Collegiums records)

ДВИА (DVIA, State Military History Archive - Veliko Tarnovo)
Fond 23 (Military Intelligence Records 1908-2001)
Fond 1544-A (86th Parachute-Reconnaissance Base/Regiment Records, 1957-1975)
Fond 2723 (68th Parachute-Reconnaissance Base/Regiment/Brigade Records, 1964-2000)
Fond 2783 (Land Forces Command Records, 1973-1993)
Fond 2786 (Land Forces Command-Operational Department Records, 1973-1993)

ЦДА (TSDA, Central State Archives - Sofia)
Fond 136 (Council of Ministers Records), Opis 83 (Confidential Records, 1944-1989), Opis 90 (Resolutions, 1993-1994), Opis 91 (Resolutions, 1995), Opis 92 (Resolutions, 1996), Opis 95 (Resolutions, 1997)

The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA - Kew, London)
FO 371 (Foreign Office Records)

Information on "*Spetsnaz units in the Bulgarian Armed Forces*" /unpublished/, prepared by col. /ret./ Sirmo Sirmov [2012]

Information on "*Special Forces of Bulgaria*", 7 June 2015 – http://bulgarianparatroopers.eu

Interviews with Col. /ret./ Associate Professor Dr. Mancho Manev (former chief of "Special Intelligence" department at General Staff' Military Intelligence Directorate, Sofia, 2007-2008, 2019.
Interview with Major-General /ret./ Prof. DSc Valeri Lazarov (former chief of J-2 military intelligence directorate at Bulgarian Land Forces HQ, Sofia, 30 June 2019.

Report on the status of the defense and armed forces of Republic of Bulgaria for Year 2020, 5 April 2021 – www.mod.bg

NATO, AJP-3.5A: *Allied Joint Doctrine for Special Operations*, Brussels: NSA-NATO, December 2013
NATO, JP 3-05: *Special Operations*, 14 July 2014, Washington D.C.: JCS

Darzhaven Vestnik [State Gazette] – official edition of the Bulgarian Parliament, No. 56, 21 July 2009; No. 42, 23 May 2019, No. 13, 16 February 2021.

National Assembly normative document 902-01-16, Sofia, 3 April 2019

REFERENCES

Baev, Jordan. *Istoria na balgarskoto voenno razuznavane*. Vol. 2 (1955-2018). Sofia: Iztok-Zapad, 2019.

Jones, Christopher. *Soviet Military Doctrine and Warsaw Pact Exercises*. National Council for Soviet and East European Research Project 621-1. Harvard University, 1980.

Kolpakidi, Alexandr and Alexandr Sever. *Spetsnaz Rossii. Samaya polnaya encyclopedia*. Moscow: Veche, 2017.

Manev, Mancho. *UP-9. Parviat balgarski parashut za voenni celi*. Sofia: Air Group 2000, 2015.

Mechkov, Ivan and Nikola Kostadinov. *Parashutnata druzhina*. Sofia: Propeler, 1998.

Mechkov, Ivan. *Balgarskiyat SPETSNAZ (1951-1975)*. Sofia: Media, 2009.

Robinson, Linda, Austin Long, Kimberly Jackson and Rebeca Orrie. *Improving the Understanding of Special Operations. A Case History Analysis*. Santa Monica: Rand, R-2026, 2018.

Tsvetkov, Lt.-Gen. Kiril ed. *Istoria na Suhopatni vojski na Balgaria*, Vol. 3 (1945-1990), Vol. 4 (1991-2018). Sofia: Asociacia na Suhopatni vojski, 2019.

Czechoslovak/Czech Elite Army Units in the Post-Communist Era

Petr Janoušek

INTRODUCTION

Between 1989 and 1999 the geopolitical situation in Central Europe was fundamentally transformed. At the end of the decade the North Atlantic Alliance (NATO) welcomed three new central European members into its midst: the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary. The process of aligning to NATO's structures helped the Czech Army and its Czechoslovak predecessor to gradually overcome the burdens of their past. Prior to the 1989 Velvet Revolution, the army was one of the main pillars of support for the communist totalitarian state. The post-communist era called for a restructuring involving civilian management structures and democratic controls within the entire defence sector.

The transformation of the Czechoslovak/Czech Armies can be divided into two main spheres: one related to ideology and the other to military expertise. Special and elite units played a decisive role in both spheres of the transformation process. In this text, the definition of special forces corresponds to how they are understood in other NATO countries. Elite units are considered to be elite not only in terms of their training and material equipment but also in terms of the tasks assigned to them or their use in the public presentation of the army. Elite therefore in fact means the best units but not necessarily special units. Nevertheless, their social role is often the same. In focussing on transformation, this paper does not examine the transformation of the entire defence sector, which naturally took place on several different levels, including the political level, but the transformation of the army's special and elite units.

During the communist era, elite units (just as the rest of the army) underwent constant ideological indoctrination. In the post-communist era of the 1990s, elite units had to search for a new way of operating, including in the area of training, as well as a new sense of purpose and meaning. In the broader sense this pertained to the whole of the army, but the need for change was most evident with special and elite units.

Presently the Czech Army has only one special forces unit: the 601st Special Forces Group. Based in the Moravian town of Prostějov, the unit meets all NATO standards.[1] The current capabilities of the special forces soldiers in Prostějov can be traced to their predecessors from the communist era. This paper focuses on the process of transforming the Prostějov 601st Special Forces Group into its modern form. It also touches on the 4th Rapid Deployment Brigade, which has been considered an elite unit since the 1990s – be it for its airborne preparedness, equipment outfit or personnel composition – despite not having been focussed on developing typical specialist capabilities.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

The Moravian town of Prostějov has been hosting airborne units since 1960, a Cold War period marked by high tensions and fears of a nuclear conflict. The then 22nd Airborne Brigade was one of the best Czechoslovak units of the era and took part in military exercises organised under the auspices of the Warsaw Pact.[2] Airborne soldiers were called upon to

1 "Introduction", 601.
2 Bílek, *Ve vzduchu*, 52, 55, 56.

represent the communist totalitarian regime as well as the army; they were considered to be elite and trusted soldiers who were both able to and encouraged to cultivate contacts with their Soviet counterparts. Airborne soldiers received a better standard of rations and equipment than regular soldiers and had access to better healthcare.[3] For this and other reasons, the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia by the armies of five Warsaw Pact countries paid special attention to Czechoslovak airborne units, which were encircled by elite units of the Soviet Union.[4]

During the 1970s the Prostějov unit – by then named the 22nd Airborne Regiment – focussed on special reconnaissance assignments; these began to take precedence over typical airborne missions.[5] Instead of training for mass airdrops, soldiers practiced dropping small groups into the enemy's rear with assignments in reconnaissance or sabotage. During this time the unit was given the honourable name of the 22nd Banská Bystrica Airborne Regiment of the Slovak National Uprising. Commemorating the armed insurrection of the Slovak resistance during the Second World War, which originated in the city of Banská Bystrica, the name honoured Czechoslovakia's wartime cooperation with the Soviet Union.[6]

The 1989 Velvet Revolution signalled a monumental change for the Czechoslovak Army. Over the ensuing decade this also affected the Prostějov-based special forces, both organisationally as well as in name, though unlike other units, the Prostějov unit remained intact.[7] Importantly, several dozen members of the then named 22nd Airborne Special Designation Brigade joined the Czechoslovak Chemical Defence Unit in 1990 to 1991 to take part in Operations *Desert Shield* and *Desert Storm*, which led to the liberation of Kuwait from Iraqi occupation.[8] This was the first time that soldiers from Prostějov had an opportunity to meet with their NATO colleagues; later they also joined peacekeeping operations in the Balkans (UNPROFOR, IFOR, SFOR and others). By the mid-1990s, the organisational structure of the Prostějov unit had adapted to the structures of the special forces units from the armies of NATO member states.

Besides the Prostějov-based airborne unit, the 4th Rapid Deployment Brigade was another driver of transformational progress within the army. Established in 1994, the brigade capitalised and built on Czechoslovakia's paratrooper tradition and took great pride in the quality of its paratrooper training. Both the Prostějov special forces and the 4th Rapid Deployment Brigade were intended to demonstrate that by then the independent Czech Republic was capable of deploying well-trained mobile units into crisis zones, units that were capable of cooperating with their NATO colleagues. This emphasis on mobile expeditionary units is illustrative of the transformation that took place during this time, when the Czech Army began to move away from a focus on heavy weaponry, reduce the overall number of soldiers, and focus on the army's professionalization.[9]

---

3 Ibid., 42, 61, 63.
4 Ibid., 64.
5 Ibid., 84.
6 Ibid., 15.
7 BArch-MA, BW 4/ 2323, Einzelbericht des Militärattachéstabes Prag Nr. 104/90 (v), April 23, 1990.
8 Janoušek, "Chemici s Havlem proti agresorovi."; Stehlík, *Dum spiro spero*, 32-33.
9 Marek, Turek, and Janoušek, *4. brigáda rychlého nasazení*, 20.

IDEOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION

An important part of the military mythology of the communist Czechoslovak state was the uncritical emphasis accorded to the Carpatho-Dukla offensive of autumn 1944, when Soviet and Czechoslovak soldiers fought side by side in the final phase of the Second World War. Heavy emphasis was also granted to the Red Army's liberation of Czechoslovakia, with little regard for the liberation of a significant part of the Czechoslovak territory by American forces or the participation of Czechoslovak fighter pilots in the Royal Air Force of the United Kingdom. Similar 'historical revision' was applied to the military history of the interwar Czechoslovak Republic and the efforts of the Czechoslovak Legion during the First World War. The basis for this version of history was Czechoslovakia's 'enduring' collaboration with the Soviet Union, a country that controlled political developments in Czechoslovakia by force – indeed, after 1968 by 'temporarily' placing occupying forces on Czechoslovakia's territory.

The Velvet Revolution halted the ideological indoctrination that soldiers had experienced under communist rule. The army's political apparatus (political officers), which had been responsible for ideological indoctrination prior to the revolution, was disbanded as early as January 1990. The army ceased the so-called 'politico-social' training, which it had previously implemented on a wide scale throughout its entire structure, and the responsibility for a soldier's comprehensive training, including their education in democratic principles, fell to their commanders. The commanders, however, were not fully prepared for this role at this time.

In the 1990s, special and elite units comprised several generations of soldiers. There were the older commanders who had experienced, even if only as children, the liberation of Czechoslovakia by the Red Army and who had served for many years in the Czechoslovak People's Army. Naturally, the older soldiers often leaned towards the Soviet Union and Russian patterns of thought. Although the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia by five Warsaw Pact nations had shaken their worldview, it had not broken it completely. This was a generation shaped by a leftist post-war ideology and by the Munich Agreement, which had permitted in 1938 the German annexation of Czechoslovakia's western border region.

The younger members of the special and elite units began their military service in the 1980s and were moulded differently. The regime's strong ideological drive had dissipated by then, replaced by the younger soldiers' desire to dedicate themselves to military craft.[10] The younger generation either took a pragmatic view of the oppressive regime or was unaware of its crimes. "As a soldier you don't think about the strategic goal that an order is meant to achieve. When serving as a platoon or a company commander, I was given a specific task: to find something, inspect it, potentially destroy it, or prepare it so that someone else could do their job," recalled General Petr Pavel who had served as Chief of the General Staff of the Czech Armed Forces between 2012 to 2015 and as Chairman of the NATO Military Committee between 2015 to 2018.[11] Just as many others had done before the revolution, General Pavel viewed entry into the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia as an opportunity to do the kind of work he was interested in doing. In fact, he wanted to join

10 Hlaváček, "'Copak je to za vojáka...,'" 73-120.
11 Mertlík, *V první linii*, 302.

the special forces and in the 1980s he began his service in Prostějov. (During the 1990s Pavel even led the Prostějov unit for several years.) Furthermore, Pavel naively believed in the possibility of changing the system from within.[12]

Gradually throughout the 1990s the army began to explore how to reform military education and the study of its own history. Earlier taboos of Czech military history – such as the Legionnaire chapter of the First World War or collaboration with Western armies during the Second World War – slowly gained their deserved place of recognition. Prior to the revolution, political officers were responsible, among their other duties, for promoting the idea of 'enduring' military cooperation with the Soviet Union. Their roles were disbanded after the revolution, though many of the officers remained in the army. In this phase of its transformation the army had to contend with the fact that it had very few individuals who were educated in the humanities yet unencumbered by the past. As a result, the highest positions – even in elite and special units – came to be filled by individuals who had technical military training but little knowledge of history. Many of them came to appreciate the relevance of history in their own work only after their participation in international study programs.

General Jiří Nekvasil served as Chief of the General Staff of the Czech Army between 1993 and 1998. The general was very aware of the need to develop a new elite within the army, an elite that would gain knowledge and experience from abroad. Thanks to this awareness, General Pavel – today one of the most distinguished of Czech soldiers – as well as other commanders from special and elite units were able to travel abroad and bring back experiences that continue to shape the Czech Army to this day. In the post-revolutionary period, General Pavel broadened his knowledge of military theory as well as the humanities at schools and universities in Great Britain – both military and civilian schools. (Between 2005-2006 General Pavel studied international relations at King's College London). Thanks to their education abroad, members of General Pavel's generation have overcome a purely technical approach to the military profession and have come to realize the importance a humanities education has for the tradition and ideological orientation of the army.

At the turn of the millennium (and the time of the Czech Republic's entry into NATO), the Prostějov special forces unit and the 4th Rapid Deployment Brigade were renamed with honourable names that commemorated the Second World War but this time without a Soviet association. The symbolic renaming was important from the perspective of realigning the army's relationship with its past. The Prostějov-based special forces were honoured with the name of General František Moravec, a prominent figure of the interwar military intelligence service. General Moravec continued his service in military intelligence during the Second World War and for a short time after the war, before escaping to the West following the Communist takeover in 1948. The current structure of the Prostějov special forces unit came into effect in 2003, when it was reorganised and renamed as the 601st Special Forces Group of General Moravec. The elite 4th Rapid Deployment Brigade was granted the honourable name of Defence of Nation by President Václav Havel in remembrance of Czechoslovak resistance to the Nazi occupation of 1939 to 1945.

12 Ibid., 327, 328.

TRANSFORMATION OF MILITARY EXPERTISE

In terms of military expertise, elite and special units were able, as a whole, to adapt to the new era faster than other areas of the army. They took part in international peacekeeping missions (particularly in the Balkans during the 1990s), established contacts with Western armies, and engaged in joint exercises. In 1992 Prostějov special forces established contacts with their American counterparts and US Special Forces commanders even planned to visit/visited Morava in order to assist in military exercises.[13] NATO's Partnership for Peace program proved to be a suitable platform for this process. For example, paratroopers from Chrudim (members of the 4th Rapid Deployment Brigade) joined members of the Dutch Navy infantry in joint exercises in the Czech military training area of Boletice from March 14-25, 1994. In 1995 the same military training area hosted joint military exercises of the Czech and UK armies. Also, members of the 4th Brigade took part in exercises abroad; in 1995 these involved Cooperative Nuggent manoeuvres at the American military base in Fort Polk, Louisiana.[14] Meetings with international partners were important for elite units as they helped them to realise more fully the extent of the changes that the new era had brought and to become aware of discussions relating to NATO membership. Until then they had stood to the side in this regard.

The Prostějov-based special forces and the elite 4th Rapid Deployment Brigade held a distinctive position within the transforming army of the mid-1990s. This was made possible by the material resources that were available to their members and the units as a whole. Some members of the 4th Rapid Deployment Brigade recall to this day how soldiers from other units were somewhat jealous of these advantages. But the inclusion of modern equipment in their arsenal was essential to ensuring compatibility with their allied partners.[15] In practical terms, the transition to these new conditions brought several challenges. Many special and elite unit members did not have English language skills, even though proficiency in English was more important for these units than for the rest of the army.

Members of the Prostějov Special Forces Group and the 4th Rapid Deployment Brigade, as well as their predecessors, have played an important role in changing the Czech public's view of the army. Throughout the 1990s the public gradually stopped seeing the army as part of the communist totalitarian machinery and began to value its engagement in international (peacekeeping) missions as well as assistance in times of domestic natural disasters. This related to the fact that the army was aiming towards full professionalization, and once again special and elite units set the tone in this regard. Local towns also began to appreciate that the presence of soldiers could be beneficial. Additionally, the public started to value the fact that the Czech Republic was capable of deploying well-trained mobile units to crisis areas, units with the capability to cooperate with their NATO colleagues.

13 BArch-MA, BW 4/ 2710, Einzelbericht des Militärattachéstabes Prag Nr. 174/92 (v). June 15, 1992.
14 Marek, Turek, and Janoušek, *4. brigáda rychlého nasazení*, 144.
15 Ibid., 124.

CONCLUSION

From the perspective of military craft/expertise, Czech special and elite units managed the transformation period very well; today they are able to hold their own in the strictest of comparisons with NATO member armies, with which they often train. During the 1990s there was a human resource vacuum when the army lacked individuals who were trained in the humanities yet were unencumbered by the past, individuals who would be capable of appreciating the new era and its values of freedom, democracy and the rule of law. For many soldiers with technical backgrounds, the importance of being educated in the humanities became clear only after their experience at military schools abroad. Thanks to their participation in international missions, today's Czech soldiers, in particular those from special and elite units, have a broader outlook and a more open mindset. Consequently, they are not as removed from the rest of society as their predecessors in the 1990s.

In a democratic state an army is able to connect all elements of society across the political spectrum. And that is the situation in the Czech Republic today. Despite this, I believe it is essential for the Czech Army, just as it is for the other armies of NATO member countries, to have as many soldiers schooled in the humanities as possible, in order to assist them in orienting themselves in the modern information world. Such individuals are less likely to succumb to the various dangerous ideologies that are reappearing in our contemporary world. This is even more critical where special and elite forces are concerned.

ARCHIVAL SOURCES

Federal Archive, Department Military Archive (Bundesarchiv, Abteilung Militärarchiv, BArch-MA - *Freiburg im Breisgau)*

BW 4/ 2323

BW 4/ 2710

REFERENCES

Bílek, Jiří. *Ve vzduchu, na zemi i ve vodě: Historie a současnost výsadkového vojska a vzdušných průzkumných jednotek československé armády a Armády České republiky.* Prague: Ministerstvo obrany ČR – Prezentační a informační centrum MO, 2009.

Hlaváček, Jiří. "'Copak je to za vojáka...' aneb Malá sonda do života příslušníků Československé (lidové) armády po roce 1968." In *Příběhy (ne)obyčejných profesí:* česká *společnost v období tzv. normalizace a transformace*, edited by Miroslav Vaněk and Lenka Krátká, 73-120. Praha: Karolinum, 2014.

Janoušek, Petr. "Chemici s Havlem proti agresorovi. K vojenským i politickým aspektům působení Československého samostatného protichemického praporu v operacích Pouštní štít a Pouštní bouře v letech 1990–1991." *Historie a vojenství* 67, no. 2 (2018): 4-21.

Marek, Jindřich, Josef Turek and Petr Janoušek. *4. brigáda rychlého nasazení.* Prague: Ministerstvo obrany České republiky – VHÚ Praha, 2019.

Mertlík, Vladimír. *V první linii: Armádní generál Petr Pavel.* Prague: Academia, 2020.

Stehlík, Eduard. *Dum spiro spero: 601. skupina speciálních sil generála Moravce.* Prague: V ráji, 2010.

DIGITAL REFERENCES

601. skupina speciálních sil generála Moravce. n.d. "Introduction." Accessed April 22, 2022. http://www.601skss.cz/english/index_en.html.

“Greetings From James Bond”?

German SOF Structures for a New Model Army. The Planning of the Kommando Spezialkräfte in the 1990s

Martin Rink

SPECIAL FORCES – A NONTYPICAL ASSET FOR THE BUNDESWEHR

After the German reunification of 3 October 1990, the role of the German Armed Forces (*Bundeswehr*) had to change thoroughly. Although all European states had to restructure their armed forces, nowhere was this requirement more profound than in Germany.[1] Given the complex negotiations to achieve the Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany (the "Two Plus Four Agreement") on 12 September 1990, the price of considerable force reductions to gain international support for reuniting Germany was deemed more than acceptable among the population and politicians. Apart from the reduction of the 500,000 strong Bundeswehr agreed-on and the dissolution of the National People's Army (*Nationale Volksarmee*, NVA) with further 170,000 troops to a total number of no more than 370,000 troops in unified Germany, further force reductions decreased this number. In 2005, the Bundeswehr comprised some 285,000 soldiers and less than 180,000 after 2011. Accordingly, in the 1990s, army structures changed five times, only to be transformed three further times after the turn of the millennium.[2]

All of these changes were intended to overhaul Cold War military structures – and with them the concepts geared towards Central Europe and conventional operations. So it took multiple changes on the level of German foreign and security politics, to set a different course for the armed forces' structures. First, the costs for the economic reconstruction in Eastern Germany turned the 1990s into a "decade of overload".[3] Thus, financial savings became the sign of the times. Second, after the Gulf War of 1990-1991, NATO allies, and especially the United States, increased their urging for a German contribution to multinational contingents for peacekeeping and stabilising missions ‚out of area'. But third, these were heavily disputed within the Federal Republic. Before the Federal Constitutional Court clarified the preconditions for Bundeswehr missions outside NATO in 12 July 1994, even thinking of such missions was deemed inappropriate within the German Ministry of Defence (MOD).

This was all the more correct concerning Special Operations Forces. Before 1989, these hardly existed within the Bundeswehr. Apart from the – not yet fully clarified – West German armed forces' contribution to 'stay behind' organisation,[4] the Bundeswehr planning considered 'irregular' or 'unconventional' armed forces not suitable for the defence of the Federal Republic. So ideas relying on light infantry, militia or even partisan-style warfare remained marginal mind games.[5] Apart from some die-hard paratroops or light infantry enthusiasts, the very notion of 'special forces' met with distrust in West German armed forces. Except for the very few Navy frogmen (*Kampfschwimmer*) and three long reconnaissance companies of the *Fernspähtruppe* to provide the Army corps of

1 Manigart, "Restructured Armed Forces."

2 On the German Army structures: Rink, "Das Heer der Bundeswehr im Wandel"; Rink, *Die Bundeswehr 1950/55*, 52-59. A general history of German army structures, based on archive sources and including a methodological disscussion as well as source-based history of German Special Operations Forces, is forthcoming: Rink, *Heeresstrukturen der Bundeswehr für die 2000er Jahre.*

3 Herbert, *Geschichte Deutschlands im 20. Jahrhundert*, 1143-1152 (quotation, 1144); Conze, *Die Suche nach Sicherheit*, 775-780.

4 Ganser, NATO's Secret Armies.

5 Uhle-Wettler, *Leichte Infanterie im Atomzeitalter*. Cf.: Hammerich, "'Gegen Elitekämpfer helfen nur Jäger'"; Rink, "Das Ungeheuer von Loch Ness."

Human intelligence, only the paratroopers claimed a certain degree of 'specialness'. In the East German ground Forces, the Air Assault Regiment 40 Willi Sänger was to fulfil long reconnaissance and commando missions.[6] But also in the NVA the concept of mechanised warfare was predominant.[7]

In the Bundeswehr, throughout its existence from 1956 to 1994, the 1.(9.) Airborne Division remained the West German Ground Forces' problem child.[8] Indeed, its role increased somewhat within the fourth army structure (*Heeresstruktur* 4) since 1980, when the paratroops battalions were equipped with tube-launched antitank missiles. But exactly this was a measure to conform airmobile light infantry with the predominant mechanised warfare instead of commando-style '*Jagdkampf*'. Anyway, most West German army planners remained very sceptical about airmobile tactical concepts.[9] As a result, the equipment of the three Airborne brigades remained rather 'unmodern'. Instead, West German Army operational thinking focused on its armoured and mechanised brigades.

Already before 1989, some planners within the MOD Army Staff (*Führungsstab des Heeres*) took notice of conflicts and potential missions 'out of area', most of them kept a high degree of distrust against and even contempt for the idea of Bundeswehr Special Operations Forces. When in June 1995, the planning department had drafted a paper named "Blueprint for Army Special Forces" (*Zielvorstellungen Spezialkräfte*), they met with furious criticism of some neighbouring staff departments. One of them read:

"These objectives for Army Special Forces come very close to a catalog offer from department 007. Greetings from James Bond! One asks rightly the question as to whether we are slightly mistaken here. According to this paper, the range of assignments for the special forces should range from anti-guerrilla warfare to combating weapons of mass destruction. There seem to be no limits to fantasy."[10]

These lines originated from the Army Staff subdepartment for leadership in combat (*Stabsabteilung III Truppenführung*). They clearly reflected the mainstream operational and organisational thinking of the West German Army.

Setting up German Special Operations Forces had to overcome a multitude of hindrances. Based on newly accessed sources from the Federal Archive (*Bundesarchiv*), the aim of this paper is to clarify the conceptualising process of the German Army's Special Forces Command (*Kommando Spezialkräfte*, KSK), which took place during the 1990s. The first ideas for this regiment-sized, albeit markedly differently organised unit were drafted in 1993. Since April 1996, the first SOF operational elements emerged out of the transformed Airborne Brigade 25. They were ready for action in April 1997 and deployed to Kosovo in 1999. But it was not until 2001, that the Kommando Spezialkräfte was considered fully

6 Dissberger, Vom Himmel auf die Erde ins Gefecht, 62-103.

7 Heinemann, *Die DDR und ihr Militär*, 185-188, 197-207.

8 Cf. Rink, "Strukturen brausen um die Wette," 477-482.

9 BArch-MA, BH 1/ 30 200, Fü H VI 1, TgbNr. 500/79, *Luftlandetruppe in den 90er Jahren*, April 2, 1979 and the remarks drafted by the Inspector of the Army.

10 BArch-MA, BH 1/ 28 625, Fü H IIII 2, *Zielvorstellung Spezialkräfte des Heeres*, June 13, 1995. The original quotation reads: "Diese Zielvorstellungen 'Spezialkräfte des Heeres' kommen einem Katalogangebot der Abteilung 007 sehr nahe. James Bond läßt grüßen! Es stellt sich doch mit Recht die Frage, ob wir uns hier nicht ein wenig verheben. Die Zielpalette der Spezialkräfte soll vom Antiguerillakampf bis hin zum Bekämpfen von Massenvernichtungsmitteln reichen. Der Phantasie werden keine Grenzen gesetzt." (my translation).

operational.[11] Unknowingly, indeed, the pertinent Army Staff planners who predicted that deadline already in May 1999, were right in a certain way: the German contribution to NATO forces' deployment in Afghanistan included KSK personnel for the Operation *Enduring Freedom*.[12] However, this one – and many missions to come – allegedly did not see too many genuinely SOF-like operations. According to newspaper reports, German SOF operators often carried out missions, that could have also been done by highly-trained infantry soldiers.[13]

But where is the difference between these and those? How did the new SOF unit really differ from 'conventional' paratroops or light infantry? For obvious reasons, most pertinent archive sources concerning the time since 2000 remain classified. Instead, it is possible – and rather advisable – to focus on the planning and conception process which took place in the previous decade, the 1990s. This, in turn, contrasted starkly with the trends the Bundeswehr and its army had followed since the 1950s. So the underlying question should be directed towards the long- and medium-term process of structural change – and the corresponding organisational inertia that had to be overcome. Apart from this, the military planners of the unified German Armed Forces (who, throughout the 1990s, had exclusively a West-German socialisation background), had to reckon with criticism from politicians and the mass media.

On a more abstract level, the history of conceiving German Special Operations Forces' structures during the 1990s offers insights for military organisation in general: the planning process had to take into account the military units' composition as well as command structures. Doing this, the trade-off between organisational flexibility and military efficiency had to be addressed. Behind everything lurked the question concerning the Special Operations Forces' 'specialness'. So, apart from depicting the internal discourse within the Army Staff planning department, this paper tries also to illuminate the military innovation process in general: the Bundeswehr planners' challenge consisted to conceive 'new' concepts. But given the lack of pertinent experience, these could not yet be based on existing tactical, administrative and legal regulations. However, these in turn were essential to set up politically controlled and legally based training procedures, materiel procurement and the development of appropriate mission concepts and tactical manuals. So, the planners were caught in a vicious circle.

MILITARY PLANNING PROCESS: OR HOW TO ORGANISE AN ORGANISED ORGANISATION

Already Thomas E. Lawrence of Arabia derided the regular troops as "little toy men". By contrast, he described himself as a "sham soldier".[14] Of course, both quotes implied, that his and his Arab companions' tactical successes in fighting the Ottoman army were due

11 BArch-MA, BH 1/ 29 123, Fü H II 6 *Materialausstattung des KSK*, May 5, 1999; Ibid., handschriftliche Notiz: *Bespr. Materialausstattung KSK*, May 11, 1999 (quotation); Ibid., Fü H II 6, Heeresamt, *Materialausstattung KSK*, May 12, 1999.

12 Cf. for instance, Rauss, "Die Profis."; Sünkler, *Kommando Spezialkräfte*, 46-70.

13 Goetz, Koelbl, Rosenbach and Szandar, "Die Führung hat versagt," 22-27.

14 Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, 205 (first quotation), 486 (second quotation), 469, 522.

more to the lack of a formal organisation than to its existence. According to this narrative, insurgents as well as their *counter*-insurgency adversaries do have to stand out from regular troops. By extension, this also applies to Special Operations Forces. And indeed, T.E. Lawrence depicted his opponents' regular armed forces as inflexible, overly complex organisation with limited ability to learn. Probably, also this contributed to his great success with the public.[15]

But strictly speaking, the term 'military organisational structure' implies a double pleonasm: The military, to be the military, is already defined by its 'organisation'. Otherwise, we should talk about 'irregular' forces. In contrast to the latter, the armed forces, are 'regular', because they are run by the state: "War made the state, and the state made war."[16] In view of Charles Tilly's classical saying, only armies wage war. And given Max Weber's famous dictum, that the modern institutional state is based on the monopoly of legitimate coercive power,[17] what we call war, is only waged by armies. These in turn are institutions and thus 'regular' by definition. Special Operations Forces engage in combat too, but their tasks range from reconnaissance missions to 'direct action', from targeting military objectives, terrorist networks and even organised crime. For this, they are specialists for 'operations other than war'. But if Special Operations Forces belong to the military, although they do not only engage in genuine military operations, what does this mean for their structure? If T.E. Lawrence was right, at least they should not be organised the way, which had become classical to the European-style armies since the early modern age: as a pyramid-like hierarchy of strict rules and regulations.

However, the formations of the parade lineup do not reflect all aspects of formal military organisational structures. Things are more complex. First, the military 'is' an organisation; it is a "purposeful social system". Secondly, it is the place where 'organisation' takes place in term of standard operating procedures. And thirdly, the military is a 'permanent structure'. Organisation is an institution, a set of procedures and a structure. And this refers to a threefold identity: organisation organises organisation. Thus: organisation (the formal structure) organises (through procedures) organisation (as an institution).[18] The same applies vice versa: organisation (the institution) is characterised by the process of building, implementing and maintaining its functional institutional elements. When we talk about 'organisation', it is important to take this multiple meaning into account.

Organisation is a set of structured communication. Given the existing organisational 'boxes', this also implies 'miscommunication'. That may be the case when "one hand does not know what the other is doing"; or when intermediate hierarchical levels appear to work as a 'clay layer' so that it prevents 'unwanted' information from bottom to top or vice versa. However, this reduction of information lies in the nature of organisation – and ultimately in that of the division of labour. Only this allows advantages of specialisation, but it creates disadvantages of barred information and narrow-mindedness. At its core, the organisational barriers arise through developing and maintaining social and communicative units.

15 On T.E. Lawrence cf. the various contributions in: Fansa and Hoffmann ed., *Lawrence von Arabien*; Rink, "Lawrence und der Partisanenkrieg."

16 Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States*, 42; similar: Tilly, *War Making*.

17 Weber, "Politik als Beruf," 506.

18 Elbe and Peters, *Die temporäre Organisation*, 4-10, here 6 f. Here also the reference to the trinity. Cf.: Türk, *Die Organisation der Welt*, 44-76; Türk, Lemke and Bruch, "Organisation."

Logically, it is the very same principle that acts 'within' the organisation(s) to focus its members on the 'relevant' issues: the organisation creates and maintains information barriers towards the 'outside' world.

Put into the narrower perspective of military organisation, a first distinction can be made between 'leadership' and 'structure'. The latter refers to the 'boxes' of the Table of organisation and equipment (TO&E) charts, the former to the people working inside them. Second, organisational structure can be differentiated from process organisation. Third, the formal organisation shows a Janus-like face: the 'cold' state of the 'organic' basic structure in the garrisons contrasts with the 'hot' organisation in action, and especially in combat.[19]

So, military organisation is characterised by an underlying irony: on the one hand, readiness for combat is its very structure-determining feature, but on the other, the ideal of a formal (military) structure only comes to light in peacetime service. And more: since military action in combat aims to destroy the opposing armed forces' structure, organised action is essential. Alas, this often leads to the destruction of the own forces' structure, too. For this, apart from its instrumentality for political aims and (organised) violence, war is the realm of contingency. It is imprinted by the "wondrous trinity" described by Carl von Clausewitz in his work On War.[20] Nevertheless, the organisation's planning staff is to rule the non-contingent world: regulations must be followed, concepts applied, missions accomplished. This is where the "grammar-book-effect" described by the anthropologist David Graeber comes into play: even the description of pre-existing rules can lead to using them as prescriptive norms for domination – or simply as a way to short-cut otherwise endless disputes.[21]

So, military organisation is shaped by the anticipation of contingency as well as by its opposite: the red tape of formal regulations. And any form of real innovation – whether in combat or in paperwork – cannot take place according to the rules. While formal rules are laid down in already existing white papers, field manuals, staff regulations and military textbooks, *real* innovations are not – otherwise the latter would not be new. Given the requirement (or prejudice), that soldiers who are involved in planning or accomplishing special operations should be innovative people, they should "bend the rules, [in order to] end-run the bureaucracy".[22] This quotation from Alvin and Heidi Toffler, who in turn had interviewed U.S. defence intellectuals in the 1980s and early 1990s, reflected the distrust for the "corporate dinosaurs" which was so current in the millennium era. So the Tofflers advocated 'smart' weapon systems and corresponding command and control procedures. For the future, they predicted low intensity missions in "niche wars" waged by "Ph.D with Rucksack".[23] Just as they expected a decentralised economy, they foresaw decentred security threats: small-scale warfare combined with clashes in the 'info-sphere'. So, the future in

19 Soeters, Winslow and Weibull, "Military Culture," 245-249; Soeters, "Organizational Cultures," 255-257; Elbe and Richter, "Militär: Institution und Organisation," 244-246.

20 Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, book I, chapter 28, 212. Further: Herberg-Rothe and Son, *Order Wars and Floating Balance*, 71-89 (cf. also chart, 88); Herberg-Rothe, "Demokratische Krieger," 420-426; Heuser, *Clausewitz lesen*, 55-87; Scheipers, *On small war*, 106-108.

21 Graeber, *The Utopia of Rules*, 197.

22 Toffler and Toffler, *War and anti-war*, 88.

23 Ibid., 183 (dinosaurs), 110 f. ("Ph.D"), 103-112: "niche wars" (chapter captation).

military affairs would belong to the high-tech sector as well as to special operations. And just as information-based reconnaissance and weapon systems as well as denial-of-service attacks on the internet would determine forthcoming conflicts on the high technology end, there would emerge a wide range of special operations on the low end. Not surprisingly, the Tofflers, referred also to popular culture. Somewhat critically, they pointed to the Vietnam veteran John J. Rambo and the technically enhanced action hero Terminator displayed at the movies.[24] And also recent research on SOF topics refers to the multiple connections between image, narrative and reality.[25]

When the German MOD planners were confronted with such ideas originating from their Army Staff fellows in 1995, some of them were reminded of the movie pictures featuring James Bond. In the movies Moonraker (1978), The Living Daylights (1987) and Licence to Kill (1995), the British MI6 agent regularly staged parachute jumps and scuba diving actions. All these technical gadgets, deployment, insertion and combat procedures contrasted sharply from the conventional approach demanded by the Bundeswehr. By the time the German army started to conceive a set of concepts, that was dreamed of within the paratroops, both equipment and approved regulations missed. and when the airborne experts started to train pertinent commando procedures, not all of them worked according to the rule book.

So the subject of military organisation concerning SOF refers to the problem of "useful illegality". Already in the mid-1960s, the German sociologist Niklas Luhmann used this concept to describe the paradox that strictly compliant performance of duties leads to a dysfunctional civil service – if this is not counteracted by informal and thus rule-breaking measures. In recent times, the organisational researcher Stefan Kühl took up this idea.[26] The very problem, however, was already depicted by George Orwell's Animal Farm. There, he mocked the nightmare of an organisational system, whose division of labour had created a hierarchical command and control structure, which had fallen into the hands of a talinist clique. The power-hungry pig Napoleon – and of course, the name indicates historical as well as military-organisational parallels – had turned the formal rules into an instrument of oppression: "All animals are equal. But some animals are more equal than others."[27] So there is a problem with Special Operations Forces: all elements of the armed forces consist of specialised services and branches. So what reasons and which criteria do exist for the 'specialness' of SOF?[28]

---

24 Toffler and Toffler, *War and anti-war*, 108 (Rambo), 138 f. (Terminator). Cf. Rambo. First Blood (USA 1982); Cf.: *Rambo. First Blood Part II* (USA 1985); Rambo III (USA 1988); The Terminator (USA 1984); Terminator 2: Judgment Day (USA 1991).

25 Spencer, "The special operations forces mosaic," 28-40, here 33-37; Turnley, "Warrior-diplomats," 42, 48.

26 Kühl, Brauchbare Illegalität; Luhmann, Funktionen und Folgen formaler Organisation, 304-314.

27 Orwell, *Animal Farm*, 80.

28 Turnley, Ben-Ari and Michael, "Special operations forces (SOF) and social science," 1.

THE CONVENTIONAL APPROACH: THE (ALMOST) CLASSIC TWELVE TANKS DIVISIONS

If the army of the 'old Bundeswehr' before 1989-1990 had to be described by two typical unit types, then it would probably be the armoured infantry brigade (*Panzergrenadierbrigade*) on the one hand and the Homeland Security Regiment (*Heimatschutzregiment*) on the other. In operations and for exercises, the former integrated other 'modern' – e.g. armoured elements in order to form the standard combined arms task force. On the other hand, the home defence units mainly consisted of standard infantry elements. But the preferred concept was to gain more mechanised forces: for this, in 1981, the Homeland Security Brigades (*Heimatschutzbrigaden*) 51 and 56 were structured almost like armoured brigades.[29] This shows one thing very clearly: to be taken seriously in the alliance and to have a say there, the West German Army's operational and organisational concept focused on armoured warfare.

Since the days of a secret expert conference, which took place in October 1950 in the remote Himmerod Abbey in the Eifel mountains, the outline of a future German army clearly accentuated twelve armoured divisions.[30] And in fact, in 1954, the German army planners of Amt Blank – still working in civilian clothes – advocated a division structure, which came very close to the Brigade 1944, conceived (albeit never fully introduced) in the final days of the doomed Wehrmacht.[31] Alas, when the Bundeswehr was set up since 1955-1956, at first, the U.S. Army divisions lent the model for the first West German army structure. But while the first army units were still being set up, the American-style 'Army structure 1' was already outdated. As early as in 1957, a successor model was designed, tested in 1958, and put into practice under the designation of 'Division 59'. This was the 'German model': Its 'organic' brigades comprised two tank battalions, one armoured mechanised and one armoured artillery battalion within the tank brigades; and three armoured mechanised, and one tank and armoured artillery battalions within the mechanised infantry brigades.[32] Despite the fact, that most Wehrmacht divisions consisted of infantry during the entire war, also the Bundeswehr planners remained deeply imprinted by the armoured divisions. It was their model which was advocated by former Wehrmacht generals after the war. Alongside their tactical expediency, it was the mythical image shaped by the Blitzkrieg-saga, which stood in the background.[33]

Thus, in contrast to the Bundeswehr's self-image as a new model army, her unit structures were shaped according to the image of the Wehrmacht Panzerwaffe. During the decades to come, the Bundeswehr army planners remained true to the concept of combined arms. For this, tank (*Panzer*), armoured infantry (*Panzergrenadiere*) and fire support elements

29 For a general outline: Rink, *Die Bundeswehr 1950/55*, 52-59. The official concepts are outlined in the White Papers, edited by the MOD: *Weißbuch 1985*, 188-233. To identify the military units of East and West German armed forces, cf. *Standortdatenbank der Bundeswehr*, https://www.deutsche-militaerstandorte-nach1945.de/.

30 On the founding document of the West German armed forces: Rautenberg and Wiggershaus, "'Die Himmeroder Denkschrift.'" Cf. the somewhat controversial approach: Keßelring and Loch, "Himmerod war nicht der Anfang."

31 Pöhlmann, Der Panzer und die Mechanisierung, 468-474.

32 Rink, "Strukturen brausen um die Wette," 372-405.

33 Frieser, *Blitzkrieg-Legende*, 118-122, 184; Pöhlmann, *Der Panzer und die Mechanisierung*, 504-516.

such as artillery had to be mixed 'organically' on a low level. And as early as in 1959, the German Commander Allied Land Forces Central Europe Hans Speidel, who had already dominated informally the Himmerod conference nine years earlier, pushed through to establish the new (West) German brigade structure as a model for all of the European NATO partners' armies. And for the subsequent three decades, the Bundeswehr ground forces were grouped around their hard core: ten armoured and mechanised divisions. Already in the first papers, the term 'infantry' stood in stark contrast to a 'modern' branch of service: armoured infantry – '*Panzergrenadiere*'.[34] However, as the procurement of a first armoured infantry fighting vehicle turned into disaster, it took until 1971, that the Bundeswehr was equipped according to the tactical and organisational concepts that stemmed from the mid-1940s and 1950s.[35]

The Bundeswehr army structures 2 to 4 thus reflected the 'classic' German approach to military organisational planning. Besides the fact, that artillery and engineer components could also have, if necessary, access to nuclear munition (which in turn, was guarded by U.S. forces), the army planners observed the advice of Wehrmacht Panzer General Hasso von Manteuffel given in the early 1950s: all armoured elements should be combined into one unit. And: "the Panzerwaffe plays first violin in this orchestra!"[36] By the end of the 1980s, the 345,000-men strong West German army formed the core of the active military service personnel of nominally roughly 495,000 men (and some very few women who were only allowed to join the medical service). The total military strength in case of war would have comprised some 1,3 million soldiers, out of which the army would have contributed the lions' share with a million soldiers. On the organisational level, the field army consisted of twelve divisions with 38 active combat brigades. Alas, at a closer look, there were only '11½' divisions: whereas the 1.(8.) Mountain Division was enforced with mechanised elements, the 1st (9th) Airborne Division lacked the personnel strength of their brigades as well as the appropriate divisional troops to be considered fully fledged. All in all, the neglect of air mobility as well as of specialised light infantry in the army of the Bundeswehr before 1989 resulted from decisions that had already been made in the early 1950s.[37]

Ironically, on the day of German unity on 3 October 1990, the army personnel initially reached its highest all-time strength with 360,000 soldiers. The remnants of the ground forces of the National People's Army which in 1987 had consisted of 106,000 soldiers, had to be integrated into the Bundeswehr. The majority of them however were drafted soldiers, whereas most of the higher ranking officers had been dismissed. Unplanned, but at last, the twelve armoured divisions planned forty years before were more than complete by now: the army consisted of 14 divisions – but only for a short time.

According to the "Two Plus Four Agreement", the German armed forces had to be

34 On this service branch cf. Senger und Etterlin, Die Panzergrenadiere; Richter ed., Panzergrenadiere. Eine Truppengattung im Spiegel ihrer Geschichte; Deinhardt, Panzergrenadiere.

35 Kollmer, *Rüstungsgüterbeschaffung*; Kollmer, "Klotzen, nicht kleckern," 538-566.

36 BArch-MA, N 617/18, p. 10 a, Hasso von Manteuffel: Welches sind die Ursachen, dass die Deutsche Panzertruppe auch noch gegen Ende des Krieges hinsichtlich Erziehung, Ausbildung und Verwendung auf dem Gefechtsfelde auf besonderer Höhe stand? Köln, July 14, 1948, memorandum, sent to the army planning board in 'Amt Blank'. On tanks and armoured forces in the age of World War I and II: Pöhlmann, *Der Panzer und die Mechanisierung*; on Bundeswehr doctrine in the first two decades: Hammerich, "Kommiss kommt von Kompromiss," 17-351; Hammerich, "Fighting for the Heart of Germany."

37 Rink, "Das Heer der Bundeswehr im Wandel," 138, 148; Rink, *Die Bundeswehr 1950/55*, 57.

reduced to 370,000 men by the end of 1994. Accordingly, the Army Inspector (*Inspekteur des Heeres*), the commanding officer of the army in terms of organisation, personnel and equipment (but not in terms of operational command of the army corps), and his army staff met with a challenging task. The structure named 'Army structure 2000', which had been planned since the late 1980s, and which would have strongly relied on air mobile and air mechanised forces, was not put into practice. From now on, the West German army underwent thorough structural changes. After it had gone through no less than eight army structures in three decades, since 2011, the German army actually comprises some 60,000 troops and three divisions, out of which one remains an air mobile unit. Only in October 2022, a new army structure has been announced, to be implemented in 2025-2027.[38]

Since the 1990s, a new type of deployment had to be taken into account. The United Nations-led mission in Somalia in 1993-1994 and missions in the Balkans since 1995 illustrated a changed framework. The challenge was no longer the fight against conventional, armoured forces, but to cover the lower end of the spectrum of violence. Thus, the initially planned 'Army Structure 5', as well as its adjusted version, the 'Army Structure 5 (N)', had to be redrafted. Right now, only 18 army brigades were to remain. And despite the requirement to train the drafted soldiers (until the end of obligatory service in 2011), military units had to be suitable for missions abroad. Thus, in accordance to NATO concepts, the army had to maintain three categories of forces: Apart from the Main Defence Forces, which consisted of drafted soldiers, and the Basic Military Organization which comprised training and support units, as well as command and control elements, Crisis Response Forces had to be set up. The latter were supposed to consist of rather lightly equipped but highly deployable elements. So, ironically, the armoured Main Defence Forces turned from the army's spearhead into a secondary asset.

To command and control the missions abroad, the former airborne division was disbanded. Instead, another division was transformed into a Missions Command Staff: the Air Mobile Forces Command (*Kommando Luftbewegliche Kräfte (KLK)/4. Division*). When later on, it gained back control of the airborne brigades, it followed the footsteps of the dissolved airborne division. So the organisational history of this unit – *KLK/4. Division*, then reorganised with unchanged core elements to Special Operations Division (*Division Spezielle Operationen*, DSO), then Rapid Forces Division (*Division Schnelle Kräfte*) – clearly illustrates the structural changes in the German Army since the historical turning point of 1990. On the level below, there remained two airborne brigades which were transformed into regiments in 2011. Besides, there was a further one, the newly formed Kommando Spezialkräfte (KSK).

38 Carstens, "Vom Auftrag her denken."

CONCEIVING MISSIONS BEFORE MISSIONS ABROAD: PLANS FOR SOF, 1992 TO 1999

Setting up the new Special Operations Forces unit broke with a military basic concept, and even a mentality, that was advocated already in the Himmerod Conference. On the one hand, the military experts who had gathered here, were well aware that future West German armed forces had to be closely integrated into the Western alliance. On the other hand, they clearly demanded political and military concessions for their country – and for themselves. According to this, the full sovereignty of the Federal Republic relied on the contribution of German-only manned army corps. This concept aggressively ruled out competing organisational ideas, that relied on low intensity operations. So the paper bluntly stated: "The possibility of [...] preparing partisan warfare is to be ruled out. The German people [and] the German terrain structure [...] are not suitable for this type of combat."[39] In a way, there was a point: the mythical veneration of the Wehrmacht paratroops was linked to Operation *Mercury*, the Pyrrhic victory at the Battle of Crete in May 1941.[40] So the protagonists of armoured warfare could easily instrumentalise this as an anti-myth to highlight the obsolescence of airborne forces and of light infantry in general. In addition, since the built-up time of the Bundeswehr, the paratroops tended rather to go public with fatal accidents than with mature operational concepts.[41] Partisan warfare – and any measures to counter this kind of tactics – not only departed from mainstream tactical thinking, but was also deemed inappropriate from a moral and international law point of view. Besides, for obvious reasons, the 'counterinsurgency' warfare waged by Wehrmacht, Waffen-SS and police battalions[42] was hardly a topic to be handed down to official Bundeswehr concepts. So the human-relations-oriented 'modern' philosophy of Innere Führung ('inner leadership') championed strictly law-based Federal Armed Forces. Thus, the official booklet Handbuch Innere Führung, which was edited by the reform-wing officer Wolf Graf von Baudissin in 1957, denounced the "unchivalrous" way in which the Wehrmacht had fought the partisans. But in discursive dependency, criticism reproduced what was criticised: by using the Wehrmacht term "Bandenkampf" which literally meant fighting against "bands of criminals", the Handbuch Innere Führung made the expression its own.[43]

The marginal character of Bundeswehr airborne forces were mirrored by the organisational history of 1st (9th) Airborne Division. This unit was set up in 1957 – but only through the intervention of the newly appointed Minister of Defence Franz Josef Strauß, who cut the Army budget in order to turn the Air Force into a nuclear strike

39 Rautenberg and Wiggershaus, "'Die Himmeroder Denkschrift,'" 169 (my translation). In the original text, the passage read: "Die Möglichkeit eines Sicherheitsbeitrages durch Vorbereitugn eines Partisanenkampfes ist auszuschalden. Das deutsche Volk, die deutsche Geländegestaltung und Bodenbedeckung sind für diese Kampfweise nicht geeignet."

40 Golla, *Die deutsche Fallschirmtruppe* 353-557; Pahl, "Kreta 1941."

41 Schlaffer, *Der Wehrbeauftragte*, 160-180.

42 This contextualization is done in: Stoker and Westermann ed. *Expeditionary Police Advising and Militarization.*

43 Handbuch Innere Führung, 62-64.

force.[44] Unlike the armoured divisions, the airborne division's TO&E comprised only weak divisional troops and only two weak brigades. These in turn consisted only of two active parachute battalions and very few brigade troops until 1982. For that, in October 1968, an Army Staff paper judged: "airborne brigade should better be called: airborne regiment".[45] And three years later, the Commanding General of III. Army Corps derided these units as "pseudo brigades".[46] By the end of the 1970s, some ideas were probed whether paratroops might be used for missions "to support the Federal Border Police [...] in protecting civilian objects and in fighting organised and military-armed insurgents" in accordance with Article 87a (4) of the West German Basic Law for the Federal Republic (*Grundgesetz*).[47] But the Army Inspector harshly removed this idea from the agenda with the blunt remark: "delete!" Nonetheless, three airborne brigades were deemed a necessity; and still not for operational reasons, but to meet West Germany's NATO-requirement to contribute twelve divisions with three brigades each. As armoured or armoured infantry brigades proved to be costly, airborne troops remained a compromise solution. But every idea to enhance their equipment or to broaden their missions portfolio, was rejected by the Army Inspector and his Chief of Staff: "36 Brig[ades are] indispensable", but "nostalgia and elite formation alone are not a motive".[48] The same applied even more for commando or special operations missions.

But that did not mean that the Federal Republic stayed totally devoid of Special Operations Forces. Given the apparent lack of relevant skills within the German police in the face of the fatal hostage taking during the Munich Olympics on 5 September 1972, the Federal Border Guard (*Bundesgrenzschutz*) began establishing *Grenzschutzgruppe* 9 (GSG 9) just three weeks later.[49] Five years later, on 17/18 October 1977, the hostage rescue operation of a captured German passenger airplane in the Somali capital Mogadishu succeeded most convincingly. Later that year, GSG 9 operators were even assigned to help set up the U.S. Delta Force.[50] The Munich terrorist attack caused also other states to establish Special Operations units, and indeed the paradigm of fighting terrorism became part of a new model for Western security policy. In the Federal Republic of Germany however, military planning hardly included such concepts. Despite this – and probably precisely because of this – the German Border Police elite formation remained controversial as a supposed

---

44 BArch-MA, BH 16959, *Neuplanung Heer*, Tgb.Nr. 1137/56, November 6, 1956; BArch-MA, BH 1/ 551, *300.000er Konzeption*, October 31, 1956; Strauß, *Die Erinnerungen*, 283; Rink, "Strukturen brausen um die Wette," 405-411.

45 BArch-MA, BH 1/ 18 574, Fü H I, Az 10-30-01, October 3, 1968, *Struktur des Heeres*, 5.

46 BArch-MA, BH 1/86 96, Die Luftlandebrigade im Heeresmodell 4. Vorschlag für eine Neugliederung, January 18, 1978, attachment: Historie der Gliederung der Luftlandedivision. The letter in question stems from early February 1974.

47 BArch-MA, BH 1/ 30 200, Fü H VI1, Tgb.Nr. 1300/78, *Luftlandetruppen in den 90er Jahren*, September 13, 1978, 6-7. Cf. *Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, Art 87 a (4), 42.

48 BArch-MA, BH 1/ 30 200, Fü H VI 1 an InspH [Poeppel], TgbNr. 500/79, *Luftlandetruppe in den 90er Jahren*, April 2, 1979, 1, 6. Handwritten remarks of COS Fü H [GM Reichenberger, April 6, 1979] and Inspector of the Army [GenLt Poeppel, May 29, 1979].

49 Oberloskamp, "Terrorismusbekämpfung"; Götschenberg, GSG 9, 29-40; Herzog, GSG 9, 7-56.

50 Geiger, "Die 'Landshut' in Mogadischu," 435 f., 444-447. On the topic of GSG 9 on different source base and with different assessments: Froese and Scholzen, *GSG 9. Innenansichten*; Wegener, GSG 9 - Stärker als der Terror; Rojahn, *Militärische Antiterroreinheiten*, 93 f.; Hänni, *Terrorismus als Konstrukt*, 41-56; Horn, "The evolution of SOF," 19; King, "What is special about special operations forces?" 276.

would-be Praetorian Guard.[51] And as early as the 1970s, very different opinions about the combatant status of the Federal Border Guard existed.

In November 1994, the law to amend the regulations on the Federal Border Police came into force. As it made no further statements on this topic, police eventually lost any connection to military combatants. And in fact, even the organisational interface between both was lacking. Since the forces of the Ministry of the Interior had now also changed their name and organisation from Federal Border Guard (*Bundesgrenzschutz*) to Federal Police (*Bundespolizei*),[52] setting up a Special Operations Unit within the armed forces reflected a new demarcation between the Federal Republic's interior and defence departments. But before this happened, the German MOD planners lacked a suitable basis for preparing relevant papers.

However, already in the early 1990s, some undaunted army soldiers worked and trained on pertinent concepts. Almost concealed, the Airborne Operations and Airmobile Transport School (*Luftlande-/ Lufttransportschule*) in Southern Bavaria began to train future commando soldiers. In June 1993, a senior staff officer proudly remarked in an military journal: "For the past three years, the German paratroopers have received an additional assignment: commando combat." At the same time, each of the three airborne brigades transformed one of their companies into a 'Commando Company B1'. On the basic level, the commando companies were to consist of eight commando squads, with nine soldiers each. This departed from the classic platoon structure and emphasised independent operations on the lowest level. These operations, however, were to be commanded directly by the brigade. The author, who was obviously aware of the corresponding intentions on the higher level, somewhat cryptically indicated that "another structure is being considered" which departed from the existing brigade structure. This "Commando regiment" should report directly to the newly established Army Forces Command (*Heeresführungskommando*), and was to consist of a supply and training company, a mixed intelligence battalion and a commando battalion. Both battalions should comprise a staff and supply company and three operational units each.[53] But it took some more years, that a fully-fledged SOF unit came into being.

But already in September 1990, the so-called Jacobsen-Kommission had been assigned by German Parliament, the Deutscher Bundestag, to elaborate a report which was published exactly a year later. It suggested to emphasise present, highly mobile, and quickly available units to deal with small conflicts and for crisis management.[54] Accordingly, Defence Minister Volker Rühe issued defence policy guidelines in November 1992, which already brought the transnational and global threat of terrorism into the Bundeswehr's

51 Geiger, "Die 'Landshut' in Mogadischu," 447.

52 Gesetz zur Neuregelung der Vorschriften über den Bundesgrenzschutz, October 19, 1994 (quotation). Cf. Deutscher Bundestag, 4. Wahlperiode Drucksache IV/3200, Schriftlicher Bericht des Ausschusses für Inneres (6. Ausschuß) über den von der Bundesregierung eingebrachten Entwurf eines Gesetzes zur Ergänzung des Gesetzes über den Bundesgrenzschutz und die Einrichtung von Bundesgrenzschutzbehörden, Bericht des MdB [Wolfram] Dorn [FDP], March 16, 1965; Deutscher Bundestag 7. Wahlperiode, Drucksache 7/3170, Unterrichtung durch die Bundesregierung Bericht der Bundesregierung über die Fortentwicklung des Bundesgrenzschutzes, January 24, 1975 (with reference to Bericht der Kommission Grenzschutzdienstpflicht und Kombattantenstatus vom December 20, 1974).

53 Altenhöner, "Spezialisten des Kleinkrieges. Kommandokampf," 667 f.

54 Jacobsen and Rautenberg ed., *Bundeswehr und europäische Sicherheitsordnung*, 33-35.

field of vision. Indirectly, but audibly, also evacuation and counter-terrorism scenarios came into play.[55] So already at this time, experts commissioned by Parliament as well as the German defence minister were well aware that the Bundeswehr was in some need for Special Operations Forces.

By 1993, also the Army Staff had started to draft papers on this topic. In September that year a paper named "Zielvorstellungen für die Kampftruppen des deutschen Heeres" (Blueprint for Army Combat Troops) contained detailed passages on commando forces whose structure departed from the classical 'German-style' brigade structure. But the concept of missions, deployment and organisation of this regiment-sized, albeit highly complex unit differed also fundamentally from classical infantry structures. In fact, KSK structure was influenced by American and British models, but also that of GSG 9.[56]

The young staff officer entrusted with drafting the Blueprint paper expressly emphasised that "[i]n contrast to the 'Special Forces' of other nations", German soldiers should "only carry out such Special Operations that comply with the law of war and can be carried out with conventional measures of warfare". Therefore, they should not be allowed to assist and support "guerrilla warfare, subversive actions, sabotage in foreign uniforms or civilian clothes" or promote resistance movements. Despite these reservations, the conceptual approach had changed thoroughly: Although tank advocates urged the Army Inspector to preserve the existing force structures and denounced "infantrymen with commando ambitions",[57] the MOD division for concept development issued a concept for German Special Operations Forces in March 1995. Approvingly, the Army Chief of Staff described them as "a flexible set of instruments that allow rapid, selective, targeted action that avoids collateral damage as far as possible".[58] The fact that only a few months passed between the first and the final draft, despite sometimes harsh remarks on signing, testifies to the urgency the Army Staff pushed this project. On September 28, 1995, the concept was issued.[59]

Already the first draft highlighted "specific risks" such as "state terrorism", "subversive forces" or the threat of "terrorist groups" as well as "political blackmail" and "hostage-taking, assassinations or explosive attacks". These risks were placed into the context of a global transformation towards an "almost limitless mobility", tightening economic and political ties and corresponding global media networks.[60] Six years before the global war on transnational terrorism was declared, Bundeswehr papers were already discussing how these risks should be countered. However, at first, even the term 'Special Operations Forces' was deemed inappropriate. As late as January 11, 1995, the minutes of a meeting read: "Inspector of the Heer prohibits the use of the designation 'Special Forces'". Instead, for the time being, they ranked as 'General purpose forces of the Army' (*Verfügungstruppen*).[61]

55 Bundesminister der Verteidigung, *Verteidigungspolitische Richtlinien* (VPR), 7-9.

56 BArch-MA, BH 1/ 28 654, Fü H VI 2, "Zielvorstellungen für die Kampftruppen des deutschen Heeres", 1. Entwurf, 55-58; attachment 19: Truppen für spezielle Einsätze.

57 Cf. BArch-MA, BH 1/ 20 977, Kdr PzBrig 34, *Denkschrift zur Heeresstruktur 2000*, February 22, 1988, 29.

58 BArch-MA, BH 1/ 29 082, CdS Fü H, *Weisung Ausplanung NHNA*, March 17, 1995, 13.

59 BArch-MA, BH 1/ 28 652, Fü H VI 2, *Ziel- und Planungsvorstellungen Spezialkräfte*, September 28, 1995.

60 BArch-MA, BH 1/ 28 652, Fü H VI 2, *Zielvorstellungen Spezialkräfte des Heeres*, May 16, 1995, 3.

61 BArch-MA, BH 1/ 25 694, Fü H VI 3, *Punktation von HStru 5 zum NHNA*, September 11, 1995, Anlage 14: *Vorbereitung InspH am 11.01.1995 auf Gespräch mit BM 17.01.1995* [und] MFR January 17, 1995, Protokoll January 12, 1995 (quotations).

This attempt to avoid unveiled terms did not prevail. A short time later, everyone knew the abbreviation 'KSK'.

The structure of KSK discarded the classic brigade structure. Given its manpower, it was a regimental equivalent. Its core comprised a single battalion equivalent with a ring of support elements. In marked difference to the combined arms brigade, the KSK structure assembled the essential operational tasks already at the lowest possible level: The principle of combined arms was already implemented at the level of the four-man team. So a complete deployment of the KSK was hardly an option. Rather, the deployment of operational task forces was a structural principle. This required a complex command and control organisation – and this in turn caused very differentiated regulations concerning the tactical, operational and administrative chains of command.

The first concept papers regarding SOF met with harsh remarks. The conventionally minded critics within Army Staff never tired of arguing against Special Operations Forces: Their points of criticism concerned logistics, armament procurement, infrastructure, and training. But their arguments also revealed a wounded pride in arms: With good reason, they had to fear a loss of importance. So it was no coincidence that many of the critics wore the black beret of the armoured forces, just as many special forces planners wore the paratroops' maroon. As with almost all first drafts for such papers, the comments reprimanded the lack of stringency and accuracy in diction. In particular, the "distinction between 'special' and 'conventional' forces created a nebulous picture". More than one department complained that a concrete structural proposal was out of place in a concept paper. And as seen, there even was a remark that castigated these ideas as James Bond fantasies. More than once the planners were criticised for dreaming of personnel staffing and specialised gear that led to resources being wasted. Further, critics expected no political acceptance for these forces. After all, the security risks presented in the paper allegedly were far exaggerated.[62]

On July 25, 1995, a special forces roundtable took place in the Army Inspector's meeting room. The latter, Lieutenant General Hartmut Bagger, approved the proposal concerning the internal structure and chain of command within the KSK. So the further conceptional process had to draw a fine distinction between permanent 'organic' administrative assignment on the one hand and the temporary tactical and operational control on the other. Concerning the first, the KSK was assigned to the Command of Airmobile Forces/4. Division. This was to command all army missions abroad as well as the airborne brigades. However, the 'organic' approach of military organisation was now fundamentally questioned: as in contemporary economic doctrines, the demand for flexibility was paramount. And it seemed that Special Operations Forces were mostly suited to meet this requirement. By contrast, the divisional level hardly mattered anymore. Its command had little say in special operations. Rather, SOF operations were subjected to "individual decisions" that were made directly by the Army Forces Command, which even represented the "lowest level" for this. Concerning training issues, the Army Office (*Heeresamt*) should remain in control, but the KSK itself should develop its training concepts independently and apart from the service branches' schools. The training support, which was so important in the initial phase, was to be provided by the GSG 9 and by the Allies – but

62 Cf.: BArch-MA, BH 1/ 28 652, Fü H III 1 to Fü H VI 2, ZV *Spezialkräfte des Heeres*, June 13, 1995; Ibid., ZV *Spezialkräfte des Heeres*, June 13, 1995.

also by Israeli SOF.[63] Between October 1995 and the end of March 1996, suitable applicants were to be brought together, tested and trained at the location of the Airborne Brigade 25 in Calw. The Army Inspector also approved the structure of the four companies, each with platoons specialised in their respective insertion types: for arctic and mountain warfare, for specialised parachute missions with parafoils, for amphibious operations and for specialised vehicle insertion.

Immediately, the critics fired back: the officer responsible for the general principles of the military organisation (who later rose to four-star general) was downright annoyed. He reprimanded "the procedure that led to the decisions of the Inspector". He urged that special forces had to remain under the operative as well as the administrative control of the divisional level. He also rejected further attempts to provide autonomy. So he strongly opposed what he considered as a "carte blanche for KSK". Instead of acting autonomously while in missions, the latter should cooperate closely with the conventional forces. Besides, he complained, the proposed command-and-control structures within the KSK departed from the command and control principle to keep an undivided leadership responsibility 'in one hand'. In doing so, he was also guided by a military-political consideration. So, assigning the KSK directly to high-level decisions, would further weaken the traditional command echelons during peace operations.[64] And in view of the seemingly abundance of staff officer posts in the KSK structure, he asked the nasty question whether the plenty of well-paid deputies and staff assistants could demote its commander to a mere "figurehead".[65] All this was about more than just SOF: regulations concerning the chain of command affected the autonomy of the force elements as well as the coordination of the whole.

Quite apart from the question of whether special operations made sense at all, there were no reference cases within the Bundeswehr to determine a completely new concept for a completely new type of unit with completely new tasks. Therein lay the real problem of the Special Operations Forces' 'specialness'. However, the linguistic distinction between a 'conventional' and a 'special' kind of forces was somewhat softened. The latter were now compared to 'less specialised forces'. But this did not solve the semantic problem that, due to the division of labour, each branch of service is – and has to be – specialised in its respective area of responsibility. So the ultimately tautological admission that Special Operations Forces were specialised in their tasks and required specialised training on specialised weapons and equipment remained in the concept paper. A mere truism remained: "The effectiveness of special forces depends to a large extent on the professionalism of their forces."[66]

Apart from the inner circle of MOD planners who were drafting their regulations and the future commando soldiers who were about to set up their new-style military unit, the press was eager to gain information – and to tell stories. In early 1995, the Hamburg left liberal news magazine Der Spiegel reported on "German leather necks". Allegedly, the

63 BArch-MA, BH 1/ 28 652, Fü H VI 5, August 3, 1995 (all quotations). For Israel: Pallade, *Germany and Israel*, 233-236.

64 BArch-MA, BH 1/ 28 652, Fü H IV 2, *ZV Spezialkräfte*, August 4, 1995.

65 Ibid., June 14, 1995.

66 Ibid., *Mitzeichnungsentwurf*, September 11, 1995, 2 f., 25, 7, 18; BArch-MA, BH 1/ 28 652, Fü H VI 2/ CdS FüH, ZV/ PVV *Spezialkräfte*, September 28, 1995, 2 f., 23, 6,16 f. (quotations).

Bundeswehr prepared 50,000 men "ready for global intervention". What was meant by that referred to the training carried out at the Airborne Operations and Airmobile Transport School. Here, future commando soldiers rehearsed rescuing hostages from a "cellar hole". However, the focus of the article was less on the tactical evacuation or protection tasks but more on a "new type of fighter". So, the news magazine sardonically reported: "In the seclusion of Upper Bavaria, the Bundeswehr has already trained 180 cold-blooded elite fighters."[67] On 5 March 1995, the audience of the rather conservative tabloid Bild am Sonntag learned more about "Rühe's leathernecks". Here, too, the motto was: "Commando soldiers train for worldwide operations." And here, too, the authors made use of fighter clichés. The pictures on display showed muscular soldiers on an exercise in northern Norway brushing their teeth, whose torsos were only covered with a dog tag. However in the article, a interviewed senior commando NCO emphasised that "Rambos" were out of place: "Guys who walk around in the forest with a knife between their teeth are good for nothing." But in contrast to this, the tabloid reporters referred to the interviewee's gigantic "Schwarzenegger body".[68] In line with the line favored by the Ministry of Defence, the conservative newspaper Die Welt assured its readership in early May: "The men don't want to be Rambos."[69]

Though already in early 1995, the public could know that the Bundeswehr was preparing Special Operations Forces, only by the end of 1996 and later, critical voices shouted scandal. It was no coincidence that the anti-militarism activist and later politician Tobias Pflüger published a very critic paperback in early 1997, which denounced the set-up of KSK in Calw.[70] And as is often the case in parliamentary hustle and bustle, an opposition party sent its parliamentary inquiry at the inconvenient time of downturned bureaucratic activities: just a week before Christmas 1996, some members of parliament from the Green Party sent a Parlamentary Inquiry concerning the Kommando Spezialkräfte to the German Chancellor's office.[71] Of course, the pertinent MOD staff division had to prepare the answer on behalf of the Federal Republic's government.

The inquiry had been triggered by some official Bundeswehr articles, published earlier that year. In March 1996, the news magazine Information für die Truppe (IFDT), which was run by the Bundeswehr Centre for Public Affairs, had noted succinctly that Minister Rühe had issued the commissioning order for the KSK on 1 January that year.[72] And in August, a short article, from the pen of retired Major General Georg Bernhard, a former commander of 1(9.) Airborne Division, had pointed out the need to set up German SOF.[73] During the recent "years of restraint", the Bundeswehr had cultivated an "understandable caution" and mental reservations on the topic. But since only Belgian paratroopers had

67 S.a., "Einsatz ins Ungewisse," 68-79; S.a., "Heute geht's zum Feind," 76.
68 Böger and Becker, "Rühes Ledernacken."
69 Moniac, "Die Männer wollen keine Rambos sein."
70 Pflüger, *Die neue Bundeswehr*, 93-103. Cf. Scholzen, *Das Kommando Spezialkräfte*, 37-39.
71 Deutscher Bundestag, Drucksache 13/6639, *Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Beer, Nachtwei, Sterzing und der Fraktion Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, Kommando Spezialkräfte*, December 18, 1996, (also in BArch-MA, BH 1/ 29 121); Deutscher Bundestag, 13. Wahlperiode, Drucksache 13/6924, *Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Beer, Nachtwei, Sterzing und der Fraktion Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen, Drucksache 13/6639*, February 7, 1997.
72 IFDT 3 (1996), 23.
73 Bernhardt, "Spezialkräfte - wichtiger Nachholbedarf."

been available in 1995 to evacuate German citizens from civil war-torn Rwanda, the need to set up Bundeswehr forces for such operations, was obvious.

Another short report on Special Operations Forces was published in November 1996. The author, an officer and editor-in-chief of the armed forces journal IFDT, had interviewed the Army Inspector, Helmut Willmann, whose wording unmistakably shone through. So the narrative oscillated between concise information and audience-seeking stylistics. This obviously implied a double advertising intention for the Bundeswehr as an organisation as well as for those of its soldiers willing to join the KSK. Thus the main title "Rambos unwanted" was already denied by the subtitle which announced an "army elite unit". The subsequent text read:

> "They come over land, from the water, from the air. They hit the opponent like a bolt from the blue. Free fall is their specialty. From a height of up to 8000 metres, they let themselves fall to a thousand metres, only then do they open their light blue parachutes. They hover silently over long distances towards their objective: a command post deep in enemy territory or an unknown piece of earth somewhere in the world where the task is to free hostages in minutes with clockwork precision. Softly hooded figures detach themselves from their parachutes, crouching, weapons at the ready, they hasten towards the goal."[74]

Notwithstanding the inaccuracy which mixed up procedures of high-altitude-high-opening (HAHO) versus high-altitude-low-opening (HALO) parachuting, the further text contained a brief description of the KSK infiltration procedures as well as a chart which displayed the future KSK structure. Both the Army Inspector and the author emphasised that the authorisation for each deployment depended exclusively "on decisions taken by Parliament". Besides, there would be "no competition with the GSG 9". And certainly KSK soldiers would not be "used in agent manner à la James Bond".[75] But of course, all the references made to the well-known cinema heroes Commander James Bond and Captain John J. Rambo confirmed what they tried to deny: the suspicion that KSK soldiers could be inspired by exactly these role models. And though the information about the new SOF unit hardly went beyond to what was already known from other sources, it triggered the criticism of the predominantly antimilitaristic Green party. Their inquiry in Parliament explicitly referred to the military magazine articles. The deputies wanted to learn more about rescue and evacuation missions of German citizens "in special situations abroad" as well as "combat missions in enemy territory". This was followed by 53 detailed questions. The deputies asked what was meant by the concepts of "protection at distance", "covert operations" and missions "against terrorist threats, subversive forces" and possible involvement of German soldiers in "unconventional warfare". Further, the members of Parliament wanted to know whether operations could be expected "against sovereign states whose governments are described as terrorist by allies (e.g. Libya)".[76] A next set of questions related to training cooperation with other armies, police or secret service authorities. Of course, the question behind this was whether German elite soldiers could possibly emulate

74 Baach, "Rambos unerwünscht," 741.
75 Ibid., 742 f.
76 Deutscher Bundestag, Drucksache 13/6639, *Kleine Anfrage B90/Die Grünen*, KSK, December 18, 1996, 2 f., questions 8-14, 23-26.

bad examples.[77] The final part of the inquiry asked whether SOF missions complied with the constitutional and international law.

One thing was clear: already in the mid-1990s the organisational outlines of the KSK were closely linked to the threat of transnational terrorism. However, the demarcation between the areas of responsibility of military and police special operations remained unclear. So when a year and a half later, when the Greens were part of the red-green coalition government which had to wage the Kosovo intervention in March 1999, they were again confronted with the subject of their questions.[78] And only five weeks after receiving the Federal Government's answer to the inquiry, at least one aspect was answered in practice: on March 13, the federal government ordered German and other citizens to be evacuated from the Albanian capital Tirana. The evacuation detachment had to be assembled literally overnight by the SFOR contingent in Bosnian Rajlovac. The following day, a task force that had hastily been assembled out of conventional forces, evacuated 99 people by helicopter. The first firefight on a foreign mission prompted the Bild tabloid to cheer the "German heroes of Tirana".[79] One thing was clear: by now, the need to carry out evacuation operations was real. By the same time, the KSK was obviously not available: in the meantime, first combat-ready operators were deployed to Kosovo – in the midst of war crimes as well as political and real minefields.[80]

Even after the SOF concepts had been drafted and been approved of by the Army Inspector, and though the critics within MOD had been convinced or silenced, the equipment was still lacking. And the procurement of KSK materiel was only partly the responsibility of the army. Over decades, the processes related to Bundeswehr logistics and materiel requirements acquisition had grown into very different directions. Accordingly, the respective regulations, responsibilities, procedures and ways of thinking strongly contrasted. Whereas the Bundeswehr Administration (*Bundeswehrverwaltung*) was run by civil servants, the Army Staff experts were officers. All of them had to respect the legal norms on which the procurement processes were based. This however, contrasted with the urgency desired by the Army Staff to set up KSK. On the political level, in turn, Defence Minister Volker Rühe had given the Bundeswehr and the Army Inspector leeway. On the level below, the future SOF operators did not care too much about procurement regulations. So many soldiers helped themselves by decentralised measures – they bought many of their special gear and equipment such as boots, rucksacks and parachute altimeters from their own money. This contrasted sharply with the regulations on which the logistics and armaments experts insisted. According to them, the materiel should first be split up into materiel groups according to the criteria established by the Federal Office for Defence Technology and Procurement (*Bundesamt für Wehrtechnik und Beschaffung*, BWB).[81] Thus, organisationally induced divergences existed in at least three ways: According to the logic

77 Ibid., questions 29-31, 34-41.
78 Kriemann, *Hineingerutscht?*
79 Glawatz, "Flug ins Ungewisse."; Rink, "Operation Libelle 1997."; Szandar, "Der erste Schuß."; Wette, "Deutsche Helden, armes Land."
80 Held, Posch and Weber ed., *Kommando Spezialkräfte. 20 Jahre KSK*, 25-27; Sünkler, *Kommando Spezialkräfte*, 46 f. A personal account on KSK operators in Kosovo: Schneider and Seul, *Der Wille entscheidet*, 17-20, 61-63, 83-87.
81 Cf. Kollmer, "Klotzen, nicht kleckern"; Kollmer, *Rüstungsgüterbeschaffung*, 55-65.

of operations, the KSK operators trained their procedures either with existing equipment put together for the time being or with privately procured gear and clothing. The military command authorities responsible for logistics and armaments, such as the Army Support Command – and the 'civilian' BWB remained true to their procurement logic: separated by weapons, clothing, vehicles. In between, the Army Staff within MOD tried to reconcile the two worlds.

Additionally, some typical special operations infiltration methods did not comply with existing regulations: already in 1988, practicing free-fall jumps with parafoils from a height of ten kilometres and with a penetration depth of 40 to 60 kilometres had been forbidden. Also fast-roping from helicopters was not allowed for safety reasons.[82] So, the very typical insertion methods for special operations that were practiced by all other armies were ruled out from the outset. While the Army Inspector had GSG 9 operators show him these methods in a showcase action against hostage-takers,[83] his own service branch was prevented from the use of these. And although, in the summer of 1998, the Airborne Operations and Airmobile Transport School had already tested SOF-conform airdropping and fast-roping procedures; and although the Army Aviation School in Bückeburg had defined and submitted proposals for changes to the corresponding equipment sets in August, the equipment was still missing: Army Logistic Support Command (*Heeresunterstützungskommando*) had refused the special permit for fast roping procedures for reasons of operational safety. The reason for this was because the approval for the corresponding device from the BWB and the Technical Service Centre for Aircraft and Aeronautical Equipment (*Wehrtechnische Dienststelle* WTD 61) was still pending. A letter from the Army Office rightly warned: "As long as the procedures are not approved, the task of the Special Forces Command is in question."[84]

In addition, the infrastructural requirements for SOF-specific shooting procedures were still missing. In practice, they helped themselves – and this was also known in higher places: in front of the MOD staff officers, the responsible officer from *Army Office* frankly reported on the pragmatic approach in Calw concerning fast roping procedures: "Here all military measures have been taken to achieve the highest level of security; [...] KSK still carries out the training."[85] Also the Army Staff knew: operational readiness was rated higher than compliance with existing regulations.

---

82 BArch-MA, N 854/ 4, Dienstreisebericht zum Besuch Inspekteur Heer bei Luftlande-/ Lufttransportschule in Altenstadt am July 29-30, 1992; Ibid., LL/LTS, Lagevortrag zur Unterrichtung des InspH am July 29, 1992, July 27, 1992; Ibid., Fü H VI 1, Dienstreisebericht zum Besuch InspH bei LL/LTS in Altenstadt am 29. und 30.07.1992, August 3, 1992.

83 BArch-MA, BH 1/ 29 124, GO/ CdS FüH an StAL Fü H I, VI, RL Fü H I 5, VI 2, *Besuch InspH bei GSG 9 am 17.07.1995*, June 13, 1995; Ibid., Grenzschutzpräsidium West, PrInfo, June 13, 1996 [recte: 1995] (quotation); Ibid., *Besuch InspH bei GSG 9 am 21.08.1995*, July 27, 1995.

84 BArch-MA, BH 1/ 29 123, Absetz-, Abseilverfahren des KSK aus Hubschraubern, December 14, 1998 (quotations); Ibid., General der Heeresflieger, Einsatzverfahren KSK mit Hubschraubern, August 4, 1998; ebd., Fü H III 2, Koordinierungsbesprechung KSK am 16.03.1999, March 18, 1999.

85 BArch-MA, BH 1/ 29 123, Heeresamt III 5, Kurzvorträge: *Ausbildung Spezialkräfte* (5 S.), p. 1 (1st quotation); *Dienstvorschriften Kommando Spezialkräfte*, 2 (2nd quotation); *Sicherheitsbestimungen für das Kommando Spezialkräfte* (3 S.), 3 (3rd quotation), March 16, 1999.

THE ORBITS OF SPECIALNESS: SPECIAL, SPECIALISED AND CONVENTIONAL FORCES

Irrespective of the question of how the Bundeswehr SOF concepts were further developed and then applied in subsequent operations in the 21st century, the nuance between 'special' and 'specialised' as opposed to 'conventional' forces had to be solved. But this seemingly academical question was of crucial importance for the KSK structure. So military organisation was a matter of definitions. But these were blurred even at NATO level. To define special operations and the forces that had to carry them out, there was a typically circular terminology. The 'specialness' of SOF was described as a fivefold set of specialness, whose components related closely to each other:

The role of NATO special Operations is to achieve the strategic or operational objectives of the NATO military commands through military activities conducted by specially designated, selected, organised, trained and equipped forces using operational techniques and modes of employment not standard to conventional forces. This may be particularly important when political and/or military considerations may require that clandestine, covert or discrete techniques are employed, or when the physical and political risk associated with conventional operations is unacceptable.[86]

In the alliance, too, SOF command-and-control structures should not form standing elements anchored in organic units, but rather a "combined and joint headquarters formed during implementation". These in turn had to command and control task forces instead of classic units. This wording already revealed that the organisational ideas of SOF structures challenged the notion of statical 'boxes' which had shaped the military units until then.

Besides this, and in contrast to German papers on the topic, the NATO document referred clearly also to "clandestine operations" which had to be "so planned and executed as to conceal the identity of or permit plausible denial by the sponsor".[87]

However, at the working level, integration evidently progressed. The German contribution to the Headquarters of the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Forces (HQ CJSOTF) since June 1999 was qualified as an "important step by the KSK on the way to the SOF community".[88] By now, the Germans had also some more insight into the divergences within the alliance. As a senior staff officer reported to MOD in Bonn, here too, "misunderstandings or false ideas about special forces still exist". And here too, the controverse was about command-and-control regulations. In the current Kosovo mission, a demand made by the British commander of the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps and Kosovo Force in action, Lieutenant General (later General) Michael Jackson, had triggered "irritation" among the higher NATO SOF staff elements. Despite his origins as a paratrooper with Northern Ireland counterinsurgency experience, the British general apparently had "reservations [...] about giving the special forces an independent mission". Rather,

86 BArch-MA, BH 1/ 29 123, Kdr u G3/Ltr KdoStab, SSCG *Meeting am 22.03.1999. Dienstreisebericht*, March 26, 1999; Anlage 2: NATO *Special Operations*, 1. Cf. McRaven, *Spec Ops*, 2.

87 Ibid, 4: Glossary of Special Operations terms and definitions.

88 BArch-MA, BH 1/ 29 123, Stv. Kdr u G3/Ltr KdoStab, ACE SPECIAL *Operations Conference 1999 vom 15./16.06.1999. Dienstreisebericht*, July 26, 1999 (6 S.), 2.

he planned to subordinate them to the brigade commanders. From the point of view of the NATO SOF community, this was unacceptable: "SOF work at the highest level". Their representatives stuck to their demand to clearly separate their forces from the conventional ones: "The subordination of special forces to multinational brigades is inappropriate and should be avoided."[89]

However, the hitherto marked distinction between 'special' and 'specialised' forces was blurring. In summer 1999, the Army Inspector decided to "specialise" Airborne Brigade 31 "for new tasks": it should be able to form two battlegroups for use in protection missions against irregular forces. The concept behind was a three tiers approach concerning the tactical task of 'protection': on the first level, every branch was to carry out its own force protection tasks. On the second level, the paratroopers had to accomplish "specialised" missions such as to "tie down and strike irregular forces" as well as to "protect persons entrusted to them" and to provide "long-range protection for convoys". On the third, the Special Operations Forces of KSK should obtain key information, ensure the personal protection for VIP and carry out "rapid and temporary operations".[90] So the superficially harmless term 'protection' (*Schutz*) acquired a very special meaning within the SOF discourse: the 'protection' provided by merely 'specialised' forces now differed from 'protection at a distance' carried out by SOF. Naturally, this wording reflected different areas of responsibility of KSK and of the conventional forces which served within the brigades or mission contingents and their respective commanders. The flexible and global deployability caused overlapping areas of responsibility. Thus, the areas of responsibility in SOF missions formed a kind of 'island' inside those of the conventional forces.

So the set-up of the KSK as a new military structure created different orbits of 'specialness'. First, the new Special Operations Forces contrasted to the 'conventional' ones. But when the new unit was being put into place, this led to a further process of 'SOF-isation' of hitherto 'conventional' troops. So second, within the KSK there were staff elements as well as logistical, medical and command and control elements, whose personnel soon outnumbered the 'core area' commando operators serving in the commando companies. But third, also outside the KSK, there emerged 'specialised' forces such as the paratroops or long reconnaissance forces. So the 'specialness' which was conceived and advocated within NATO as well as by Bundeswehr planners, revealed a military innovation process: out of the rather indistinct buzz word of 'specialness', more precise tactical and organisational terms were drafted. So a more clarified wording offered models that could be adopted by 'conventional' forces. But ultimately, the process of turning a buzz-word into a concept referred to the organisational novelty of SOF. Initially, they had been simply contrasted to 'conventional' forces. But in order to provide precise criteria for this, this required a conceptualisation process. More precise delimitations had to be made by naming an array of different 'special' tasks.[91]

---

89 BArch-MA, BH 1/ 29 123, Stv. Kdr u G3/Ltr KdoStab, ACE SPECIAL *Operations Conference 19999* [sic] *vom 15./16.06.1999. Dienstreisebericht*, July 26, 1999, 3 f.

90 BArch-MA, BH 1/ 29 123, Kdr KSK an Kdr KLK/ 4. Div., July 12,.1999, annex 2: Positionspapier KSK zum Zusammenwirken von Spezialkräften und Kräften für ‚Spezielle Operationen', 1.

91 For a recent survey: Sünkler, *Kommando Spezialkräfte*.

In a broader sense, German armed forces could not escape from the trend to establish Special Operations Forces. In contrast to the conventionally minded armoured warfare concept, this process of developing pertinent concepts had started already in the mid-1970s. Basically, two developments led to a 'special fortification' of the armed forces – of NATO allies, the Bundeswehr, of their army, of their airborne soldiers and of other branches. On the one hand, the technical upheavals led to sophisticated command and control systems, intelligence and reconnaissance features and weapons systems. What initially enabled to increase the combat effectiveness of the technologically up-dated artillery systems as well as the armoured element, now affected air mobility, too. This provided the basis to turn infantrymen into SOF operators. On the other hand, the security policy setting changed on a global scale. Globalisation, whatever it meant in detail, meant not only the prospect of a transnational, even post-national era in which the flow of goods and services expanded seemingly without limits. But exactly this multiplied corresponding threats. This softened the hitherto sharply distinct spheres of domestic and foreign politics, which in turn affected security concepts: what up to 1990, had been an anti-terrorist task for a specialised police force, the GSG 9, by now had to be accomplished by armed forces, the KSK – whether the Germans liked it or not.

As before with regard to the paratroopers, the criticism of the new SOF unit was threefold. First, the planners had to defend their concepts against the objection that SOF were contrary to constitutional or international law. But they were well aware that the multinational integration of which the Bundeswehr was so proud of, relied on the opportunity – or risk – to take part in the alliances' special operations. Likewise, the military planners knew very well they could come under criticism from the politicians, the public and the press. Second, the critics of airmobile forces emphasised the latters' lack of protection and military effectiveness. Here, the tank served as the point of reference. But after all, its characteristics of protection, fire power and mobility were combined in a single weapon system as well as in the organic unit structures. Third, the critical voices within the German Army Staff complained about the vagueness of the ‚special' tasks. Initially, they had their point. In addition to the tactical-operational deployment concept, they referred to the problem of differentiation from other, 'conventional forces', which of course, were also 'specialised' in their respective tasks. Because, after all, military organisation is based on division of labor and thus horizontal and vertical specialisation, any, all and each (military) structure has to take this into account. But from an organisational point of view, the term 'special' as well as its derivative, specialised' was conceptually cleared.

Hardly surprisingly, whenever possible, the military organisation planning process had to be based on given structures. But the history of the drafting process for the German SOF unit offers a rather rare example of a completely new set-up. As the Bundeswehr itself had no reference point from which to start from, the Army planners had the same leeway here as they had in the in the 1950s, when their precursors had drafted the 'German-style' armoured brigade. So British SAS, the U.S. and even Israeli SOF and German GSG 9 police had been asked for their assistance. And what turned out was a military structure that differed starkly from every military unit the Bundeswehr had seen before.

Looking back to the planning process for German Special Operations Forces up to the year 2000, it is worth jumping forth in time to the recent past. During more than two decades, the need to adapt to expeditionary missions had favoured the paradigm of a modular set of forces. But since the second decade of the 21st century, and especially after NATO had to counterbalance the Russian threat to its East Central European NATO partners in the wake of the annexation of Crimean peninsula in 2014, also in Germany some voices were now urging to return to structures that could meet the requirements of defence missions in Europe. Experts – and not necessarily those hostile to maroon berets – now criticised the previous "tool box thinking". They urgently advocated the return to organic divisions with integrated combat and logistics support units; and to fully equipped armoured combat brigades.[92] This meant however, that these units had reached a status of combat (un)preparedness far below the desired level.

Since 2017 and increasingly so in 2020-2021, the KSK itself was also critically examined; and worse: the criticism no longer was limited to the critical press or left-wing anti-militaristic activists or Members of Parliament. Rather, it included reprimands from the highest political and military echelons. In spring 2017, the public received information about a company celebration at which questionable rituals had been practiced. Further, suspected cases of anti-constitutional mind-set among KSK operators went public as well as the misappropriation of ammunition to a considerable extent. By now, the third level of the organisation had been reached: Besides the unit structure and the command-and-control procedures, by now it was the organisational identity, which raised questions.[93]

So, in terms of military organisation, a pendulum swung back: the KSK structure drafted in the mid-1990s had evidently proven itself in foreign operations and was largely retained. However, meanwhile, many staff and support elements had been increased, as well as the structure of the commando companies themselves.[94] But in the end, all this confirmed the previous planning trends in many respects. Following investigations, on June 30, 2020 the Federal Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer and her Inspector General praised the KSK's "top performance" to date, but also condemned any tendency towards "misunderstood [or misguided] esprit de corps" and "toxic leadership". In a way, the admission that special forces "have become independent in some areas over the last few years"[95] was as just as misleading on the one hand as it was true on the other: By now, SOF had been integrated into the Bundeswehr's set of forces. And meanwhile other units and branches are subjected to a certain 'SOF-isation'. But as there is no inter-service

92 Marlow, "Großübung Red Griffin/ Colibri."; Loges, "Die aktuelle Ausrichtung des Heeres."; Bartels and Glatz, "Der Status quo ist unhaltbar."; Bartels, "Organische Großverbände für die Verteidigung Europas."

93 Generalinspekteur der Bundeswehr, "Zwischenbericht zur Umsetzung des Maßnahmenkatalogs der AG KSK", October 30, 2020; Generalinspekteur der Bundeswehr, "2. Zwischenbericht zur Umsetzung des Maßnahmenkatalogs der AG KSK", March 2, 2021, Generalinspekteur der Bundeswehr, "Abschlussbericht Umsetzung Maßnahmenkatalog AG KSK", June 8, 2021. Cf. Wiegold, "Gegen Rechtsextremismus." and the blog run by this author: https://augengeradeaus.net. Cf.: Kümmel, "Military Identity."; Soeters, "Organizational Cultures."

94 Scholzen, *Das Kommando Spezialkräfte*, 94-113; cf. https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kommando_Spezialkr%C3%A4fte#cite_note-34, accessed June 30 2021.

95 Bundesministerin der Verteidigung [Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer], *Tagesbefehl zu den Konsequenzen rechtsextremistischer Tendenzen im Kommando Spezialkräfte*, July 1 2020 (5 p., quotations p. 2-3). E-Mail to Bundeswehr personnel. https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/organisation/heer/aktuelles/aufloesungsappell-der-2-kompanie-des-ksk-864840, accessed June 30, 2021.

SOF command, the related command and control structures procedures still seem to be somewhat fragmented. Apparently, the political leadership as well as the military top brass seems to remain rather uncomfortable with the 'specialness' of Special Operations Forces. Seemingly, they are too 'special' to be controlled. But in the end, it is rather not the operators' responsibility, that they feel 'special'. Indeed, that truism applies to all services, branches and unit types. The much deeper problem behind is to draft and put into practice organisational structures that are able to balance the three aspects of organisation: organisation (the formal structure) organises (through procedures) organisation (as an institution). At all levels the 'specialised' autonomy needs to be countered by the rule-based command and control. But this applies also vice versa: In order to accomplish specified missions, forces need their fair degree of 'specialised' autonomy.

ARCHIVAL SOURCES

Federal Archive, Department Military Archive (Bundesarchiv, Abteilung Militärarchiv, (BArch-MA) - Freiburg im Breisgau)

BH 1/ 551
BH 1/ 6959
BH 1/ 8696
BH 1/ 18574
BH 1/ 18574
BH 1/ 20977
BH 1/ 25694
BH 1/ 28625
BH 1/ 28652
BH 1/ 28654
BH 1/ 29082
BH 1/ 29121
BH 1/ 29123
BH 1/ 29123
BH 1/ 29124
BH 1/ 30200
N 617/18
N 854/ 4

PRINTED SOURCES

Deutscher Bundestag, 13. Wahlperiode, Drucksache 13/6639, Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Angelika Beer, Winfried Nachtwei, Christian Sterzing und der Fraktion Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, Kommando Spezialkräfte, December 18, 1996.

Deutscher Bundestag, 13. Wahlperiode, Drucksache 13/6924, Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Angelika Beer, Winfried Nachtwei, Christian Sterzing und der Fraktion Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen, February 07, 1997. http://dipbt.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/13/069/1306924.pdf. Accessed May 28, 2021.

Deutscher Bundestag, 4. Wahlperiode Drucksache IV/3200, Schriftlicher Bericht des Ausschusses für Inneres (6. Ausschuß) über den von der Bundesregierung eingebrachten Entwurf eines Gesetzes zur Ergänzung des Gesetzes über den Bundesgrenzschutz und die Einrichtung von Bundesgrenzschutzbehörden, March 16, 1965.

Deutscher Bundestag, 7. Wahlperiode, Drucksache 7/ 3170, Unterrichtung durch die Bundesregierung Bericht der Bundesregierung über die Fortentwicklung des Bundesgrenzschutzes, January 24, 1975.

Deutscher Bundestag, Bericht der Kommission Grenzschutzdienstpflicht und Kombattantenstatus, December 20, 1974.

REFERENCES

Altenhöner, Klaus. "Spezialisten des Kleinkrieges. Kommandokampf – Erste Erfahrungen mit einem neuen Lehrgang." *Truppenpraxis* 6 (1993): 667-670.

Baach, Werner. "Rambos unerwünscht. Das Kommando Spezialkräfte – eine Elitetruppe des Heeres wächst auf." *Truppenpraxis/ Wehrausbildung* 11 (1996): 741-743.

Bartels, Hans-Peter. "Organische Großverbände für die Verteidigung Europas – Eine Einordnung der aktuellen Bundeswehr-Reform." *Europäische Sicherheit & Technik* (June, 21 2021).

Bartels, Hans-Peter und Rainer L. Glatz. "Der Status quo ist unhaltbar. Zentralisierung, Stabslastigkeit und Mangelwirtschaft lähmen die Bundeswehr." *Die Bundeswehr* 11 (2020): 21-24.

Bernhardt, Georg, "Spezialkräfte - wichtiger Nachholbedarf." *Europäische Sicherheit* 8 (1996): 18-22.

Böger, Helmut and Klaus Becker. "Rühes Ledernacken. Für weltweite Einsätze trainieren Kommando-Soldaten." *Bild am Sonntag,* March 5, 1995.

Bundesminister der Verteidigung im Auftrag der Bundesregierung, ed. Weißbuch 1985. Zur Lage und Entwicklung der Bundeswehr. Bonn, 1985.

Bundesminister der Verteidigung [Volker Rühe]. *Verteidigungspolitische Richtlinien für den Geschäftsbereich des Bundesministers der Verteidigung (VPR).* Bonn, November 26, 1992.

Carstens, Nikolaus. "Vom Auftrag her denken!" *Die Bundeswehr* 10 (2022): 52 f.

Clausewitz, Carl von. *Vom Kriege* [1832], edited by Werner Hahlweg 18. ed. 1973. Bonn: Dümmler, 1973.

Conze, Eckard. *Die Suche nach Sicherheit. Eine Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland von 1949 bis in die Gegenwart.* München: Siedler, 2009.

Deinhardt, André. *Panzergrenadiere – eine Truppengattung im Kalten Krieg 1960 bis 1970.* Sicherheitspolitik und Streitkräfte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 11. München: Oldenbourg, 2011.

Dissberger, Karl-Heinz, et al. *Vom Himmel auf die Erde ins Gefecht: Fallschirmjäger der nationalen Volksarmee.* Zürich: Kabinett Verlag, 1999.

Elbe, Martin and Gregor Richter. "Militär: Institution und Organisation." In *Militärsoziologie – Eine Einführung,* edited by Nina Leonhard and Ines-Jacqueline Werkner 2nd ed., 244-263. Wiesbaden: vs Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2012.

Elbe, Martin and Sibylle Peters. *Die temporäre Organisation. Grundlagen der Kooperation, Gestaltung und Beratung.* Wiesbaden: Springer, 2016.

Fansa, Mamoun and Detlef Hoffmann, ed. *Lawrence von Arabien. Genese eines Mythos.* Mainz: Philip von Zabern, 2010.

Frieser, Karl-Heinz. *Blitzkrieg-Legende. Der Westfeldzug 1940.* München: Oldenbourg, 1995.

Froese, Kerstin, and Reinhard Scholzen. GSG 9. *Innenansichten eines Spezialverbandes des Bundesgrenzschutzes.* Stuttgart: Pietsch-Verlag, 2007.

Ganser, Daniele. *NATO's Secret Armies. Operation Gladio and Terrorism in Western Europe.* London, New York: Taylor&Francis, 2005.

Geiger, Tim. "Die 'Landshut' in Mogadischu. Das außenpolitische Krisenmanagement der Bundesregierung angesichts der terroristischen Herausforderung 1977." *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 3(2009): 414-456.

Generalinspekteur der Bundeswehr [Eberhard Zorn], "2. Zwischenbericht zur Umsetzung des Maßnahmenkatalogs der AG KSK." March 23, 2021. https://www.bmvg.de/resource/blob/5044696/27583a2ebe3b13f0767cb3ad7959daaa/zweiter-zwischenbericht-ksk-data.pdf.

Generalinspekteur der Bundeswehr [Eberhard Zorn], "Abschlussbericht Umsetzung Maßnahmenkatalog AG KSK." June 8, 2021.

Generalinspekteur der Bundeswehr [Eberhard Zorn], "Zwischenbericht zur Umsetzung des Maßnahmenkatalogs der AG KSK." October 30, 2020. https://fragdenstaat.de/dokumente/8451-zwischenbericht-zur-umsetzung-des-manahmenkatalogs-der-arbeitsgruppe-kommando-spezialkrafte-ag-ksk/.

Glawatz, Henning. "Flug ins Ungewisse - Die Operation Libelle." In *Von Kambodscha bis Kosovo. Auslandseinsätze der Bundeswehr seit Ende des Kalten Krieges,* edited by Peter Goebel, 295-307. Frankfurt am Main: Report, 2000.

Glicken Turnley, Jessica, Kobi Michael and Eyal Ben-Ari, ed. *Special Operation Forces in the 21st Century* New York: Routledge, 2018.

Goetz, John, Susanne Koelbl, Marcel Rosenbach and Alexander Szandar. "Die Führung hat versagt." *Der Spiegel* 40 (2007): 22-27.

Golla, Karl-Heinz. *Die deutsche Fallschirmtruppe 1936-1941. Ihr Aufbau und ihr Einsatz in den ersten Feldzügen der Wehrmacht.* Hamburg, Berlin, Bonn: Mittler, 2006.

Götschenberg, Michael. GSG 9. *Terror im Visier. Mythos und Realität einer Spezialeinheit.* Econ: Berlin, 2022.

Graeber, David. *The Utopia of Rules. On Technology, Stupidity, and the Secret Joys of Bureaucracy.* New York: Melville House, 2015.

Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland/ 64. ed., commented by Andreas Voßkuhle. München: Beck, 2016.

Hammerich, Helmut R. "Fighting for the Heart of Germany: I (GE) Corps and NATO-Planned Defense of the North German Plain in the 1960s." In *Blueprints for Battle. Planning for War in Central Europe, 1948-1963,* edited by Jan Hoffenaar and Dieter Krüger, 155-174. Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky, 2012.

Hammerich, Helmut R. "Kommiss kommt von Kompromiss. Das Heer der Bundeswehr zwischen Wehrmacht und U.S. Army (1950 bis 1970)." In Helmut R. Hammerich, Dieter Kollmer, Martin Rink, Rudolf Schlaffer and Michael Poppe, *Das Heer 1950*

bis 1970. Konzeption, Organisation, Aufstellung. = Sicherheitspolitik und Streitkräfte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, vol. 3, 17-351. München: Oldenbourg, 2006.

Hammerich, Helmut. "'Gegen Elitekämpfer helfen nur Jäger, keine Hausschuh-Truppen': Die Bundeswehr und der Kleine Krieg im Kalten Krieg." In *Jahrbuch Innere Führung* 2010, edited by Helmut Hammerich, Uwe Hartmann and Claus von Rosen, 161-173. Berlin: Miles, 2010.

Handbuch Innere Führung. Hilfen zur Klärung der Begriffe, edited by Bundesministerium für Verteidigung [MOD], Führungsstab der Bundeswehr, Referat FüB I 6, [1957], 2nd. ed. 1960 (= Schriftenreihe Innere Führung, Bonn: MOD).

Hänni, Adrian. *Terrorismus als Konstrukt. Schwarze Propaganda, politische Bedrohungsängste und der Krieg gegen den Terrorismus in Reagans Amerika.* Essen: Klartext, 2018.

Heinemann, Winfried. *Die DDR und ihr Militär 1990* = Militärgeschichte kompakt, vol. 3. München: Oldenbourg, 2011.

Held, Oliver, Michael Posch and Jan Weber, ed. *Kommando Spezialkräfte, 20 Jahre KSK*. 2016.

Herberg-Rothe, Andreas and Key-young Son. *Order Wars and Floating Balance. How the Rising Powers Are Reshaping Our Worldview in the Twenty-first Century*. London, New York: Routledge, 2018.

Herberg-Rothe, Andreas. "Demokratische Krieger." In *Reform - Reorganisation - Transformation. Zum Wandel in deutschen Streitkräften von den preußischen Heeresreformen bis zur Transformation der Bundeswehr*, edited by Karl-Heinz Lutz, Martin Rink and Marcus von Salisch, 401-428. Munich: Oldenbourg, 2010.

Herbert, Ulrich. *Geschichte Deutschlands im 20. Jahrhundert.* München: Beck, **2014**.

Herzog, Martin. *GSG 9. Ein deutscher Mythos.* Christoph Links: Berlin, 2022.

Heuser, Beatrice. *Clausewitz lesen! Eine Einführung* = Militärgeschichte kompakt, vol 1. München: Oldenbourg, 2005.

Horn, Bernd. "The evolution of SOF and the rise of SOF Power." In *Special Operation Forces in the 21st Century*, edited by Jessica Glicken Turnley, Kobi Michael and Eyal Ben-Ari, 15-27. New York: Routledge, 2018.

Jacobsen, Hans-Adolf and Hans-Jürgen Rautenberg, ed. *Bundeswehr und europäische Sicherheitsordnung. Abschlußbericht der Unabhängigen Kommission für die künftigen Aufgaben der Bundeswehr.* Bonn, 1991.

Keßelring, Agilolf and Thorsten Loch. "Himmerod war nicht der Anfang. Bundesminister Eberhard Wildermuth und die Anfänge westdeutscher Sicherheitspolitik." *Militärgeschichtliche Zeitschrift* 74, no. 1-2 (2015), 60-96.

King, Anthony. "What is special about special operations forces?" In *Special Operation Forces in the 21st Century*, edited by Jessica Glicken Turnley, Kobi Michael and Eyal Ben-Ari, 273-284. New York: Routledge, 2018.

Kollmer, Dieter H. "Klotzen, nicht kleckern! Die materielle Aufrüstung des Heeres von den Anfängen bis Ende der sechziger Jahre." In Helmut R. Hammerich, Dieter Kollmer, Martin Rink, Rudolf Schlaffer und Michael Poppe, *Das Heer 1950 bis 1970. Konzeption, Organisation, Aufstellung* = Sicherheitspolitik und Streitkräfte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, vol. 3, 485-614. München: Oldenbourg, 2006.

Kollmer, Dieter H. *Rüstungsgüterbeschaffung in der Aufbauphase der Bundeswehr. Der Schützenpanzer HS 30 als Fallbeispiel (1953-1961).* Stuttgart: Steiner, 2002.

Kriemann, Hans-Peter. *Hineingerutscht? Deutschland und der Kosovo-Krieg* = Bundeswehr im Einsatz, 3. Göttingen: Vandenhoek&Ruprecht, 2021.

Kühl, Stefan. *Brauchbare Illegalität.* Frankfurt am Main/ New York: Campus, 2020.

Kümmel, Gerhard. "Military Identity and Identity Within the Military." In *Handbook of the Sociolgy of the Military*, 2nd ed., edited by Giuseppe Caforio and Marina Nuciari, 477-493. Cham: Springer, 2018.

Lawrence, T[homas] E[dward]. *Seven Pillars of Wisdom. A Triumph.* London: Penguin, 1962 [first published 1926].

Loges, Florian. "Die aktuelle Ausrichtung des Heeres. Konsequenzen aus dem Fähigkeitsprofil des Heeres." *Behörden Spiegel* (Dezember 2020): 65.

Luhmann, Niklas, *Funktionen und Folgen formaler Organisation.* 5th ed. Berlin: Duncker&Humblot, 1999 [first published 1964].

Manigart, Philippe. "Restructured Armed Forces." In *Handbook of the Sociology of the Military*, 2nd ed., edited by Giuseppe Caforio and Marina Nuciari, 407-425. Cham: Springer, 2018.

Marlow, Andreas. "Großübung 'Red Griffin/ Colibri'." *Behörden Spiegel* 11(2017): p. 51.

McRaven, William H. *Spec Ops: Case Studies in Special Operations Warfare* (New York: Ballantine, 1996.

Moniac, Rüdiger. "Die Männer wollen keine Rambos sein. Das künftige Kommando Spezialkräfte (KSK) trainiert in Schongau." *Die Welt*, May 8, 1995.

Neitzel, Sönke. *Deutsche Krieger. Vom Kaiserreich zur Berliner Republik – eine Militärgeschichte.* Berlin: Propyläen Verlag 2020.

Oberloskamp, Eva. "Terrorismusbekämpfung nach Olympia. Reaktionen des Bundesministeriums des Inneren auf das Attentat von 1972." *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 36 (September 5, 2022): 27-32.

Orwell, George. *Animal Farm.* Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2003.

Pahl, Magnus. "Kreta 1941 – die 'Schwarze Madonna' der deutschen Fallschirmtruppe." In *Hitlers Elitetruppe? Mythos Fallschirmjäger*, edited by Magnus Pahl and Armin Wagner, 15-38. Berlin: be.bra, 2021.

Pallade, Yves. *Germany and Israel in the 1990s and Beyond: Still a 'Special Relationship'?* Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2005.

Pflüger, Tobias. *Die neue Bundeswehr. Mit neuer Strategie, Struktur und Bewaffnung in den Krieg?* 1997.

Pöhlmann, Markus. *Der Panzer und die Mechanisierung des Krieges. Eine deutsche Geschichte 1890 bis 1945* = Zeitalter der Weltkriege, 14. Paderborn: Schöningh, 2016.

Rautenberg, Hans-Jürgen and Norbert Wiggershaus, "Die 'Himmeroder Denkschrift' vom Oktober 1950. Politische und militärische Überlegungen für einen Beitrag der Bundesrepublik Deutschland zur westeuropäischen Verteidigung." *Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen* 21 (1977): 135-206.

Richter, Klaus Christian, ed. *Panzergrenadiere. Eine Truppengattung im Spiegel ihrer Geschichte* Münster/Örtze: Freundeskreis der Panzergrenadiertruppe, 2004.

Rink, Martin. "Das Heer der Bundeswehr im Wandel 1950-2005: Von Himmerod zum Heer der Zukunft." In *Entschieden für Frieden – 50 Jahre Bundeswehr*, edited by Klaus-Jürgen Bremm, Hans-Hubertus Mack and Martin Rink, 137-154. Berlin: Rombach, 2005.

Rink, Martin. "Das Ungeheuer von Loch Ness und andere Wiedergänger. Milizkonzeptionen und Bundeswehr." In *Spießer, Patrioten, Revolutionäre. Militärische Mobilisierung und gesellschaftliche Ordnung in der Neuzeit (1500-2000)*, edited by Rüdiger Bergien and Ralf Pröve. Göttingen: Vandenhoek&Ruprecht, 2010.

Rink, Martin. *Die Bundeswehr 1950/55 bis 1990* = Militärgeschichte kompakt, vol 6. München: Oldenbourg, 2015.

Rink, Martin. *Heeresstrukturen der Bundeswehr für die 2000er Jahre. Kurze und lange Wege von Konzeption und Organisation deutscher Landstreitkräfte.* (forthcoming)

Rink, Martin. "Lawrence und der Partisanenkrieg. Ein Konzept 'neuer' Kriege?" In *Lawrence von Arabien. Genese eines Mythos*, edited by Mamoun Fansa and Detlef Hoffmann, 163-172. Mainz: Philip von Zabern, 2010.

Rink, Martin. "Operation Libelle 1997." *Militärgeschichte. Zeitschrift für historische Bildung* 1 (2007): 31.

Rink, Martin. "Strukturen brausen um die Wette. Zur Organisation des deutschen Heeres." In Helmut R. Hammerich, Dieter Kollmer, Martin Rink, Rudolf Schlaffer und Michael Poppe, *Das Heer 1950 bis 1970. Konzeption, Organisation, Aufstellung* = Sicherheitspolitik und Streitkräfte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, vol. 3, 353-483. München: Oldenbourg, 2006.

Rojahn, Christoph. *Militärische Antiterroreinheiten als Antwort auf die Bedrohung des internationalen Terrorismus und Instrument nationaler Sicherheitspolitik – das Beispiel Amerika.* München: Utzverlag, 2000.

S.a. "Einsatz ins Ungewisse." *Der Spiegel* 5 (1995): 68-79.

S.a. "Heute geht's zum Feind. Wie eine Spezialtruppe den Ernstfall probt." *Der Spiegel* 5 (1995): 76.

Scheipers, Sybille. *On small war: Carl von Clausewitz and people's war.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Schlaffer, Rudolf J. *Der Wehrbeauftragte 1951 bis 1985. Aus Sorge um den Soldaten* = Sicherheitspolitik und Streitkräfte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 5. München: Oldenbourg, 2006.

Schneider, Oliver and Shirley Michaela Seul. *Der Wille entscheidet. Krisen bewältigen, Verhandlungen gewinnen.* Munich: Ariston, 2021.

Scholzen, Reinhard. *KSK: Das Kommando Spezialkräfte der Bundeswehr.* Stuttgart: Motorbuch Verlag, 2004.

Senger und Etterlin, Ferdinand von. *Die Panzergrenadiere. Geschichte und Gestalt der mechanisierten Infanterie 1930-1960.* München: J.F. Lehmanns, 1961.

Soeters, Jan. "Organizational Cultures in the Military." In *Handbook of the Sociology of the Military*, edited by Giuseppe Caforio and Marina Nuciari, 251-272. Cham: Springer, 2018.

Soeters, Joseph L., Donna J. Winslow and Alise Weibull. "Military Culture." In *Handbook of the Sociology of the Military*, 237-254. New York: Springer, 2006.

Spencer, Emily. "The special operations forces mosaic: a portrait for discussion." In *Special Operation Forces in the 21st Century*, edited by Jessica Glicken Turnley, Kobi Michael and Eyal Ben-Ari, 28-40. New York: Routledge, 2018.

Stoker, Donald and Edward B. Westermann ed. *Expeditionary Police Advising and Militarization. Building Security in a Fractured World*. Solihull: Helion&Company, 2018.

Strauß, Franz Josef. *Die Erinnerungen*. Berlin: Siedler, 1989.

Sünkler, Sönke. *Kommando Spezialkräfte – 25 Jahre*. Würzburg, 2021.

Szandar, Alexandar. "Der erste Schuß." *Spiegel Jahreschronik* 54 (December 16, 1997). https://www.spiegel.de/politik/der-erste-schuss-a-c8b8ee70-0002-0001-0000-000008850309, accessed November 18, 2021.

Tilly, Charles. *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1992*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1992.

Tilly, Charles. "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime." In *Bringing the State Back*, edited by Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Linda Skocpol, 169-187. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

Toffler, Alvin and Heidi Toffler. *War and anti-war. Survival at the dawn of 21st century*. Boston: Little Brown&Co, 1993.

Türk, Klaus. *Die Organisation der Welt. Herrschaft durch Organisation in der modernen Gesellschaft*. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1995.

Türk, Klaus, Thomas Lemke and Michael Bruch. "Organisation als gesellschaftliches Konstrukt." In *Organisation in der modernen Gesellschaft. Eine historische Einführung*, edited by Klaus Türk, Thomas Lemke and Michael Bruch, 19-37. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften: 2002). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-663-10961-7.

Turnley, Jessica Glicken, Eyal Ben-Ari and Kobi Michael. "Special operations forces (SOF) and social science: an introductory essay." In *Special Operation Forces in the 21st Century*, edited by Jessica Glicken Turnley, Kobi Michael and Eyal Ben-Ari, 1-12. New York: Routledge, 2018.

Turnley, Jessica Glicken. "Warrior-diplomats and ungoverned spaces: narratives of possibilities." In *Special Operation Forces in the 21st Century*, edited by Jessica Glicken Turnley, Kobi Michael and Eyal Ben-Ari, 41-55. New York: Routledge, 2018.

Uhle-Wettler, Franz. *Leichte Infanterie im Atomzeitalter. Die Gefahr der Übertechnisierung moderner Streitkräfte*. Darmstadt: Wehr und Wissen, 1966. [2nd and 3rd eds as: Gefechtsfeld Mitteleuropa: Gefahr der Übertechnisierung von Streitkräften (München: Bernard&Graefe, 1980, 1981]

Uli, Rauss. "Die Profis." *Stern*, November 13, 2004. https://www.stern.de/politik/deutschland/kommando-spezialkraefte-die-profis-3545576.html, accessed April 23, 2021.

Wagner, Armin. "Fallschirmjäger. Mythos einer Truppe." In *Hitlers Elitetruppe? Mythos Fallschirmjäger*, edited by Magnus Pahl and Armin Wagner, 7-13. Berlin: be.bra, 2021.

Weber, Max. "Politik als Beruf." In Max Weber, *Gesammelte Politische Schriften*, 505-560. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1971.

Wegener, Ulrich. *GSG 9 - Stärker als der Terror* (edited by Ulrike Zander und Harald Biermann). Berlin: LIT, 2017.

Wette, Wolfram. "Deutsche Helden, armes Land." *taz* (March 19, 1997): 10. https://taz.de/!1408968/, accessed November 18, 2021.

Wiegold. "Gegen Rechtsextremismus: Kommando Spezialkräfte bekommt Umstrukturierung auf Bewährung", https://augengeradeaus.net/2020/06/gegen-rechtsextremismus-kommando-spezialkraefte-bekommt-umstrukturierung-auf-bewaehrung-neufassung/, accessed June 2, 2021.

Zimmermann, John. "Wahrnehmung und Nachleben der Fallschirmtruppe." In *Hitlers Elitetruppe? Mythos Fallschirmjäger*, edited by Magnus Pahl and Armin Wagner, 111-119. Berlin: be.bra, 2021.

ONLINE RESOURCES

https://augengeradeaus.net.

Gesetz zur Neuregelung der Vorschriften über den Bundesgrenzschutz, 19-10-1994, Bundesgesetzblatt Jg 1994, Teil I, S. 2978-3000, hier §§ 7 f., https://www.bgbl.de/xaver/bgbl/start.xav?start=//*%5B@attr_id=%27bgbl194s2978.pdf%27%5D#__bgbl__%2F%2F*%5B%40attr_id%3D%27bgbl194s2978.pdf%27%5D__1663748450077.

Standortdatenbank der Bundeswehr, https://www.deutsche-militaerstandorte-nach1945.de/.

Special Ethics for Special Soldiers?

Thoughts on Ethical Standards in the Special Operations Forces of the Bundeswehr

Sven Behnke

INTRODUCTION

Ethics as a philosophical or theological discipline aims to critically reflect on observed actions and attitudes and to judge them according to the categories of 'good' and 'evil'. The call for ethical reflection gets particularly loud when we are confronted with obvious or alleged wrongdoing. Whereas everyday life usually does not offer any reason for questioning behaviour and attitude, scandals are usually followed by a call for detailed investigation and (ethical) evaluation of the (alleged) misconduct. Ethical theory has to prove itself in practice, especially where norms are violated by breaches of rules, and the social consensus on binding values is called into question. The question of ethics and morals in the German special operations forces is not purely theoretical. It was of practical relevance in 2017 when the *Bundeswehr*'s Special Forces Command (*Kommando Spezialkräfte*/KSK) was confronted with an increasing number of suspected cases of right-wing extremism and lack of loyalty to the constitution. As a result, the KSK, the best-known special operations forces unit of the Bundeswehr, whose missions are usually subject to secrecy and about whose activities the public is generally not informed had been in the focus of German media interest for months. There were reports of internal investigations of the Bundeswehr regarding a farewell party held in April 2017 for a KSK company commander where soldiers allegedly gave the Hitler salute, listened to right-wing rock and threw pigs' heads.[1] The incident prompted the then Minister of Defence to appoint a task force to conduct a structure and deficit analysis on right-wing extremist tendencies within the KSK. An initial report by this task force stated in June 2020:

> "Die Häufung der Verdachtsfälle von Rechtsextremismus [im KSK] belegt, dass sich Teile dieses Verbandes über die Jahre hin verselbständigt haben. Auf der Grundlage eines ungesunden Eliteverständnisses einzelner Führungskräfte sind dort Strukturen entstanden, denen bisher nicht effektiv begegnet wurde."[2]
>
> ["The accumulation of suspected cases of right-wing extremism [in the KSK] proves that parts of this unit have become independent over the years. Based on an unhealthy elitism among individual leaders, structures developed that have not yet been effectively countered."][3]

The suspicions of right-wing extremism against individual KSK members, as well as the accusation of "unhealthy elitism" to which parts of the KSK have been exposed, provoke the question of how special the ethos and morals of the Bundeswehr's special operations forces are and should be. What ethical standards apply to the soldiers of the KSK and other German special operations forces? In view of their (supposedly) special ethos, do special operations forces also require special ethics? To explore these questions, I will first look back at the beginnings of the Bundeswehr when the principles of soldierly action in the German armed forces were established.

---

1 Cf. e.g. S.a., " KSK Eliteeinheit".

2 German Federal Ministry of Defence ed., *Bericht der Arbeitsgruppe Kommando Spezialkräfte*, 6. The tendency toward independence (from the organisation/the Bundeswehr) and elitism are two dangers that run counter to the intention of *Innere Führung* as the leadership philosophy and self-image of all Bundeswehr personnel.

3 All translations from German in parentheses here and below were done by the author.

MANDATORY FOR ALL: INNERE FÜHRUNG AS SELF-PERCEPTION AND LEADERSHIP PHILOSOPHY OF THE BUNDESWEHR

When in November 1955 the first voluntary conscripts were sworn in, giving a face to the Bundeswehr as an "army of democracy", intensive debates had already been held years earlier about how new armed forces could be integrated into the political system and society of the young Federal Republic of Germany. In many respects, the concept of *Innere Führung* (leadership development and civic education), with its guiding principle of the soldier as a 'citizen in uniform' developed by the future Lieutenant General Wolf Graf von Baudissin, was ground breaking.[4] It reflects important lessons learned from the past of German armed forces before 1945: the Bundeswehr as an institution in a democratic and liberal state was to be fundamentally different from the *Wehrmacht*, which had served the Nazi regime as a willing instrument for waging aggressive wars, and whose soldiers had also participated in Nazi mass crimes and been responsible for countless war crimes.[5]

In the light of the abysses of German military history, seamless continuity with the *Wehrmacht* was out of the question for the new armed forces, and a noticeable break with the predecessor institution was called for. The Bundeswehr's masterminds wanted to "create something fundamentally new today without adopting the forms of the old Wehrmacht" ("ohne Anlehnung an die Formen der alten Wehrmacht heute grundlegend Neues zu schaffen"[6]). The intended break with the *Wehrmacht* (and other former German armies) manifested itself, for example, in consistent civilian control of the Bundeswehr and a primacy of politics on missions.[7]

In addition to civilian control of the armed forces and the primacy of politics, the difference between the new army and the old army is particularly evident in the changed concept of the soldier: Hermann Göring, as commander-in-chief of the *Luftwaffe* (WW II German Air Force) during the Nazi era, propagated the image of a soldier[8] who "in und außer Dienst ein vorbildlicher [...] Kämpfer ohne jeden Vorbehalt zu sein [habe]"[9] "on and off duty must be an exemplary [...] fighter without reservations."].

But in Germany's new armed forces this "fighter without reservations" is replaced by the 'citizen in uniform' who is bound to the free and democratic basic order. By participating in and actively shaping the intellectual, cultural and social life of society, the 'citizen in uniform' is an integral part of civil society, whose values he shares and defends.[10]

---

4 Cf. von Baudissin 1968, 194: "Sie können die ganze Innere Führung als einen Integrationsprozeß der einzelnen in ihre militärische Einheit, aber auch in Staat und Gesellschaft ansehen [...]." ["You can view the whole *Innere Führung* as a process of integration of individuals into their military unit, but also into the state and society"]

5 Cf. Picht, "Vom künftigen deutschen Soldaten,", 16: "Als Staatsbürger in Uniform soll der künftige Soldat zu seinem ‚militärischen' Vorfahren in deutlichen Gegensatz treten." ["As a citizen in uniform, the future soldier shall clearly stand in contrast to its 'military' ancestor."] Not only the Wehrmacht, but the Reichswehr, too is unfit to serve as a model for the new army of democracy, since it largely refused to be integrated into the democratic Weimar Republic and occasionally questioned its institutions.

6 German Federal Ministry of Defence, *Von Himmerod bis Andernach*, 84-85.

7 Cf. Rink, *Die Bundeswehr*, 11.

8 Goering explicitly refers to officers and non-commissioned officers, in whom he recognises "Volkserzieher" ("educators of the people").

9 Göring, "Geleitwort.", III-IV.

10 Cf. von Baudissin, "Das Bild," 206-207.

He has to make sure that orders and instructions are not only in conformity with the law, but also with his conscience, and he knows that he is first and foremost obliged to protect and preserve the free democratic basic order.[11] Establishing this new image of the soldier posed a particular challenge for the young Bundeswehr since most of the personnel available had served in the *Wehrmacht*. For Baudissin, two things are essential for the concept of the 'citizen in uniform': on the one hand, the 'citizen in uniform' is firmly integrated into the intellectual, cultural and social life of the community (i.e., the liberal society oriented toward Western values) and actively participates in it. On the other hand, he knows that he is bound to the existing moral order (i.e., the liberal democratic basic order) representing the community.[12] The soldier does not stand in opposition to civil society but is an integral part of it. It is precisely this identification with the state and civil society that motivates him to commit himself to freedom and security.

Von Baudissin's concept of Innere Führung depicts an image of the soldier as a 'citizen in uniform' that is in clear contrast to the 'unreserved fighter'. In this concept soldierly action does not fit into the simple scheme of command and obedience. Rather, the model of the 'citizen in uniform' perceives the soldier as a personality and conscience-guided individual who is responsible for his actions at all times and in all places.

From the very beginning critics of the concept of Innere Führung complained that binding soldiers to ethical principles could limit their ability to deploy and act.[13] By contrast, Baudissin declared already in 1952:

> "Die Verwirklichung dieser Grundsätze [der Inneren Führung] darf und braucht [...] keine Verminderung der Schlagkraft zur Folge zu haben [...]. Sie gewährt dem Menschen die Möglichkeit zur persönlichen Entfaltung, damit er im vollen Bewußtsein seiner Verantwortung seine gesamte Kraft und Fähigkeit in den Dienst der Sache stellt. "[14]
>
> ["The realisation of these principles [of Innere Führung] must not and need not [...] result in a reduction of striking power [...]. It grants man the opportunity for personal development, so that he, in full awareness of his responsibility, places all his strength and ability at the service of the cause."]

Those who perform their service in freedom and for the sake of freedom are not only better motivated, but also liberated from the burden of having to act against their own conscience. This is the logic of Innere Führung. The concept seeks to show that a high

11 Regarding the limit of obedience cf. von Baudissin, "20. Juli 1944," 107.

12 Cf. von Baudissin, "Das Bild," 206-207.

13 Cf. e.g. Neitzel, *Deutsche Krieger*, 590: "Zwar beschrieben die Konzepte des Staatsbürgers in Uniform und der Inneren Führung einen wünschenswerten Idealzustand des politisch mündigen Soldaten und standen mitnichten im Gegensatz zu kampfbereiten Streitkräften. Sie waren aber zu verkopft gedacht und beschäftigten im Alltag vor allem die Stabsoffiziere. Die Masse der Soldaten konnte mit ihnen wenig anfangen." ["Although the concepts of the citizen in uniform and Innere Führung described a desirable ideal state of the politically mature soldier and were by no means in opposition to combat-ready armed forces, they were too sophisticated in their conception, and, in everyday life, they were primarily of concern to staff officers. Most of the soldiers had little use for them."]

14 Von Baudissin, "Das innere Gefüge," 139; cf. on this Luther, *Ob Kriegsleute*, 14: "wer mit einem guten, wohlunterrichteten Gewissen kämpft, kann gut kämpfen. Denn es kann nicht misslingen: Wo ein gutes Gewissen ist, da ist auch großer Mut und ein tapferes Herz." ["he who fights with a good, well-instructed conscience can fight well. For it cannot fail: where there is a good conscience, there is also great courage and a brave heart."]

demand for military effectiveness while granting freedom as well as soldierly and civic rights to the greatest possible extent is no contradiction in terms.[15]

Moreover, Innere Führung reminds us that the pursuit of freedom goes hand in hand with the assumption of responsibility. Soldiers who have the right to follow the call of their conscience also have the duty not to act against their conscience.[16] They are responsible for their actions and cannot evade this responsibility, for example, by claiming to have acted under superior orders.[17] The responsibility of the conscience-guided 'citizen in uniform' includes the "indefensibility of the decision" ("*Unvertretbarkeit der Entscheidung*").[18]

As intended by its founders the concept of Innere Führung underwent continuous development. But the concept's core elements from the 1950s remained unchanged and its spirit has persisted through various restructuring and transformation processes that the Bundeswehr has experienced in recent decades, especially after the German reunification and the end of the Cold War. Also in the era that was decisive for the establishment and growth of the German special operations forces units, from the mid-1990s (establishment of the KSK after the genocide in Rwanda in 1994/1996 and of the Naval Special Operations Command [*Kommando Spezialkräfte Marine*/KSM] in 2014)[19] to the international fight against Islamist terrorism after September 11, 2001, and under the impact of new conflict scenarios until about 2014/2015, [20] Innere Führung was a given and self-evident fact for all units.

Today, the concept of Innere Führung is available in a Type A General Publication (*Zentrale Dienstvorschrift* A-2600/1).[21] It is to be understood as the self-image and leadership culture of the Bundeswehr. Innere Führung is a unique feature of the Bundeswehr and forms the "basis for military service in the Bundeswehr" ("Grundlage für den militärischen Dienst in der Bundeswehr")[22] by committing all members of the armed forces to an ethos that is bound to the values and norms of the free democratic basic order, above all the respect for human dignity. In this way, Innere Führung is congruent with the basic soldierly duty to bravely defend the law and the freedom of the German people,[23] as enshrined in the German Legal Status of Military Personnel Act (*Soldatengesetz* - SG) and attested to in the oath.

Superiors have a special responsibility for the lived practice of Innere Führung. In particular, through leadership, political education and the use of their disciplinary powers, they should convey the nature and meaning of Innere Führung to the soldiers entrusted to their care and raise the awareness of the commitment to law and order. However, Innere

15 Cf. German Federal Ministry of Defence, *Innere Führung*, no. 302.

16 For Baudissin, 'unconditional' obedience is out of the question, since it implies "eine Befehlsgewalt bzw. Gehorsamspflicht, der keine rechtlichen und sittlichen Grenzen gesetzt sind". ["a power of command or a duty of obedience with no defined legal or moral limits"] Von Baudissin, "Über den unbedingten Gehorsam," 175.

17 Cf. on the legal assessment of the criminal liability for state-ordered crimes in German postwar trials: Rückerl ed., *Nationalsozialistische Vernichtungslager*, 305-329; on the topic cf. also Kelman and Hamilton, *Crimes of Obedience*.

18 Von Baudissin, "Vom Bild," 203.

19 Cf. Denisentsev, "German Special Forces," 73, 75-78, 86.

20 Following the armed conflict over Crimea and its annexation by Russia in 2014, the focus of security strategy has increasingly shifted back to national and alliance defense.

21 Cf. German Federal Ministry of Defence, *Innere Führung*.

22 German Federal Ministry of Defence, *Innere Führung*, no. 101.

23 Cf. section 7 and section 9 of the German Legal Status of Military Personnel Act (*Soldatengesetz*).

Führung is by no means the exclusive responsibility of superiors. It is – without exception – "für jede Soldatin und jeden Soldaten [der Bundeswehr] verbindlich"[24] ["mandatory for every member [of the Bundeswehr]"]. As a result, it contributes to the 'internal cohesion' of the German armed forces, despite all the differences between the various service branches and rank categories. Since Innere Führung with its ethical principles claims normative binding force for both the members of the conventional units and the soldiers of the special operations forces units, it is evident that there can be no room in the Bundeswehr for an ethos that contradicts those principles. The universal claim of Innere Führung, which extends to all members of the armed forces, is in conflict with any elitist consciousness from which standards for soldierly action are derived which deviate from the principles of Innere Führung.

How does this ethical claim of Innere Führung relate to the existing ethos[25] of the special operations forces units in the Bundeswehr?

ELITE? – ON THE ETHOS OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES UNITS IN THE BUNDESWEHR

The common perception of special operations forces is particularly influenced by their media portrayal in films, television, computer and video games: "Elite, masculine, highly capable yet somewhat elusive warriors shape the image that comes to mind when people think of SOF."[26] But does this image of the elite warrior reflect reality, and if so, is it compatible with Innere Führung and its guiding principle of the 'citizen in uniform'? If one seeks to describe the ethos of the German special operations forces units, it is useful to first ask what distinguishes their soldiers from members of conventional units. What is special about the special operations forces units?

The range of tasks performed by the Bundeswehr's special operations forces units includes special reconnaissance, direct action, and military assistance. A highly professionalised training program prepares the soldiers for these tasks. It aims at acquiring and promoting various specific professional competencies, including: urban combat and close quarters battle, methods of assaulting buildings, planes and ships, methods of rapid entry and precision marksmanship, drills for room and building clearance, hostage rescue,

---

24 German Federal Ministry of Defence, *Innere Führung*, no. 102.

25 On the term "ethos" cf. Reuter, "Grundlagen und Methoden," 15: "Ethos ist eine eingelebte Üblichkeit des Verhaltens [...]. *Ein Ethos ist die Gesamtheit der [...] Haltungen und Vorstellungen, an denen sich das Handeln in einer Gruppe oder Gemeinschaft faktisch ausrichtet.*" ("Ethos is a habitual custom of behavior [...]. *An ethos is the totality of [...] attitudes and ideas, to which the actions in a group or community are factually oriented.*") In contrast the term "morality" describes "weniger beschreibbare, faktische Verhaltensgewohnheiten [...], sondern eher die normativen Handlungsmuster, die Gesamtheit von Regeln, die das richtige Handeln ausmachen und die von allen zu befolgen sind. [...] In der Moral geht es um die Regulierung des Handelns durch Normen, und zwar der Tendenz nach um allgemeingültige Normen." ["less describable, factual habits of behavior [...], but rather normative patterns of action, the totality of rules that constitute the right action and that are to be followed by all. [...] Morality is about the regulation of action by norms, and, as a tendency, by universally valid norms."] (Cf. Ibid.)

26 Spencer, "The special operations forces mosaic," 34.

specialised insertion and infiltration techniques.[27]

But to single out members of special operations forces as mere specialists is inadequate to describe the difference between them and other soldiers in the armed forces. Conventional forces may also have comparable specialist skills.[28] Moreover, in terms of organisation and structure, the special operations forces units in the Bundeswehr are closely related to the (conventional) units supporting them.[29] Instead of specialisation, it seems more appropriate to emphasise the high degree of professionalisation and the density of expertise in the special operations forces units. Unconventional (compared to conventional units) and thus 'special' is the high level of selection procedures: "Across Western forces, SOF selection is widely regarded as the most demanding of all testing processes [...]. SOF operators are themselves exceptional as individuals in terms of their physical and psychological resilience."[30]

Taking this selection of the best into account, it is understandable that soldiers often regard their membership in the special operations forces units as a privilege.[31] This self-perception is in contrast to a critical view on special operation forces within the military organisation: "SOF's image within conventional military establishments is less flattering, often centering on features like elitism and arrogance."[32] Selection procedures and high-level trainings in special operation forces can be accompanied by an increasing social distancing from conventional units, as an empirical analysis of Belgian special operations forces units in the MINUSMA operation in Mali revealed.[33]

Yet independent and systematic studies of how special operations forces units are perceived by themselves and by others in the armed forces and in society remain rare.[34] Thus, assumptions about the ethos of the special operations forces units of the Bundeswehr can only be made with great caution. In this context, a Danish case study is revealing: it examined the characteristics of the "mind-set"[35] of the two Danish special operations forces units (Jaeger and Frogman Corps) and in particular asked "how SOF interacts with the wider military institutional environment"[36]. The authors state: "[...] the combination of

27 Cf. King, "What is special," 276-277. "There seems little doubt that, as might be expected, the specialness of the SOF [special operations forces] resides in what they can actually do. It signifies identifiable, concrete and proven specialities." (loc. cit., 277)

28 Cf. King, "What is special," 277: "SOF have become adept at close quarters battle, deep reconnaissance, infiltration, and irregular warfare, but in each of these cases, there are examples of regular forces which have developed a similar range of skills or could have done so if they had been sufficiently trained and resourced."

29 Cf. Denisentsev, "German Special Forces," 86. Special mention should be made in this context of soldiers with the so-called "Extended Basic Qualification" (*Erweiterte Grundbefähigung*/EGB), who belong to the special operation forces of the army ("*Heer*") and can effectively support the special operations forces. Cf. Hinz 2021.

30 King, "What is special," 275. In the German KSK, after a two-stage selection procedure that lasts several weeks (including the "Überlebenslehrgang Spezialkräfte"/ Commando Survival Course), applicants must complete two years of training, which includes numerous individual courses and exercises at various locations in Germany and at allied partners' facilities. (Cf. Denisentsev, "German Special Forces," 84).

31 Cf. Spencer, "The special operations forces mosaic," 30.

32 Dalgaard-Nielsen and Falster Holm, "Supersoldiers or Rulebreakers?" 592.

33 Cf. Resteigne, "Aiming to punch," 157.

34 Cf. Højstrup Christensen, *Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, 13-14.

35 Regarding the term "mind-set", the authors of the study note: "Our working definition of SOF's mind-set is that it consists of a set of common characteristics and preferences that shape SOF's approach to tasks and missions across from national and unit borders." (Dalgaard-Nielsen and Falster Holm, "Supersoldiers or Rulebreakers?" 593)

36 Cf. Dalgaard-Nielsen and Falster Holm, "Supersoldiers or Rulebreakers?" 598.

characteristics, like self-managing, goal oriented, challenging together with SOF's apparent lack of respect for authority, set processes, and willingness to compromise, could feed notions of SOF elitism and unruliness and cause friction between SOF and general-purpose forces."[37]

However, the study also points out that the adjective "elitist" is hardly ever used to describe the operators, neither by members of the Danish special operations forces units nor by colleagues closely acquainted with them.[38] The authors of the study conclude that the mind-set of Danish special operations forces units reflects a complex reality, and that their members cannot be stereotypically described as either "superhuman elite soldiers" or "arrogant rule breakers".[39] This insight is probably also correct with regard to the soldiers of German special operations forces. Due to their mind-set a tendency toward elitist consciousness of special operations forces units is nevertheless to be expected. Although elitism alone does not yet cause an ethical problem, the more a unit (through elitism) separates itself from the standards of the larger organisation, the greater the likelihood that competitive ideas of values and norms will emerge. Therefore, the aforementioned investigation report on suspected extremist cases in the KSK[40] demands: "Auch und gerade wegen seiner fachlichen Spezialisierung muss sich das KSK – wie jede Unikat-Befähigung der Streitkräfte – in den gesamten Truppenkörper einfügen."[41] ["Also and precisely because of its professional specialisation, the KSK - like any unique capability in the armed forces - must fit into the entire military force. "]

However, a supposed 'special ethos' of soldiers in the special operations forces could not be attributed solely to demanding selection procedures and specific and professionalised training and skills; the operating conditions typical for the special operations forces units could also be an explanation.[42] NATO's *Allied Joint Doctrine for Special Operations* describes the nature of special operations as follows: "Special operations are normally conducted in uncertain, hostile or politically sensitive environments. These operations may be conducted using clandestine capabilities/techniques and require mature and highly trained operators."[43]

Military historian Sönke Neitzel uses the term "tribal cultures" to describe the inherent cultures of service branches. He argues that with regard to the cultural entities of individual service branches of the Bundeswehr continuities have persisted from the German Empire (1871-1918) to the present.[44] He surmises: "Je näher sich der Auftrag einer Truppengattung am scharfen Ende des militärischen Berufes befindet, desto ausgeprägter

37 Dalgaard-Nielsen and Falster Holm, "Supersoldiers or Rulebreakers?" 603.

38 Cf. Dalgaard-Nielsen and Falster Holm, "Supersoldiers or Rulebreakers?" 606: "As a matter of fact, characteristics like *judgmental*, *elitist*, and *unruly* are rare in our data."

39 Dalgaard-Nielsen and Falster Holm, "Supersoldiers or Rulebreakers?" 606.

40 See above, n. 2.

41 German Federal Ministry of Defence ed., *Bericht der Arbeitsgruppe Kommando Spezialkräfte*, 6.

42 Cf. Neitzel, "Kämpfen im Grenzbereich," 16: "Das Besondere an den Spezialkräften ist, dass sie auch im Frieden im Krieg sind." ["What is special about the special operations forces is that they are at war even in peacetime."]

43 NATO, *AJP*-3,5, no. 1.5.

44 Cf. Neitzel, *Deutsche Krieger*, 596: "In den *tribal cultures* der Kampftruppen hatte das von manchem Soziologen totgesagte Kriegertum überlebt." ["In the tribal cultures of the combat troops, warriorship, which had been pronounced dead by many a sociologist, had survived."]

scheinen die *tribal cultures* zu sein." [45] ["The closer a branch's mission is to the sharp end of the military profession, the more pronounced *tribal cultures* seem to be."] In view of the operational scenarios of special operations forces units, a strongly pronounced "tribal culture" would thus be expected. According to Neitzel a possible danger of such "tribal cultures" is "eine[r] Art Isolationismus, sodass Soldaten im ärgsten Fall nur noch die eigene Welt sehen und sich vom Rest der Streitkräfte, aber auch der Gesellschaft abgrenzen" [46] ["a kind of isolationism, so that in the worst case soldiers only see their own world and separate themselves from the rest of the armed forces, and also from society"].

It is obvious that such "isolationism" (just like right-wing rock and the Hitler salute) cannot be reconciled with Innere Führung, which aims at integration into the civil society. Elitist fighters and egalitarian 'citizens in uniform' are compatible only to a limited extent. Against this background, is the leadership culture of the Bundeswehr called into question?

'INNERE FÜHRUNG' VERSUS 'INNERE FÜHRUNG LIGHT' – DOES THE PROFESSIONAL REALITY OF SOLDIERS IN SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES REQUIRE SPECIFIC ETHICAL STANDARDS?

Is there a threat of alienation from the military organisation (Bundeswehr), from society and from the values and norms enshrined in the German Basic Law, not only with regard to the specific habitus of special units, but especially when deployment to "uncertain, hostile or politically sensitive environments"[47] becomes the norm? Does perhaps even the preparation for such missions lead to an abandonment of familiar ethical demands, because already here it becomes obvious that the 'world on operation' has nothing in common with the conditions at home?

Is the price of the demanding training and operational reality of special operations forces a fundamentally different ethos that requires its own ethics? This question touches on the frequently discussed debate in the Bundeswehr as to whether Innere Führung as a leadership philosophy and ethical compass proves its worth only in the barracks area or also in the field.[48] According to some people the fact that the protection of and respect for human dignity "at any place and at any time"[49], including in the fight against terrorism in Afghanistan, is a central requirement for every soldier, is unrealistic. In 2014, for example, a young lieutenant remarked that, in his perception, few soldiers really knew or internalised the Joint Service Regulation on Innere Führung,[50] and he quotes a former Chief of the German Army who said in 2004: "Der Staatsbürger in Uniform hat ausgedient [...] Wir brauchen den archaischen Kämpfer und den, der den High-Tech-Krieg führen kann. "[51] ["The citizen in uniform has outlived its usefulness [...] We need the archaic fighter and the

45 Neitzel, "Tribal Cultures und Innere Führung," 7.
46 Ibid., 10.
47 See above, n. 43.
48 For an example of this debate, see Bohnert, *Innere Führung auf dem Prüfstand*.
49 Cf. German Federal Ministry of Defence, *Innere Führung*, no. 105.
50 Cf. Rotter, "Wie dienen?" 56-57.
51 Hans-Otto Budde quoted in Rotter, "Wie dienen?" 56-57. (In fact, the original quote differs somewhat from Rotter's citation, cf. Winkel, "Bundeswehr braucht.")

one who is able to fight the high-tech war."]

In light of such a questioning of the guiding principle of Innere Führung, it may seem tempting to consider "double standards" for soldierly ethics in the Bundeswehr and to define different ethical requirements for commando soldiers which take into account the particular hardships of their operational reality. A so-called "two-level ethic" that claims full obligation only for one part of a group/organisation but has a merely recommendatory character for another part, would not be without historical precedent. Christian theologians of the Middle Ages, for example, understood the partly radical ethical demands of Jesus, including the commandment to love one's enemies (Matthew 5:44), as having absolute binding force only for the class striving for moral perfection (clergy, monasticism). For the majority of the faithful, the imperfect state of the laity, in contrast, the Jesuan demands of the Sermon on the Mount would only have orienting, advisory potential.

With the expansion of Protestantism in the early modern period, theological ethics received new stimuli. The ideas of the Wittenberg reformer Martin Luther became particularly influential. Luther firmly rejected the distinction made in medieval exegesis between (binding) "commandments" (*praecepta*) and (non-binding) "counsels" (*consilia*) as not being in accordance with Scripture,[52] and discarded the two-stage ethic which was based on an outwardly visible division of Christianity into the perfect and the imperfect:

> "Denn Vollkommenheit und Unvollkommenheit bestehen nicht in Werken, machen auch keinen besonderen äußeren Stand unter den Christen, sondern bestehen im Herzen, im Glauben und in der Liebe, so daß, wer mehr glaubt und liebt, der ist vollkommen, er sei äußerlich ein Mann oder Weib, Fürst oder Bauer."[53]
>
> ["For perfection and imperfection do not consist in works, and do not establish any distinct external order among Christians. They exist in the heart, in faith and love, so that those who believe and love are the most perfect ones, whether they be outwardly male or female, prince or peasant."]

Here and elsewhere Luther argues against all efforts to understand the spiritual state as a kind of 'elite' within Christianity. At the same time, he espouses the inner cohesion of Christianity: just as all Christians indiscriminately find themselves confronted with the demands of biblical commandments and the demands of the law, in faith they experience the unconditional promise of God's grace through the gospel without distinction.

The reformatory objection to the two-level ethic, mentioned only in passing here, draws attention to the fact that by formulating different normative standards, one favors the creation of an 'elite' within one's community (be it the church or the military organisation) and thereby at the same time abandons its inner unity. If, however, one wants to counter tendencies toward independence within the military organisation, a uniform ethical standard is required, and all members of the organisation must live up to it. There can be no such thing as (mandatory) Innere Führung for routine service and 'Innere Führung light' (as a mere recommendation) for demanding missions, because a scaled ethical doctrine and education would not only betray the aspired 'self-perception' of the entire Bundeswehr, but also, above all, call into question the organisation's common fundamental values.

52 Cf. Luther, "Von weltlicher Obrigkeit," 42.
53 Ibid.

Despite all efforts to achieve internal cohesion in the Bundeswehr, it must be recognised that the ethical standards of Innere Führung pose different challenges for soldiers depending on the context of their deployment. For Bundeswehr members in routine service at home, commitment to the values and norms of the Basic Law is a duty that challenges them no more and no less than other fellow citizens in the country who also live within the bounds of the constitution. The situation is different for the commando soldier in action: in the hostile environment there are often only his own comrades who share values and norms, and sometimes he is forced to make morally significant decisions of great consequence within seconds, including decisions about the death and life of a person. The normative requirements formulated for soldiers in routine service and command soldiers in combat may be identical: however, it is much more demanding to meet these standards in an operational environment of the special operations forces, and in some cases it may even be impossible.

Baudissin already recommended not to give too much thought to the "concern that soldiers should not be overstrained" ("Bedenken, daß man die Soldaten nicht überfordern soll[e]"[54]). The normative claim to validity of Innere Führung must be defended even in difficult operational situations, at any time and in any place. Baudissin's insight, formulated under the conditions of the Cold War, proves to be correct, even with regard to the operational scenarios of modern special operations forces units:

> "Die Härte, von der heute vielfach gefordert wird, daß sie sich an der Härte unseres mutmaßlichen Gegners ausrichten müsse, kann nicht die Erbarmungslosigkeit des 'Killers' sein. Es ist vielmehr die geistige und moralische Standhaftigkeit, die notfalls auch das Töten von Menschen auf sich nimmt, falls es sich nicht vermeiden läßt, und die es vor sich und vor Gott zu verantworten sucht."[55] ["The toughness, which according to current demands should be geared to the toughness of our presumed enemy, cannot be the mercilessness of the 'killer'. It is rather the mental and moral steadfastness which, if necessary, also includes the killing of human beings, if it cannot be avoided, and which seeks justification before oneself and before God."]

The conscience of the individual soldier in the Bundeswehr, whether religiously bound or not, constitutes an unchallengeable authority for any code of conduct. Neither does the concept of Innere Führung know of a "lawless space" where it does not claim any validity, nor is there an "ungoverned space"[56] for the human conscience that frees it from responsibility for one's own actions. While the impression of the 'elitist fighter' with regard to commando soldiers may sometimes adequately describe reality, the guiding principle of the 'citizen in uniform' cannot be dispensed with, because – as Baudissin puts it: "Ohne Leitbilder [...] überlassen wir die innere Entwicklung der Streitkräfte dem Zufall, d.h. im Zweifelsfall unerfreulichen Mächten."[57] ["Without guiding principles [...] we leave the internal development of the armed forces to chance, i.e. in case of doubt, to unpleasant powers."]

---

54 von Baudissin, "Vom Bild," 204.
55 von Baudissin, "Der Soldat," 172.
56 On the term "ungoverned space" and its use in US security discourse after the attacks of September 11, 2001 cf. Turnley, "Warrior Diplomats," 41.
57 von Baudissin, "Vom Bild," 204.

The universal claim of Innere Führung as a leadership philosophy and self-image, which extends to all members of the Bundeswehr, must be upheld. Even the 'sharp end' of the soldier's profession, even the hardships faced by the commando soldier, do not justify a 'special ethic' for deployment that absolves them from the ethical demands of the concept of Innere Führung. Ethical competence is put to the test particularly in extreme situations. It is not different from the special military skills that soldiers in the special operations forces units have acquired and that shape their standing in the Bundeswehr.

CONCLUSION

The concept of Innere Führung is without limitation the rule and guideline for soldierly action in the entire Bundeswehr, including the special operations forces units. Neither the selection of the best nor the professionalised training nor the particularly challenging operational spectrum of the special operations forces units justify a special ethos that competes with the ethical standards of Innere Führung. With regard to the values and norms of the German constitution (Basic Law), Innere Führung relies on uniformity, but at the same time it opens up a broad range of possibilities for plurality and diversity in the armed forces - in the spirit of the liberal basic order. In this context, different 'mind-sets' or 'tribal cultures' also have their place and their right.[58] Such specific *ethoi*, which can find expression in their own traditions and rituals, reach their limits however, when they come into conflict with the guiding values of the Federal Republic of Germany, for example, when they lack respect for human dignity. There is no room for any form of extremism in the Bundeswehr.

The concept of Innere Führung sets limits, but it is by no means to be restricted to its ethical requirements. As a leadership philosophy, it aims to go beyond and be different than purely professional ethics. The importance of human leadership, service organisation and training, as well as of care and support, which is emphasised in the concept of Innere Führung, offers good clues as to how the specific challenges of special operations forces units can be met - not least in the sense of 'prophylaxis for ethical emergencies', this means:

- In addition to physical and technical qualifications, the selection process should already take into account the mental maturity and the level of ethical and moral development of applicants for positions in the special operations forces units.[59]
- Ethical education should be part of the initial training as well as of further education and training of members of the special operations forces throughout their active professional life. Ethical education must address the ethical challenges faced by commando soldiers in high-risk and difficult conflict situations and, in turn, requires

58 Last but not least, they bear witness to group-specific training biographies, skills, competencies and professions that influence the soldiers' view of their lifeworld and environment.

59 The need for extremely careful personnel selection arises from the insight that "SOF, of any nation, draws its principle strength from its people". (Horn, "Adaptive & Agile," 51.)

special professionalisation and specification of its mediators within the special operations forces units.[60]

- Operations must be planned and prepared in advance in the best possible way. In this context, ethical expertise must be involved in order to anticipate ethical conflicts during deployment and to agree in advance on responsible options for action.
- As part of its overall care responsibility, the employer must make sure that members of the special operations forces receive adequate psychosocial care that extends beyond a mission. This recognises the fact that the ethical aspirations of Innere Führung in extremely stressful deployment scenarios can be not only an important requirement, but also an overload for soldiers.
- Protestant, Roman Catholic and Jewish military chaplains guarantee pastoral care and support for all soldiers in the Bundeswehr. They grant unconditional confidentiality and offer rituals and assistance in situations when soldiers face moral dilemmas and/or experience guilt. Since the normative requirements of Innere Führung exist without exception and at all times, care is needed whenever people fail to meet these normative standards.
- The employer's responsibility for the well-being of the special operations forces also means to take resolute action against the 'creation of myths' about them, to publicly recognise their achievements and make their commitment to democracy and freedom transparent (as far as possible), to defend them against unjustified criticism, and at the same time to punish individuals for breaches of duty and rules through consistent administrative supervision.
- The special operations forces units need always to be kept aware that they are part of the Bundeswehr in various ways.

Properly understood, the concept of Innere Führung is not perceived solely as an ethical imperative or heteronomous burden by the Bundeswehr military personnel. Rather in many ways it proves to be an offer of support and a guarantor of the compatibility of the soldier's profession and democratic rights of freedom. It does not describe a utopian dream far removed from life, but takes account of the operational reality of the special operations forces units.

In its final report of June 8, 2021, the appointed working group for the structure and deficit analysis of right-wing extremist tendencies within the KSK mentioned above described a number of successfully implemented measures to contain and prevent extremist tendencies within the KSK.[61] As a result, many of the above-mentioned aspects are already lived practice in the KSK.

To put in a nutshell: special operations forces do not require special ethics, but (with regard to their tendency toward elitism and the challenges they have to face) they do require special guidance and care. The violations of international law of war observed in the context of the current Russian aggressive war against Ukraine underscores the importance

60 Teaching ethical competencies must take into account measure and means. The members of the special operation forces are not trained in order to turn them into experts in ethics; rather, ethical education should complement their training in a meaningful way.

61 Cf. Inspector General of the Bundeswehr, *Abschlussbericht*, 4-17.

of ethical education in all branches of the armed forces. Soldierly action calls for moral orientation. Commando soldiers are not to be seen as 'fighters without reservation', but as conscientious 'citizens in uniform' whose commitment must always be to freedom and democracy.

REFERENCES

Baudissin, Wolf Graf von. "Innere Führung, ein veraltetes Konzept?" *Zeitschrift für Politik* 6 (1968): 193-194.

Baudissin, Wolf Graf von. "Das innere Gefüge der Streitkräfte (1952)." In *Soldat für den Frieden. Entwürfe für eine zeitgemäße Bundeswehr*, edited by Peter von Schubert, 133-140. München: Piper, 1969.

Baudissin, Wolf Graf von. "Vom Bild des künftigen Soldaten (1953)." In *Soldat für den Frieden. Entwürfe für eine zeitgemäße Bundeswehr*, edited by Peter von Schubert, 200-204. München: Piper, 1969.

Baudissin, Wolf Graf von. "Das Bild des zukünftigen deutschen Soldaten (1954)." In *Soldat für den Frieden. Entwürfe für eine zeitgemäße Bundeswehr*, edited by Peter von Schubert, 205-209. München: Piper, 1969.

Baudissin, Wolf Graf von. "Der Soldat in der Welt von heute (1957)." In *Soldat für den Frieden. Entwürfe für eine zeitgemäße Bundeswehr*, edited by Peter von Schubert, 168-175. München: Piper, 1969.

Baudissin, Wolf Graf von. "20. Juli 1944 (1964)." In *Soldat für den Frieden. Entwürfe für eine zeitgemäße Bundeswehr*, edited by Peter von Schubert, 102-109. München: Piper, 1969.

Baudissin, Wolf Graf von. "Über den unbedingten Gehorsam (1964)." In *Soldat für den Frieden. Entwürfe für eine zeitgemäße Bundeswehr*, edited by Peter von Schubert, 175-177. München: Piper, 1969.

Bohnert, Marcel. *Innere Führung auf dem Prüfstand. Lehren aus dem Afghanistan-Einsatz der Bundeswehr*. With introduction by Gerhard Brugmann. Hamburg: Deutscher Veteranen Verlag, 2017.

Dalgaard-Nielsen, Anja and Kirstine Falster Holm. "Supersoldiers or Rulebreakers? Unpacking the Mind-Set of Special Operations Forces." *Armed Forces & Society* 45, no. 4 (2019): 591-611.

Denisentsev, Sergey. "German Special Forces." In *Elite Warriors. Special Operations Forces from around the World*, edited by Ruslan Pukhov and Christopher March, 72-87. Minneapolis (USA): East View Press, 2017.

German Federal Ministry of Defence (Führungsstab der Streitkräfte I 3), ed. *Von Himmerod bis Andernach. Dokumente zur Entstehungsgeschichte der Bundeswehr*. Bonn, 1985.

German Federal Ministry of Defence, ed. *Innere Führung. Selbstverständnis und Führungskultur der Bundeswehr – A-2600/1* [Type A General Publication]. Berlin, 2018.

German Federal Ministry of Defence, ed. *Bericht der Arbeitsgruppe Kommando Spezialkräfte [June 30, 2020]*. https://www.bmvg.de/resource/blob/273864/6ceb69f8b4b33c2c1393e21c61395dea/20200702-bericht-ag-kskdata.pdf, accessed April 21, 2022.

Göring, Hermann. "Geleitwort." In *Wehrmacht und Weltanschauung. Grundfragen für die Erziehungsarbeit in der Wehrmacht*, by Armin Roth, III-IV. Berlin: Mittler & Sohn, 1940.

Hinz, René. "EGB – Eine ganz besondere DNA." 2021. https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/organisation/heer/aktuelles/egb-eine-ganz-besondere-dna-5297044, accessed August 17, 2022.

Højstrup Christensen, Gitte, ed. *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Special Operations Forces. Conference Proceedings*. Copenhagen: Royal Danish Defence College, 2017.

Horn, Bernd. "Adaptive & Agile: The Human Platform as the Determining Factor For Future SOF Organization." In *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Special Operations Forces. Conference Proceedings*, edited by Gitte Højstrup Christensen. Copenhagen: Royal Danish Defence College, 2017.

Inspector General of the Bundeswehr. *Abschlussbericht zur Umsetzung des Maßnahmenkatalogs der Arbeitsgruppe Kommando Spezialkräfte [June 8, 2021]*. https://www.bmvg.de/resource/blob/5092600/a7d5af1cbf3caf79ab0527a87553d1d0/dl-abschlussbericht-ksk-data.pdf, accessed April 22, 2022.

Kelman, Herbert C. and V. Lee Hamilton. *Crimes of Obedience. Toward a Social Psychology of Authority and Responsibility*. New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1989.

King, Anthony. "What is special about special operations forces?" In *Special Operations Forces in the 21st Century. Perspectives from the Social Sciences*, edited by Jessica Glicken Turnley, Kobi Michael and Eyal Ben-Ari, 273-284. Cass Military Studies. Abingdon/New York: Routledge, 2018.

Luther, Martin. "Von weltlicher Obrigkeit, wie weit man ihr Gehorsam schuldig sei." In *Martin Luther. Ausgewählte Schriften*, vol. 4: Christsein und weltliches Regiment, edited by Karin Bornkamm and Gerhard Ebeling, 36-84. 2nd ed. Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1983.

Luther, Martin. *Ob Kriegsleute auch in seligem Stande sein können*. Edited on behalf of the Protestant Military Bishop by Angelika Dörfler-Dierken and Matthias Rogg. 2nd ed. Delitzsch: Akanthus, 2015.

NATO Standard. *AJP-3,5: Allied Joint Doctrine for Special Operations*. Edition B Version 1. 2019.

Neitzel, Sönke. *Deutsche Krieger. Vom Kaiserreich zur Berliner Republik – eine Militärgeschichte*. Berlin: Propyläen, 2020.

Neitzel, Sönke. "Kämpfen im Grenzbereich." *Y – Das Magazin der Bundeswehr. Spezial* 5 (2021): 12-16.

Neitzel, Sönke. "Tribal Cultures und Innere Führung – Ein Widerspruch?" *Ethik und Militär* 2 (2021): 4-10.

Picht, Werner. "Vom künftigen deutschen Soldaten." *Wort und Wahrheit. Monatszeitschrift für Religion und Kultur* [special print], 1956.

Resteigne, Delphine. "Aiming to punch above their weight. The Belgian Special Forces." In: *Special Operations Forces in the 21st Century. Perspectives from the Social Sciences*, edited by Jessica Glicken Turnley, Kobi Michael and Eyal Ben-Ari, 152-163. Cass Military Studies. Abingdon/New York: Routledge, 2018.

Reuter, Hans-Richard."Grundlagen und Methoden der Ethik." In *Handbuch der Evangelischen Ethik*, edited by Wolfgang Huber, Torsten Meireis and Hans-Richard Reuter, 9-124. München: Beck, 2015.

Rink, Martin. *Die Bundeswehr 1950/55 bis 1989*. Beiträge zur Militärgeschichte: Militärgeschichte kompakt vol. 6. Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2015.

Rotter, Florian. "Wie dienen? Preußische Tugenden im 21. Jahrhundert." In *Armee im Aufbruch. Zur Gedankenwelt junger Offiziere in den Kampftruppen der Bundeswehr*, edited by Marcel Bohnert and Lukas J. Reitstetter, 53-62. Berlin: Miles, 2014.

Rückerl, Adalbert, ed. *Nationalsozialistische Vernichtungslager im Spiegel deutscher Strafprozesse. Belzec. Sobibor, Treblinka, Chelmno*. With introduction by Martin Broszat. München: dtv, 1978.

S.a., "KSK Eliteeinheit: Hitlergruß und fliegende Schweineköpfe." *ZEIT Online*, August 17, 2017. https://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/zeitgeschehen/2017-08/ksk-eliteeinheit-bundeswehr-hitlergruss-rechtsrock-ermittlungen, accessed April 22, 2022.

Spencer, Emily. "The special operations forces mosaic. A portrait for discussion." In *Special Operations Forces in the 21st Century. Perspectives from the Social Sciences*, edited by Jessica Glicken Turnley, Kobi Michael and Eyal Ben-Ari, 28-40. Cass Military Studies. Abingdon/New York: Routledge, 2018.

Turnley, Jessica Glicken. "Warrior-diplomats and ungoverned spaces. Narratives of possibilities." In *Special Operations Forces in the 21st Century. Perspectives from the Social Sciences*, edited by Jessica Glicken Turnley, Kobi Michael and Eyal Ben-Ari, 41-55. Cass Military Studies. Abingdon/New York: Routledge, 2018.

Winkel, Wolfgang. "Bundeswehr braucht archaische Kämpfer." *Welt am Sonntag*, February 2, 2004. https://www.welt.de/print-wams/article107173/Bundeswehr-braucht-archaische-Kaempfer.html, accessed July 26, 2022.

Organisational Learning in Special Operations Forces

Martijn van der Vorm

INTRODUCTION

In August 2021, an element of the Dutch *Korps Commandotroepen* (KCT; the Dutch Army Special Forces Regiment) was deployed to Kabul, Afghanistan to assist with the evacuation of Dutch citizens and other dependents such as former interpreters for the Dutch armed forces. This effort formed the closing chapter of the Dutch military contribution to the war in Afghanistan. For the KCT, this difficult non-combatant evacuation operation (NEO) capped its engagement to Afghanistan. Since 2002, the KCT has executed various missions in Afghanistan. During these years, the KCT developed acquired vast experience and introduced new capabilities. In early 2002 it participated in the early stages of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in and around the Afghan capital Kabul. Conducting reconnaissance missions, it supported regular Dutch and international forces. As such, the mission was not too challenging. Subsequently, the KCT was deployed to Iraq to participate in the Dutch Stabilisation Force Iraq (SFIR). The KCT then returned to Afghanistan in 2005.[1]

The years between 2005 and 2010 proved to be the most intense phase of the KCT's engagement with Afghanistan when it conducted three distinct missions in close collaboration with the Dutch Maritime Special Operations Forces (MARSOF) Special Forces Task Group Afghanistan (SFTG-A) in Kandahar (2005-2006); Special Forces Task Group Viper in Uruzgan (2006-2007) and Task Force 55 across southern Afghanistan (2009-2010). The challenging environment and robust mandate were a marked departure from the earlier operations in the KCT's recent history. Concurrently, the Dutch special forces were confronted with various political imperatives and operational challenges, such as national restrictions, complex command and control relationships, and ISAF directives on the execution of operations. The level of cooperation with other SOF and the access to sophisticated technology, such as SOF helicopters, wideband satellite communication and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) assets, was unprecedented. During these deployments a large number of lessons were captured that changed the organisational structure, tactics, equipment and doctrine of the Dutch army special forces.

This paper examines how the KCT learned from experience during and between missions. In other words, how did the learning processes work and to what extent is knowledge retained after specific missions? Additionally, this paper analyses what specific attributes of the SF-regiment shape these learning processes and to what extent these differ from regular units. This paper is an adaptation from earlier works on the KCT. As such, it refers largely to secondary literature but is in essence based on archival records and over 50 interviews with members of the Special Forces Regiment. Although the Dutch MARSOF was an integral part of these missions, the examined learning process will focus on the Army's KCT.[2]

To examine the KCT's learning process, this paper is structured in the following way. The first section explores relevant elements of organisational learning theory. Subsequently, the second section delves into the application of this literature on military

1 See Ten Cate and Van der Vorm, *Callsign Nassau*.

2 This paper is an adaptation of earlier work by the author, see Dimitriu, Tuinman and Van der Vorm, "Formative Years," 146-166; Ten Cate and Van der Vorm, *Callsign Nassau*; Van der Vorm, *The Crucible of War*.

learning processes. Furthermore it analyses the extent to which special operations forces differ from other units and how this impacts their ability to institutionalise knowledge from operational experience. The following sections focus on the three distinct, albeit related, missions executed by Dutch SOF in southern Afghanistan between 2005 and 2010. These sections will examine the learning processes of these missions. The subsequent section delves into more recent developments and explores the extent of institutionalisation of the lessons from the experiences in southern Afghanistan. Finally, the conclusion will reflect on the learning process as a result of the missions and the impact of specific organisational traits of a special forces unit.

FRAMEWORK

In any organisation, individuals and small groups are confronted during day-to-day operations with challenges, large and small, that impede the ability to perform as envisioned. To overcome these challenges, organisations (and their constituent parts) have to acquire knowledge through interaction with their environment.[3] Subsequently, this knowledge must be utilised and shared to enhance the performance of the organisation. In other words, the organisation must learn. The question of how organisations learn from interactions with their environment through the use of knowledge is the subject of organisational learning theory.[4] Although organisational learning has many definitions, this chapter defines organisational learning as: *the process through which an organisation constructs knowledge or reconstructs existing knowledge for maintaining or enhancing its performance in relation to its environment.*[5]

This subsection does not seek to provide a comprehensive overview of the vast discourse in this field.[6] Instead, it examines the application of central concepts within organisational learning theory in order to establish a fundamental understanding of learning processes in military organisations.

First of all, knowledge forms the primary commodity in organisational learning as it both drives the process and is the main product of it. Organisational knowledge encompasses "rules, procedures, strategies, activities, technologies, conditions, paradigms, frames of references, etc., around which organisations are constructed and through which they operate".[7] Secondly, although multiple models of the learning process exist, most scholars agree in general on the cyclical nature of the process.[8] Furthermore, organisational learning is regarded as a dynamic and continuous process. Additionally, multiple learning processes can exist concurrently within an organisation.[9]

3 Hoffman, *Learning While Under Fire*, 35.
4 Fiol and Lyles, "Organizational Learning," 803-813; Levinthal and March, "The Myopia of Learning," 95-112.
5 For an elaborate overview of definitions see: Noll and Rietjens, "Learning the hard way," 225.
6 Overviews of the literature on organizational learning are readily available, see for example: Crossan and Apaydin, "A Multi-Dimensional Framework," 1154-1191; Burnes, Cooper and West, "Organisational learning," 452-464; Berends and Antonacopoulou, "Time and Organizational Learning," 437-453.
7 Huysman, "An organizational learning approach," 136.
8 Darling et al., "Emergent Learning," 59-73; Nonaka and Konno, "The Concept of "Ba"," 40-54; Crossan and Apaydin, "A Multi-Dimensional Framework," 1154-1191.
9 Grah, et al., "Expanding the Model of Organizational Learning," 191.

A third common aspect is the perceived path of the learning process. Knowledge is acquired by individuals through their own experience or reflections on experiences from other individuals. This knowledge can help individuals and their co-workers in their daily routines.[10] From this, the knowledge must be shared throughout the rest of the organisation so that it can be *institutionalised*. This step helps to retain knowledge within an organisation despite personnel turnover.[11] An additional way to study more informal learning practices is through "communities of practice". Here specialists share a common, informal group identity based on their trade or position, for instance engineers or consultants.[12] Within these communities, specific knowledge can be shared between their members both at an organisational or inter-organisational level. In other words, these specialists can learn from each other's experiences, even when this knowledge is not present in their own team or organisation.[13]

A fourth consideration from organisational learning theory is therefore that the leadership of an organisation must accept the validity of the lessons learned. Implementation of this knowledge can result in changed routines, new organisational structures and even altered strategies and therefore affect the whole organisation. Thus, institutionalisation will only occur after careful deliberation and will require time.[14]

The fifth contribution of organisational learning theory described here is the distinction between levels of learning. First, there is the learning process that allows the organisation to continue its normal procedures and pursue its objectives with small corrections based on information feedback during operations.[15] This mode of learning seeks to increase efficiency in the short term by *exploiting* the core competencies of the organisation.[16] The second mode of learning is more invasive.[17] In this type of learning, the actions are not limited to small corrective interventions, but the process itself (and the underlying policies and objectives) are questioned and if necessary altered. This mode of learning should enable the organisation to identify new opportunities or threats and to address critical deficiencies to ensure survival in the long run. In other words, organisations must explore beyond routine operations in order to ensure that they develop the relevant competencies that are necessary to endure in an ever-changing environment.[18] Understandably, the higher echelons of an organisation can be reluctant to engage in such profound and expensive alterations as this might impede the short-term efficiency of the organisation. From the organisation's standpoint, the disinclination to radically changing objectives, policies and operations is understandable as this entails risk-taking that may or may not be rewarded.[19]

---

10 Argote and Miron-Spektor, "Organizational Learning," 1124; Nonaka and Konno, "The Concept of "Ba"," 40-42.
11 Nonaka and Von Krogh, "Perspective," 635-652; Huysman, "An organizational learning approach," 136.
12 Boh, "Mechanisms for sharing knowledge," 47-49.
13 Duffield and Whitty, "How to apply the Systemic Lessons Learned Knowledge model," 430-431.
14 Crossan, Lane and White, "An Organizational Learning Framework," 527-530.
15 Fiol and Lyles, "Organizational Learning," 807-810.
16 March, "Exploration and Exploitation," 71.
17 Other scholars call this "higher learning", see for example: Fiol and Lyles, "Organizational Learning," 808.
18 March, "Exploration and Exploitation," 71-74.
19 Weick and Westley, "Organizational Learning," 190-191.

The extent of change can also have significant repercussions for the organisation's internal power distribution.[20] Initiating change will challenge the current status quo, which can add to reluctance within the organisation to accept the validity of lessons learned.[21] In turn, this can lead lower level personnel to be circumspect in communicating perceived deficiencies lest they be punished for questioning the direction of the organisation.[22] Organisational learning, therefore, is not only a question of technocratic performance enhancement; it also has a salient political dimension. It is important to note that *exploitation* of current strengths and *exploration* for new opportunities and threats are not mutually exclusive. Both modes of learning are indispensable for the organisation's success. Rather, organisations must seek a delicate balance between exploitation and exploration as both require the organisation's attention and resources.

ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING IN MILITARY ORGANISATIONS

All forces in war try the adapt to operational challenges, whether these are imposed by the adversary or by the environment.[23] One of the main disputed issues is the question of what constitutes military change. Authors have suggested military changes comprise alteration in formal doctrine, the structure of the military organisation, goals, or strategies.[24] Often military change is differentiated between innovation – major change and adoption of new means and methods – and adaptation – adjusting existing military means and methods. Others saw adaptation and innovation as overlapping concepts.[25] Last, others also include emulation, the importing of new tools and ways of copying other militaries.[26]

Application of organisational learning literature to military case studies is a small but nascent niche in the study of how military organisations change. One of the first scholars that utilised organisational learning literature was Richard Downie in his work *Learning from Conflict*. Downie examined doctrinal change after wars in the American military.[27] To explain this process, he constructed a framework of institutional learning. Downie defined this as "a process by which an organisation uses new gained knowledge or understanding from experience or study to adjust institutional norms, doctrine and procedures in ways designed to minimise previous gaps in performance and maximise future success".[28] An important limitation of Downie's work was that it places the agency for change at the institutional leadership and thereby neglecting the role of individuals or units in the field.

The scholarly attention to the influence on organisational change by the lower

20 Huysman, "An organizational learning approach," 135.
21 Ganz, "Ignorant Decision Making and Educated Inertia," 55.
22 Argyris, "Double Loop Learning in Organizations," 116.
23 Murray, *Military Adaptation in War*, 2; Kollars, *By the Seat of Their Pants*, 43-44.
24 Farrell and Terriff, "Introduction," 6.
25 See for instance: Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*; Kier, *Imagining War*; Horowitz, *The Diffusion of Military Power*; Finkel, *On Flexibility*, 223-226; Freedman, *The Future of War*, 277279; Murray, *Military Adaptation in War*, 5; Hunzeker, *Dying to Learn*; Marcus, *Israel's Long War With Hezbollah*.
26 See Goldman, "The Spread of Western Military Models," 61-62; Cottichia and Moro, "Learning From Others?" 712714.
27 Downie, *Learning from Conflict*, 2.
28 Ibid., 22.

echelons of the military was established by Adam Grissom. Grissom posited that during operations, deployed units are the ones faced with operational challenges. If tactics, doctrine or equipment does not work as intended, the troops in the field will try to overcome these deficiencies or report them through the chain of command for remedial action. For them the urgency to learn from their experience is often a matter of life and death.[29] Somewhat ironically, Grissom argued that Downie's (interpretation of) organisational learning theory was not a valid framework to study bottom-up adaptations. His argument for this position was that organisational learning theory discounts the impact of front-line units on identifying and overcoming operational challenges.[30] As seen in the previous section, individual or team experience engaged in day-to-day operations within an organisation is established as a main driving factor in organisational learning literature.

Grissom's article was well-timed, as the study of "bottom-up adaptation" has proliferated significantly in recent years. To an important extent the adaptations by Western militaries during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan served as catalyst. Here, armed forces were confronted with multi-faceted insurgencies for which they were ill-prepared. Consequently, troops in the field had to adapt to overcome these exigencies. The resulting scholarly works indicate that the primary agents of change were the units in the field.[31] Through largely informal networks, deployed service members shared knowledge, skills and best practices that enabled them to address day-to-day challenges.[32] To be sure, the literature was not limited to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Other, and more historical cases of adaptations were examined through this lens.[33]

A salient element in the literature on adaptation is that "bottom-up" solutions from the field frequently encountered a lack of enthusiasm or bureaucratic disinterest at the organisational level (service or ministry). This stymied a coherent dissemination of knowledge across units or rotations. Furthermore, the lack of support by the institutional level often denied the resources required for remedying deficiencies.[34] This is not to say that the higher echelons of the military are indifferent to the travails of their forces. As established in the previous section, the institution must maintain a delicate balance between the operations at hand, for instance a stabilisation mission and plan for future contingencies such as a high intensity conventional war.

Despite Grissom's reservations, organisational learning theory did feature in a number of these works on adaptation.[35] However, the understanding and application of this literature has been deemed superficial. [36] A more recent work by Aimee Fox, *Learning to Fight*, captures informal learning processes in the British Army through a comprehensive

---

29 Grissom, "The future of military innovation studies," 919-920.

30 Ibid., 926.

31 Russell, *Innovation, Transformation and War*, 4; Serena, *A Revolution in Military Adaptation*, 173; Johnson, "You Go to Coin with the Military You Have," 115-118.

32 Kollars, "War's Horizon," 548-550.

33 See for instance: Marcus, "Learning 'Under Fire,'" 344-370; Foley, "Dumb donkeys or cunning foxes?" 279-298.

34 See Janine Davidson, *Lifting the Fog of Peace*, 175-177.; Barno and Bensahel, *Adaptation under Fire*, 142-155; Hoffman, *Mars Adapting*, 219-220.

35 See for instance Serena, *A Revolution in Military Adaptation*; Marcus, *Israel's Long War With Hezbollah*; Hunzeker, *Dying to Learn*.

36 Griffin, "Military Innovation Studies," 208-210.

framework based on organisational learning theory. Fox emphasised the influence of organisational culture on informal learning.[37]

The most insightful and recent publications that fuse organisational learning with military case studies are that by Tom Dyson and Frank Hoffman. Dyson studies learning processes within the British and German militaries during their operations in Afghanistan. The main contribution of Dyson's work is that he critically examines formal "lessons learned" processes in armed forces and analyse whether these lead to implemented solutions. Dyson argues that this process is an interplay between organisational arrangements ("absorptive capacity") and external interventions such as pressure by politicians to enact change within the military.[38]

In his 2021 book *Mars Adapting*, Frank Hoffman has a slightly different approach. Hoffman focuses on the influence of internal organisational traits as: leadership, organisational culture, learning mechanisms and dissemination mechanisms. The most germane aspect of *Mars Adapting* is the depiction of learning as a process in which the dialectic between adaptations by deployed units and institutional learning is the central dynamic.[39] As such the application of organisational learning theory to military cases is still a nascent field.

With this in mind, the question whether learning from experience works differently in SOF-units as opposed to conventional units is pertinent. Inherently, SOF-units are organised in smaller, more tight-knit teams. Furthermore, special forces doctrinally have a diverse set of tasks: special reconnaissance, direct action, and military assistance. Through the execution of these tasks, special operations are to produce strategic results.[40] As a result of these characteristics, the culture of these units has been characterised as more flexible, creative and informal.[41] Perhaps the most pertinent trait of Special Forces is the rigorous selection of personnel. Special Operators are required to be creative, flexible self-sufficient and have perform a range of tasks.[42] Consequently, SOF-units are responsible for the education and training of their members. Furthermore, given their special status, these units often have a form of doctrine or concept development capability within their organisation. In other words, SOF-units have internal means for knowledge development and dissemination. To be sure, SOF are not unique in this as other specialised units such as Explosive Ordnance Disposal teams or intelligence units can serve as both repositories conduits for specific knowledge.[43] Although publications on recent developments in SOF-units exist, studies that incorporate organisational learning theory are scarce.[44] As SOF-units are thought to have distinct characteristics and are deemed to be more adaptable, thorough analysis of learning processes may yield new insights.

---

37 Fox, *Learning to Fight*.
38 Dyson, *Organisational Learning*, 40-44.
39 Hoffman, *Mars Adapting*, 40-42.
40 Kiras, *Special operations and strategy*, 113.
41 Turnley, *Cross-cultural competence and small groups*, 57.
42 Spulak, *A theory of special operations*, 14-19.
43 See Van der Vorm, *The Crucible of War*, 457-459.
44 See Melkonian and Picq, "Opening the "Black Box" of Collective Competence," 79-90; Melkonian and Picq, "Building Project Capabilities in PBOs," 455-467.

SPECIAL FORCES TASK GROUP – AFGHANISTAN, 2005-2006

The Dutch SOF experience in southern Afghanistan started in 2005. Although the Army SF regiment had been extensively deployed to the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan (as part of ISAF) in the preceding years, this deployment was a distinct departure from those earlier missions. First, the mission itself was unique in scope and mandate. The Dutch Special Operations Forces were to support the international fight against terrorism under Operation *Enduring Freedom* (OEF) in Kandahar province. This was politically sensitive in the Netherlands where voices in parliament were critical of OEF's heavy handed approach of hunt down remaining Taliban and Al Qaeda forces in the southern and eastern provinces of the country. Despite these reservations, the government secured a parliamentary majority for the mission.[45] As the government expected that the special forces would encounter heavy resistance, it formally announced that the operations in Kandahar would be conducted under wartime conditions, thereby giving the troops more certainty regarding their legal position and rules of engagement.[46] The SFTG-A was to conduct special reconnaissance missions to acquire intelligence on adversarial forces in the border area with Pakistan and potentially interdict them.

A second novel aspect of this deployment was the organisation of the Special Operations Task Group – Afghanistan (SFTG-A). Organised around two platoons of the KCT, the SFTG-A included a detachment of Chinook helicopters, intelligence personnel, combat engineers, logistical support and force protection. This allowed the SFTG-A to conduct independent operations over the extensive area of operations. Furthermore, the SFTG-A was embedded in the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force (CJSOTF), located at the Bagram airbase, near Kabul. This command structure enabled the SFTG-A to cooperate with allied SOF units and allow to adapt the operational plans to the local circumstances.[47]

In the end, the mission proved to be challenging, but the SFTG-A met with limited resistance. Only when the area of operations was shifted to Kandahar's border with Helmand province in 2006, the SFTG-A had a few engagements with armed smugglers, resulting in firefights.[48] Still, this experience proved valuable in the development of Dutch SOF.

First of all, the government's willingness to deploy a special forces task group independently under an international SOF-command structure with a robust mandate was indicative that the stature of special operations had improved at the political level.[49] Of course, political opposition to such endeavors remained in parliament.

A second development was that the KCT concluded that the SFTG-A provided a blueprint for further SOF deployments. The acquired experience with new procedures tactics developed in Kandahar were a welcome addition to the already existing SOF repertoire. Furthermore, the collaboration with allied SOF-units helped the KCT to align itself with developments within NATO. Before this mission, the Dutch SOF had almost always been

45 The Netherlands Parliament, Minutes of the Second Chamber 2004-2005, 27925, no 167.
46 Ten Cate and Van der Vorm, *Callsign Nassau*, 174.
47 Dimitriu, Tuinman and Van der Vorm, "Formative Years," 151-152.
48 Ten Cate and Van der Vorm, *Callsign Nassau*, 187-188.
49 The Netherlands Parliament, Evaluatie Nederlandse Special Forces Taakgroep in operatie Enduring Freedom, April 2005-April 2006..

part of a conventional force. In this setting, the SFTG-A could learn from its international partners and operational tasking and command and control went smoothly. For example, before their deployment in southern Afghanistan, the Dutch SOF had limited operational experience in command and control of SOF operations above company level and the use of fire support and air support. The international command structure—particularly the use of forward air controllers at team level—now enabled the Dutch SOF to gain this operational experience.[50]

A third adaptation was the organisation of the SFTG-A along the lines of a Special Operations Task Group (SOTG). The SOTG is a concept that allowed for the deployment of larger SOF-elements, including enabling units, in order to operate independently from other formations. Thus, the enablers and an increased staff capacity made it possible for the SFTG-A to plan and execute its operations autonomously. During the mission, the SFTG-A staff was able to plan its own mission in a proactive way, rather than await tasking from CJSOTF. This allowed the SFTG-A to plan less kinetic operations when the initially perceived resistance did not occur.[51]

Last, the KCT adapted to the challenges presented by operating in the difficult terrain of Kandahar: for example, the open terrain made it hard to gather intelligence in a covert manner. New procedures were developed, such as conducting operations with force elements of multiple teams, implementing non-kinetic activities and methods and shaping the battle space to increase situational awareness. The SFTG demonstrated its ability to adapt to the operational challenges, the tactical situation and the new means available. Moreover, the robust mandate, the level of autonomy and the force composure of SFTG-A was seen as a blueprint for future special operations. The political mandate, the allocation of enablers, the organisational structure, and the challenging environment were the main drivers and factors of the Dutch SOF's adaptation. As a result, SFTG-A is still regarded as a template in discussions of special operations.[52] The impact of these adaptations and extent of institutionalisation are examined in the subsequent sections.

SPECIAL FORCES TASK GROUP VIPER, 2006-2007

With the political decision in February 2006 to deploy Dutch troops to Uruzgan province, the SFTG-A started a reconnaissance mission from the adjacent province Kandahar to the volatile area. Based in part on its reports, the Dutch government acknowledged that the new mission under ISAF would be challenging. Nevertheless, the Netherlands would deploy the Task Force Uruzgan (TFU) to secure the province and help foster development and governance. For the Dutch SOF, the new mission meant a change of tack. As opposed to SFTG-A, the Special Forces Task Group Viper would be embedded in the TFU. Responding to parliamentary questions regarding the role of the special forces in Uruzgan, Defence minister Henk Kamp stated: "There is no Special Forces operation planned in [Uruzgan]; there is just an ISAF-operation. The Commandos are part of the military taskforce. They have

50 Van Wiggen, "De Nederlandse special forces task group," 36-39.
51 Dimitriu, Tuinman and Van der Vorm, "Formative Years," 154-155.
52 Jellema, "Special Operations Task Group (SOTG)," 4-9.

specific Commando tasks, like long range reconnaissance patrols in harsh environments."[53]

Consequently, this command arrangement significantly influenced the level of autonomy, the effect and the tactical flexibility of the Dutch Special Forces unit. When "Viper" arrived in Uruzgan in the spring of 2006 as part of the Deployment Task Force of TFU, the role of the special forces was to create favorable conditions for the arrival of the TFU.[54] Along with the command structure, the internal organisation of "Viper" differed from the SFTG-A. The core of SFTG Viper consisted of four Special Forces (10-person) teams with an enhanced company staff, without enabling units. Any supporting capabilities had to be provided by the TFU or the allies. This meant that these units were not specifically prepared to support special operations.[55] Due to these changed conditions, the KCT had to adjust its planning process and execution of operations.

Somewhat ironically, Uruzgan proved to be far more volatile than Kandahar had been during the operations of SFTG-A. Compared with the border region of Kandahar, Uruzgan province was largely dominated by insurgents, who showed that they were willing to contest the presence of allied forces in the province. Naturally, the activities by the insurgents proved to be a primary driver in the development of tactics, procedures and organisational structure.

During the first two rotations, "Viper" still had a large amount of independence. Because the TFU was still in the process of deploying, SFTG Viper had to initiate and plan its own missions. Moreover, most enabling units were not yet available as the TFU was still in the process of deploying. As a result, SFTG Viper had to closely collaborate with Australian and American special forces in Uruzgan, operating as part of OEF. A main reason for this was that "Viper's" vehicles were not yet fitted with electronic counter-measures against improvised explosive devices (IEDs). As a result, the Dutch SOF had to move within the slipstream of the allies to give a measure of protection, significantly reducing its autonomy.[56] To be sure, this collaboration had important benefits as well. For instance, the Australian and American units had more experience with operating in Uruzgan. Through this close cooperation, the Dutch special forces learned relevant best practices and procedures from the international partners during intense combat operations. This relative autonomy and international cooperation during the first months of "Viper" operations were crucial to adapt successfully to the intense firefights that occurred in Uruzgan. A additional boon was that "Viper" itself could quickly disseminate its acquired experiences to the incoming TFU-units through informal briefings.[57] Of course, these lessons were also shared widely within the KCT. To help prepare subsequent rotations, experiences were incorporated into training by instructors. Furthermore, this knowledge served as an important source for doctrinal development for the KCT's special operations knowledge centre.[58]

Once the TFU became operational in August 2006, the national command structure asserted itself and affected the conduct of operations by "Viper". From now on, "Viper" was increasingly called to act as a 'fire brigade' for the overstretched battle group. A second

53 The Netherlands Parliament, Minutes of the Second Chamber 2005-2006, 27925, nr. 213.
54 Commander SFTG Viper 1, "DTF-acties," 30-35.
55 Dimitriu, Tuinman and Van der Vorm, "Formative Years," 155-156.
56 Ten Cate and Van der Vorm, *Callsign Nassau*, 203-204.
57 Commander SFTG Viper 1, "DTF-acties," 30-35.
58 Ten Cate and Van der Vorm, *Callsign Nassau*, 217-218.

consequence of embedding within the TFU was that "Viper" had to procure enabling units such as intelligence specialists, engineers and explosive ordnance disposal personnel from the TFU. As these units were scarce , the TFU-staff had to balance "Viper's" requirement with those of the conventional infantry units of the battle group. This had an adverse effect on the autonomy and flexibility of SFTG Viper. Last, being embedded outside the SOF chain of command restricted the access to resources at higher levels, most importantly helicopters and ISR.[59]

During the later rotations, "Viper" could no longer circumvent these deficiencies by cooperating with allied SOF-units. The "community of practice" between special forces that existed in the early months dissipated as "Viper" started to become more embedded within the TFU. Instead, "Viper" conducted operations with the TFU's Provincial Reconstruction Team or with the reconnaissance platoons to gain intelligence on the area of operations.

Despite these constraints, the acquired experience during SFTG Viper proved valuable for the KCT. The operational environment and the insurgency posed significant challenges and drove the adaptation process. As described above, Uruzgan proved to be a volatile area of operations and the unit got involved in some intense engagements and heavy combat. The extensive list of accolades awarded to members of "Viper" are indicative of the challenging conditions.[60]

One of the most important learning aspects was that "Viper" experienced the challenges of fighting an insurgency. The insurgents often blended into the local population, which required judicious restraint in the use of force. Moreover, the adversaries proved to be highly adaptive. The commander of SFTG Viper rotation 4, for example, noted that the opposing forces had adapted during the missions to the point that "fighting against ISAF troops with small arms was to no avail. Instead of engaging directly [the insurgents] shifted their tactics increasingly to using [IEDS]."[61]

Another challenge was that the populated areas (colloquially known as green zones) were not always suited for the use of vehicles. "Viper" therefore experimented with other means of insertion. For instance a small element would get into a settlement under cover of darkness, after which a mounted unit would link up at dawn. Another example was to deploy covert observation posts and subsequently infiltrate the 'green zone' (the populated and cultivated areas in Uruzgan) with a seemingly small unit in order to draw fire, after which the insurgents could be engaged. As one of the commanders of Task Force Viper would conclude, the Dutch SOF adapted to the geographical circumstances and the insurgent tactics by means of surprise, creativity and flexibility.[62]

A second consequence of the challenging operational environment and the organisational structure was the continuation of the use of larger force elements, as during the previous deployment to Kandahar. Initially, the first rotation used two clusters of two teams each. Later task groups were mostly deployed as a whole. To a considerable extent, the use of larger force elements was a response to the intensity of the insurgency in Uruzgan. Another reason was the limited availability of enablers such as combat engineers.

59 Dimitriu, Tuinman and Van der Vorm, "Formative Years," 156-158.
60 See Ten Cate and Van der Vorm, *Callsign Nassau*, 289.
61 Commander SFTG Viper 4, "Een breed scala van special operations," 6.
62 Commander SFTG Viper 5, "Special forces task unit Viper," 16-20.

Because of the threat posed by IEDs, it was hard to deploy multiple elements of "Viper". The experiment with multiple team operations during SFTG-A, incrementally became the standard way of conducting operations during "Viper's" rotations. Another continuation from Kandahar was the use of fire support and air support. The familiarisation with these assets during SFTG-A yielded benefits during combat engagements. Consequently, these assets were increasingly given prominence at the planning and preparation stages of operations.[63]

To conclude, SFTG Viper had to adapt to operational challenges in Uruzgan, and concurrently overcome organisational constraints. Although the previous mission in Kandahar had yielded relevant insights, the considerations of the special forces were trumped by the requirement of the deployment of the TFU. This was explicitly stated as "Viper" was embedded within the conventional TFU. Furthermore, the formal learning processes of the Dutch armed forces as an institution have been criticised, both by internal reports as by scholars.[64]

However, other factors also played a role. The Dutch mission focused on security, stability and reconstruction and the presence of a SOF unit operating as the SFTG-A did, would not match with the overall mission profile and would neither naturally fit within the overall communication messages.[65] Moreover, with the deployment of TFU, the Dutch armed forces were not able to provide dedicated enabling units to both the conventional battle group and to "Viper". The limited capacity of such units had not been a consideration during SFTG-A as the Dutch army had not been engaged in a large scale deployment during that time.[66]

Despite these constraints, the acquired knowledge during SFTG-A were implemented and developed during SFTG Viper. A main reason for this was that personnel deployed to Uruzgan had previously acquired experience in Kandahar. As a result, "Viper" could build on this accumulated knowledge. Furthermore, the lessons learned from this new challenging mission could be transferred to subsequent rotations and more broadly among the Dutch SOF-units. The sharing of experiences and knowledge was further facilitated by a relative high retention of personnel. Experienced special operators became instructors within the KCT and thus could impart their experience on new members of the regiment. Other operators became part of the Interservice Special Operations Center of Excellence. This element formed the main repository for knowledge and concept development within the Dutch SOF. It wrote down lessons in doctrinal publications, which in turn informed training and predeployment exercises. As such, training and concept development by experienced operators brought synergies to these informal learning processes. In other words, these characteristics helped institutionalise lessons within the KCT despite the lack of more formal learning processes in the wider armed forces.

---

63 Jellema, "Special Operations Task Group (SOTG)," 4-9.

64 See Kitzen, Rietjens and Osinga, "Soft Power, the Hard Way," 160; Netherlands Ministry of Defence, *Rapport Lessons Learned*.

65 Dimitriu and De Graaf, "Fighting the war at home," 5-10.

66 Dimitriu, Tuinman and Van der Vorm, "Formative Years," 157.

TASK FORCE 55, 2009-2010

In December 2007, SFTG Viper left Uruzgan for an operational pause. In the meantime, the TFU continued its operations. Gradually, the security situation in the province improved. Still, the insurgents retained considerable freedom of movement beyond the reach of the coalition troops.[67] In March 2009, the Dutch government announced the return of Dutch SOF to southern Afghanistan to support the ongoing Dutch operations there. The objectives of the new SOF-deployment would be to conduct reconnaissance missions, acquire intelligence, and arrest leaders of the insurgency and IED facilitators. To this end, the new task force, christened Task Force 55 (TF55), would operate outside the TFU development zones to disrupt the adversaries' interference on TFU's activities.[68]

Crucially, TF55 was to be deployed under more favorable circumstances compared to SFTG Viper. As such, important lessons from the previous missions had been heeded. First of all, the Dutch SOF's preference for being embedded in an international SOF command was allowed. TF55 was attached to ISAF SOF Command, a subcommand of ISAF headquarters. A further consideration was the enlarged mandate for TF55. The Dutch SOF were now tasked to operate as a genuine special operations task force. TF55's mission was to target the insurgents' networks and seize the initiative through special reconnaissance and direct action. Concurrently, it was to perform military assistance by partnering with Afghan security forces.[69]

Still, TF55's configuration was not optimal from the KCT's perspective. The scarcity of enabling units had not been resolved since the "Viper" mission. If anything, enabling capacity had become even more strained due to the enduring TFU-operations. Although TF55 had considerable more staff-capacity than "Viper", most enabling units had be detached from the TFU. Paradoxically, TF55 was not part of the TFU and could operate autonomously, but in order to do so it had request these assets from the TFU-staff. At the least, this required close coordination between the TFU and TF55. This was somewhat complicated by the fact that TF55 could operate in the neighbouring provinces of Kandahar and Helmand, thereby withdrawing critical assets from the TFU. Helicopters and ISR-support had to be requested at the headquarters of Regional Command South in Kandahar.[70]

This dependency on inorganic enablers would have an effect on the operational flexibility and tempo of TF55. The complete task force consisted of 76 service members, formed around four Special Forces teams. The commander of TF55 and his staff were located at Kandahar Airfield. Tactical command was provided by a company staff based in Tarin Kowt, Uruzgan. Operations were habitually planned by TF55 by itself, but had to be approved by the Dutch Defence staff and the ISAF chain of command. Most key command and staff positions in TF55 were filled with personnel with prior experience in southern Afghanistan. This ensured familiarity with the operational environment and the accumulation of experience.[71]

---

67 Van der Vorm, *The Crucible of War*, 186-189.
68 The Netherlands Parliament, Minutes of the Second Chamber 2008-2009, 27925, no 330.
69 The Netherlands Parliament, Eindevaluatie Nederlandse bijdrage aan ISAF 2006-2010.
70 Ten Cate and Van der Vorm, *Callsign Nassau*, 245-247.
71 Dimitriu, Tuinman and Van der Vorm, "Formative Years," 159.

The deployment of TF55 in the spring of 2009 coincided with the strategic review of the international campaign in Afghanistan. One of the most important directives following this review was the obligation to partner with an Afghan unit. As no unit from the Afghan National Army was available at the time, TF55 had to team up with a unit of the Afghan National Police, the Special Response Team Uruzgan (SRTU). Through this cooperation, the capabilities of the Afghan security forces should be improved so that eventually they could take over the responsibilities of the international troops. A further reasoning was that collaboration with Afghan forces might foster more support of the Afghan population for the Afghan government. Although this task amounted to the KCT's core task of military assistance, it had not specifically prepared for this. As such, TF55 did not have dedicated training and partnering personnel and did not have the financial resources to equip the SRTU. This was necessary as the SRTU had to be trained and equipped from scratch.[72] In time, after training, advising and operating together, the SRTU proved to be a valuable partner to TF55.

Another aspect that influenced TF55's mission was that ISAF Command decided in 2009 that Kandahar City and central Helmand province were to be ISAF's main effort. Consequently, scarce resources as helicopters and ISR-platforms were husbanded for these areas. In order to operate effectively and autonomously, TF55 was dependent on these assets. However, the renewed focus meant that operations in Uruzgan would be deprived of such resources. As a result, TF55 increasingly had to initiate operations in these provinces while maintaining a positive effect for Uruzgan where most Dutch troops were operating.[73]

Again, the operational environment proved challenging for the Dutch SOF given the complicated command relationships. Furthermore, most operations were conducted in areas that were dominated by the insurgents. Consequently, TF55 was often engaged in combat and sustained losses on these operations. During an operation on September 6, 2009, Corporal Kevin van de Rijdt suffered a fatal injury during a fire fight. On February 15, 2010, an officer of the SRTU, Zaman Ali, was killed in an IED explosion. After the direct confrontations of 2006 and 2007, the insurgents had adapted their operations as well. As they sustained heavy losses during these years, the insurgents adopted more indirect approaches through the use of IEDs to restrict the freedom of movement of ISAF troops. Furthermore, they conducted non-kinetic activities to influence the local population in seemingly ISAF-controlled areas. The insurgents' impassable and desolate terrain as sanctuaries to recuperate and launch operations from. SOF units like TF55 were tasked to engage and neutralise these sanctuaries. To do this successfully, TF55 needed substantial ISR-support to locate the insurgents and helicopters to engage them in a timely fashion.[74]

In relation to the two previous missions, TF55 proved to be another valuable experience for the KCT. Given the wide array of operations, all primary SOF tasks: special reconnaissance, direct action, and military assistance, were performed by TF55. Furthermore, the SOTG-concept was further solidified by TF55. The special forces operators acknowledged that they required support from enablers as helicopters, intelligence, fire support, engineers and EOD in order attain their objectives.

72 Ten Cate and Van der Vorm, *Callsign Nassau*, 277-278.
73 U.S. Department of Defence, *Report on progress*, 12-20.
74 Dimitriu, Tuinman and Van der Vorm, "Formative Years," 159-160.

IMPACT OF AFGHAN MISSIONS ON KCT

After the Afghan missions of 2005-2010, the KCT sought to institutionalise the acquired lessons. That the Dutch special forces units were able to do so was noteworthy in its own right. After 2010, the Dutch armed forces were subject to large, successive budget cuts. Although the KCT was not entirely spared from these reductions, special operations were one of few areas that were prone to further investments. The willingness was a testament to the enhanced appreciation of SOF by Dutch political and military leadership based on their performance in Afghanistan. At the same time, SOF were regarded as a relatively inexpensive asset that would continue to allow the Netherlands to contribute to international security without deploying large amounts of troops. Indeed, due to the financial constraints, deploying conventional units similar to the size of the Task Force Uruzgan was no longer feasible. Of course, the political appetite for this had significantly diminished as well after 2010.

The main emphasis in institutionalisation for the KCT was the Special Operations Task Group concept. By introducing the command element for multiple team operations, the KCT had institutionalised an important means to coordinate and execute operations through this concept in the field. With regard to doctrine and policy, the SOTG concept was further developed in various studies.[75] Consequently, through this advocacy the SOTG concept became to be regarded as a main form of deployment for the Dutch Special Forces. Indeed, a central element of the Dutch contribution to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) was the so-called Special Operations Land Task Group (SOLTG) "Scorpion" in 2014. As MINUSMA was a relatively small mission, and the special forces were the main ground maneuver element in the Dutch contingent, the SOLTG included dedicated enablers. For instance, the SOLTG included mortar crews, an intelligence cell, combat engineers and an explosive ordnance disposal team. These elements were incorporated in the predeployment training of the special forces, thereby familiarising the personnel with each other and specific procedures. This was a marked improvement over the relationship with the enabling units during TF55. Additionally, the Netherlands contributed an All-Sources Intelligence Fusion Unit, Chinook transport helicopters and Apache attack helicopters. However, the various Dutch elements within MINUSMA were not solely dedicated to one another, but also for all other MINUSMA units. Consequently, from the perspective of the SOLTG, the support arrangement from helicopters and intelligence was not as exclusive as envisioned.

As such, the KCT remained dependent on inorganic enabling capabilities that could be allocated for a specific mission or deployment. Due to the scarcity of these units throughout the Dutch armed forces the ability of the KCT to train with such units was constrained. Still, in 2021 the KCT was augmented with a reorganised SOF support company. In addition to logistical, medical and signals support, the KCT established new support roles in its organisation. New elements included an intelligence cell, a surgical team, a group of military dogs and their handles, combat engineers and explosive ordnance disposal. Furthermore, two light infantry companies were dedicated to support special operations

75 The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, *Special Operations Forces*; Jellema, "Special Operations Task Group (SOTG)."; Van den As, "Het Korps Commandotroepen," 47-5.

although these remained outside of the KCT's organisational structure.[76]

Beyond the maturing of the SOTG-concept, a second development was the establishment of the Dutch Special Operations Command (SOCOM) at the defence staff-level. Established in 2018, SOCOM became responsible for the planning, direction and execution of special operations. With approximately 70 staff members, SOCOM was a significant expansion from the earlier department for Joint Special Operations. The idea underpinning SOCOM was that a specialised staff could enhance both the conduct of special operations and the advice (and advocacy) regarding SOF towards the higher echelons of the Ministry of Defence. Moreover, with a Dutch SOCOM, the Dutch SOF could enhance their interoperability with allies that often have their own special operations command.

A third notable development was the increased attention to military assistance. The experience with the Afghan SRTU during TF55's operations was a significant driver of this. Still, this development was not entirely attributable to Afghanistan. Since 2007, the KCT had been engaged in military assistance activities in Africa in the annual *Flintlock* exercise. Here international special forces units partner with dedicated units from various African countries to enhance the latter's capabilities.[77]

Besides the activities in Africa, the KCT conducted other military assistance missions. From 2015 to 2018, the KCT and MARSOF were active in Iraq during the fight against the Islamic State (IS) during Operation *Inherent Resolve*. The Dutch SOF-units gave advice and assistance to Kurdish *Peshmerga* militias and trained Iraqi SOF-units. In 2018, the KCT returned to Afghanistan for a military assistance mission. As part of ISAF's successor mission, *Resolute Support* (RSM), Dutch SOF was part of the coalition's Special Operations Assistance Team. With the absence of overt other missions, military assistance thus became more prominent in the KCT's recent deployments.

CONCLUSION

In a span of five years across three distinct operations in southern Afghanistan, the Dutch Army Special Forces Regiment saw an intense development in capabilities. The main drivers of these changes were operational challenges and emulation of allies. During the operations in southern Afghanistan, the KCT was confronted with austere conditions, an adaptable adversary, varying tasks and changing command and supporting structures. The deployment of SFTG-A provided a rich learning environment for the Dutch SOF. For the first time, a Dutch SOTG was deployed within an international SOF organisation. The operational environment posed significant challenges, which the SFTG was able to overcome because of its autonomy and the organisational structure. During Task Force Viper, the adaptation on the operational level appeared to be limited because the Dutch forces were not properly used as a SOF unit and lacked the mandate, the organisational structure and supporting assets to conduct special operations. This mission, however, marked a period of tactical developments as a result of the fierce insurgency resistance and geographical challenges. During TF55 in 2009–2010, the important organisational and operational lessons learned

76 Strijbosch, "Vaste ondersteuning," 4.
77 Ten Cate and Van der Vorm, *Callsign Nassau*, 287-288.

from SFTG-A came together with the tactical adaptation of TF Viper. The Dutch SOF learning experience in Afghanistan thus culminated with the execution of some complex operations with a broad spectrum of sophisticated enabling assets and the application of battlefield-proven tactics.

Additionally, the Dutch special forces could learn from their allied counterparts throughout the missions. As such, the Dutch Army special forces came to resemble Allied SF during operations if not in structure. The international SOF units formed a community of practice which helped the sharing of knowledge and best practices. The first rotation of Task Group Viper saw the most intense collaboration by Dutch special forces with their Australian and American counterparts. During SFTG-A and TF55, the Dutch special forces benefitted from being embedded in an international SOF command structure and conducting operations with allied units. This enabled the sharing of experience between international units. As a result, Dutch army SF gained significant operational experience and was able to tap into allied knowledge. At the same time, the KCT (and MARSOF) were a source for emulation for Dutch regular units. Again, the first rotations of Task Group Viper were instrumental in informally sharing best practices among the TFU. Furthermore, units that supported special forces gleaned new tactics and procedures from their operations that they incorporated within their parent formations.

In itself the largely informal learning process was not unique as most regular forces engaged in Afghanistan had to adapt to the conditions and operational challenges. Still, specific organisational attributes helped to institutionalise this knowledge within the special forces regiment. First of all, the regiment is relatively small with high continuity of its personnel which enabled knowledge retention among individuals within the unit. Furthermore, personnel from earlier rotations helped prepare successive rotations. This is of course not unique for special forces, but the extent of familiarity among the personnel promoted knowledge dissemination. A second attribute is that the special forces regiment has its own knowledge centre responsible for doctrine and concept-development and its own training establishment. After an operational tour, SOF-operators were often transferred to a role as instructor or at the knowledge centre, thereby ensuring continuity. As a result, informal knowledge can quickly be institutionalised. As such, the KCT formed a conduit for specific knowledge. These elements enabled the accumulation of knowledge throughout the engagement in southern Afghanistan. In other words, the KCT conducted multiple consecutive learning cycles that build up its knowledge base. A final aspect that helped institutionalisation of knowledge is the special forces regiment has access to discrete budgets and expedited procurement processes for equipment. This meant that institutional barriers to adaptations were more limited than for regular units.

Internally, the KCT's learning process can be designated as focused on exploitation rather than exploration. Given the broad task set of the KCT, the regiment could focus on enhancing existing competencies rather than challenging internal norms. As such this did not affect the power distribution of the KCT. For instance, military assistance had been a doctrinal core task for the KCT. Later operations meant that this task was awarded more practical emphasis, without upsetting the organisational structure or culture. Perhaps the most far-reaching adaptations were the establishment of multiple team operations and the adoption of the SOTG-concept. In essence the SOTG-concept stands for comprehensive

planning and execution of special operations, wherein the enabling elements are an integral part of the SOTG. Although this concept is not new and several NATO allies practice it, it has gained momentum in the Netherlands as a result of the missions in Afghanistan. The concept has evolved in studies and doctrine and has stimulated thinking on creating additional SOF capability such as the incorporation of enabling assets into the SOF community. The SOTG concept is a central part of the development of SOF in the Netherlands, which was once again demonstrated with the SOLTG "Scorpion" during the deployment MINUSMA in Mali in which the relevant lessons from Afghanistan were used during the planning phase and early stages of the execution. However, the implementation of the SOTG-concept required wider institutional support. Enabling units were often scarce commodities and could generally not be exclusively dedicated to SOF in theatre, let alone be incorporated in the KCT's organisational structure. Consequently, this example shows that while special forces can be quite adaptable through their internal learning and dissemination mechanisms, they still need institutional support for more far-reaching changes. The establishment of SOCOM and the integration of modest enabling capabilities within the KCT's organisation was testament to the increased stature of special operations within the Netherlands.

PRINTED SOURCES

The Netherlands Parliament. Minutes of the Second Chamber 2004-2005, 27925, no 167. The Hague: Netherlands, 2005.

The Netherlands Parliament. Evaluatie Nederlandse Special Forces Taakgroep in operatie Enduring Freedom, April 2005-April 2006. Attachment to Minutes of the Second Chamber 2006-2007, 29521, no. 33. The Hague: Netherlands, 2007.

The Netherlands Parliament. Minutes of the Second Chamber 2008–2009, 27925, no 330. The Hague: Netherlands, 2009.

The Netherlands Parliament. Eindevaluatie Nederlandse bijdrage aan ISAF 2006-2010. Attachment to Minutes of the Second Chamber 2011–2012, 27925, no. 436. The Hague: Netherlands, 2012.

REFERENCES

Argote, L., and E. Miron-Spektor. "Organizational Learning: From Experience to Knowledge." *Organization Science* 22, no. 5 (2010): 1123-1137.

Argyris, C. "Double Loop Learning in Organizations." *Harvard Business Review* 55, no. 5 (1977): 115-124.

As, H. van den. "Het Korps Commandotroepen op weg naar 2025." *Infanterie* 19, no. 1 (2014): 47-56.

Barno, D., and N. Bensahel. *Adaptation under Fire: How Militaries Change in Wartime.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2020.

Berends, H., and E. Antonacopoulou. "Time and Organizational Learning: A Review and Agenda for Future Research." *International Journal of Management Reviews* 16 (2014): 437-453.

Boh, W.F. "Mechanisms for sharing knowledge in project-based organizations." *Information and Organization* 17, no. 1 (2007): 27-58.

Burnes, B., C. Cooper, and P. West. "Organisational learning: the new management paradigm?" *Management Decision* 41, no. 5/6 (2003): 452-464.

Cate, A. ten, and M. van der Vorm, M. *Callsign Nassau: Dutch Army Special Forces in Action in the 'New World Disorder'.* Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2016.

Catignani, S. "Coping with Knowledge: Organizational Learning in the British Army?" *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 37, no. 1 (2014): 30-64.

Commander SFTG Viper 1 "DTF-acties Nederlandse special forces in de Chora-vallei." *Carré* 30, no. 3 (2007): 30-35.

Commander SFTG Viper 4. "Een breed scala van special operations." *Infanterie* 13, no. 1 (2008): 4-9.

Commander SFTG Viper 5. "Special forces task unit Viper, verkenningen in de groene zone." *Infanterie* 14, no. 2 (2008): 16-20.

Cottichia, Fabrizzio and Francesco Moro. "Learning From Others? Emulation and Change in the Italian Armed Forces Since 2001." *Armed Forces & Society* 42, no. 4 (2016): 712714.

Crossan, M. M., and M. Apaydin. "A Multi-Dimensional Framework of Organizational Innovation: A Systemic Review of the Literature." *Journal of Management Studies* 47, no. 6 (2010): 1154-1191.

Crossan, M. M., H.W. Lane, and R.E. White. "An Organizational Learning Framework: From Intuition to Institution." *Academy of Management Review* 24, no. 3 (1999): 522-537.

Darling, M. J., H. Sparkers Guber, J.S. Smith and J.E. Stiles. "Emergent Learning: A Framework for Whole-System Strategy, Learning, and Adaptation." *The Foundation Review* 8, no. 1 (2016): 59-73.

Davidson, Janine. *Lifting the Fog of Peace.*

Dimitriu, G. and B. de Graaf. "Fighting the war at home: Strategic narratives, elite responsiveness, and the Dutch mission in Afghanistan, 2006-2010." *Foreign Policy Analysis* 12, no. 1 (2014): 1-22.

Dimitriu, G., G. Tuinman and M. van der Vorm. "Formative Years: Military Adaptation of Dutch Special Operations Forces in Afghanistan." *Special Operations Journal* 2, no. 2 (2016): 146-166.

Downie, R. D. *Learning from Conflict: The U.S. Military in Vietnam, El Salvador, and the Drug War.* Westport: Praeger, 1998.

Duffield, S. and S. Whitty. "How to apply the Systemic Lessons Learned Knowledge model to wire an organisation for the capability of storytelling." *International Journal of Project Management* 34, no. 3 (2016): 429-443.

Dyson, T. *Organisational Learning and the Modern Army: a new model for lessons-learned processes.* Abingdon: Routledge, 2020.

Farrell, T., F. Osinga and J.A. Russell ed. *Military Adaptation in Afghanistan.* Stanford: Stanford Universty Press, 2013.

Farrell, Theo and Terry Terriff. "Introduction." In *The Sources of Military Change*, edited by T. Farrell and T. Terriff, 3-20. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2002.

Finkel, M. *On Flexibility: Recovery from Technological and Doctrinal Surprise on the Battlefield.*

Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011.
Fiol, C. M. and M.A. Lyles. "Organizational Learning." *The Academy of Management Review* 10, no. 4 (1985): 803-813.
Foley, Robert. "Dumb donkeys or cunning foxes? Learning in the British and German armies during the Great War." *International Affairs* 90, no. 2 (2014): 279298.
Fox, A. *Learning to Fight: Military Innovation and Change in the British Army, 1914-1918.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.
Freedman, Lawrence. *The Future of War: A History.* London: Penguin, 2017.
Ganz, S. G. "Ignorant Decision Making and Educated Inertia: Some Political Pathologies of Organizational Learning." *Organization Science* 29, no. 1 (2018): 39-57.
Goldman, Emily. "The Spread of Western Military Models to Ottoman Turkey and Meiji Japan." In *The Sources of Military Change*, edited by T. Farrell and T. Terriff, 6162. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2002.
Grah, B., V. Dimovski, C.C. Snow and J. Peterlin. "Expanding the Model of Organizational Learning: Scope, Contingencies, and Dynamics." *Economic and Business Review* 18, no. 2 (2016): 183-212.
Griffin, S. "Military Innovation Studies: Multidisciplinary or Lacking Discipline." *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 40, no. 1-2 (2017): 196-224.
Grissom, A. "The future of military innovation studies." *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 29, no. 5 (2006): 905-934.
Hasselbladh, H. and K. Yden. "Why Military Organizations Are Cautious About Learning?" *Armed Forces & Society* (2019): 1-20.
Headquarters International Security Assistance Force. "Tactical Directive." Kabul. July 6, 2009.
Hoffman, Frank. *Learning While Under Fire: Military Change in Wartime.* London: King's College (Doctoral Dissertation), 2015.
Hoffman, F. G. *Mars Adapting: Military Change during War.* Annapolis: Naval Insitute Press, 2021.
Horowitz, Michael. *The Diffusion of Military Power: Causes and Consequences for International Politics.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010.
Hunzeker, M. A. *Dying to Learn: Wartime Lessons from the Western Front.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2021.
Huysman, M. "An organizational learning approach to the learning organization." *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology* 9, no. 2 (2000): 133-145.
Jellema, E. "Special Operations Task Group (SOTG): Operationele ontwikkelingen binnen het Korps Commandotroepen." *Infanterie* 16, no. 2 (2011): 4–9.
Johnson, David. "You Go to Coin with the Military You Have." In *Insurgencies and Counterinsurgencies: National Styles and Strategic Cultures*, edited by B. Heuser and E. Shamir, 115-118. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.
Kier, Elizabeth. *Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine between the Wars.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.
Kiras, J. *Special operations and strategy: From World War II to the War on Terrorism.* New York, NY: Routledge, 2006.

Kitzen, M. *The Course of Co-option: Co-option of local power-holders as a tool for obtaining control over the population in counterinsurgency campaigns in weblike societies.* Breda: Netherlands Defence Academy, 2016.

Kitzen, M., S. Rietjens and F. Osinga. "Soft Power, the Hard Way: Adaptation by the Netherlands, Task Force Uruzgan." In *Military Adaptation in Afghanistan,* edited by T. Farrell, F. Osinga and J. A. Russell, 159-191. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013.

Kollars, Nina. *By the Seat of Their Pants: Military Technological Adaptation in War.* Columbus: The Ohio State University, 2012.

Kollars, Nina. "War's Horizon: Soldier-Led Adaptation in Iraq and Vietnam." *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 38, no. 4 (2015): 548-550.

Levinthal, Daniel and James March. "The Myopia of Learning." *Strategic Management Journal* 14 (1993): 95-112.

March, J. G. "Exploration and Exploitation in Organizational Learning." *Organization Science* 2, no. 1 (1991): 71-87.

Marcus, R. D. *Israel's Long War With Hezbollah: Military Innovation and Adaptation Under Fire.* Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2018.

Marcus, Raphael D. "Learning 'Under Fire': Israel's improvised military adaptation to Hamas tunnel warfare." *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 42, no. 3-4 (2019): 344-370.

Melkonian, T. and T. Picq. "Opening the "Black Box" of Collective Competence in Extreme Projects: Lessons from the French Special Forces." *Project Management Journal* 41, no. 3 (2010): 79-90.

Melkonian, T. and T. Picq. "Building Project Capabilities in PBOs: Lessons from the French Special Forces." *International Journal of Project Management* 29 (2011): 455-467.

Murray, Willamson. *Military Adaptation in War: With Fear of Change.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Netherlands Ministry of Defence. *Rapport Lessons Learned binnen Defensie.* The Hague, The Netherlands: Ministry of Defence, 2010.

Noll, Joerg and Sebastiaan Rietjens. "Learning the hard way: NATO's civil-military cooperation." In *Theorising NATO: New perspective on the Atlantic alliance,* edited by Mark Webber and Adrian Hyde-Price. London: Routledge, 2016.

Nonaka, I. and G. von Krogh. "Perspective - Tacit Knowledge and Knowledge Conversion: Controversy and Advancement in Organizational Knowledge Creation Theory." *Organization Science* 20, no. 3 (2009): 635-652.

Nonaka, I. and N. Konno. "The Concept of "Ba": Building a Foundation for Knowledge Creation." *California Management Review* 40, no. 3 (1998): 40-54.

Posen, Barry. *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain and Germany between the World Wars.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984.

Rietjens, S. and E. De Waard. "UN Peacekeeping Intelligence: The ASIFU Experiment." *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence* 30, no. 3 (2017): 532-556.

Russell, J. A. *Innovation, Transformation and War: Counterinsurgency Operations in Anbar and Ninewa Provinces, Iraq, 2005-2007.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011.

Saideman, S. M. *Adapting in the Dust: Lessons Learned from Canada's War in Afghanistan.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016.

Sar, P. van der. "Kick the enemy where it hurts the most: de steun van de bevolking, daar gaat het om." *Carré* 30, no. 1 (2007): 10-17.

Serena, C.C. *A Revolution in Military Adaptation: The US Army in Iraq.* Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2011.

Spulak, Jr., R. G. *A theory of special operations: The origin, qualities and use of SOF.* Hulburt Field, FL: Joint Special Operations University, 2007.

Strijbosch, Vanessa. "Vaste ondersteuning voor de Commando." *Defensiekrant* (2021): 4.

The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies. *Special Operations Forces: Schaduwkrijgers in het licht van de toekomst.* The Hague, Netherlands, 2015.

Turnley, Jessica. *Cross-cultural competence and small groups: Why SOF are the way SOF are.* Tampa, FL: Joint Special Operations University, 2011.

U.S. Department of Defence. *Report on progress toward security and stability in Afghanistan.* Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2010.

Vorm, M. van der. "Learning and Forgetting Counterinsurgency." In *The Conduct of War in the 21st Century: Kinetic, Connected and Synthetic,* edited by R. Johnson, M. Kitzen and T. Sweijs, 189-208. London: Routledge, 2021.

Vorm, M. van der. *War's Didactics: A Theoretical Exploration on how Militaries Learn from Conflict.* Breda: Netherlands Defence Academy, 2021.

Vorm, M. van der. *The Crucible of War: Dutch and British military learning processes in and beyond southern Afghanistan.* Leiden: Leiden University, 2023.

Weick, K. E. and F. Westley. "Organizational Learning: Affirming an Oxymoron." In *Managing Organizations,* edited by S.R. Clegg, C. Hardy and W. R. Nord, 190-208. London: SAGE Publications, 1999.

Wiggen, Otto van. "De Nederlandse special forces task group in Operatie Enduring Freedom" [The Dutch special forces task group in Operation Enduring Freedom]. *Carre* 30, no. 3 (2007): 36-39.

Wiltenburg, I. and L. Leeuwenburg. *The Battle of Chora: A Military Operational Analysis of the 2007 Defence of the Chora District Centre in Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan.* Breda: Netherlands Defence Academy, 2021.

Concluding Remarks

Jan Hoffenaar

As several contributions to this publication also show, it is not possible to give a precise universal and all-time definition of 'special forces' and 'special operations'. We could still say that it refers to the action of specially trained units that is complementary to what conventional forces are capable of.[1] But what we should concretely mean by it varies according to the strategic, tactical and technological conditions in the period under discussion. Moreover: action that we used to consider special has sometimes over time become less special and incorporated into regular action (see Eriksson and Rink). And: nowadays, certain 'regular' units are labelled "special operations capable".[2] In short, the dividing line between 'regular' action and 'special' action and between 'regular' units and 'special (forces)' units is fluid, certainly historically speaking. Therefore, at all times when special forces are spoken or written about, it should be explained exactly what it means in that particular case. All this puts contemporary SOF and their performance in a relatable perspective.

Since '9/11' and the start of the Global War on Terror, SOF have emerged as a 'force of choice', offering political and military decision-makers a wide choice of cost-efficient, low-risk and effective options and taking advantage of them by deploying them around the world.[3] They see the great benefits of deploying these forces. However, this – to a term by Peter Paret – "intellectual mastery"[4] of special forces in wider layers of various national armed forces, is not a given. During the Second World War, for example, special forces advocates had to swim against the military mainstream that was not SOF-minded at all. The sentiment that special forces could at most be a useful niche capability, while sucking the good forces out of the armed forces, remained persistent in the decades after the war (Medvecký/Čaplovič). In the 1960s, for example, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Maxwell Taylor, believed that SOF did not provide anything unique that "any well-trained unit" could not also do.[5] This perspective, too, puts into perspective the great importance currently accorded to SOF; they must continually prove their operational and, above all, strategic usefulness. This insight leads to the warning that so-called "internal military entrepreneurs"[6] may begin to imagine bigger threats and exaggerate SOF capabilities in the pursuit of opportunities. Also, in their drive to create more goodwill, SOF supporters should be careful not to embellish the results of SOF actions; sooner (often very sooner these days) or later, the true story will come out in the open anyway (Foucrier).

An ongoing concern – and one of the reasons for the distance between conventional and SOF units – is the culture, image and self-image of special units. Because they are prepared in isolation for special, secretive, often dangerous missions with a high political and military risk of degradation, there is a chance that they may see themselves as so special that they feel they can have their own standards and rules.[7] If special military skills are coupled with ethical competence and political sense, then SOF can be a positive (strategic)

1 Titulaer, "Special operations (forces) explained," 98.
2 Among others, in the US, British and Dutch armed forces.
3 Horn, "Operationalizing SOF Theory," 63-64.
4 Paret, *Innovation and Reform in Warfare*, 2.
5 Adams, *US Special Operations Forces in Action*, 70 and 148.
6 This term is used in: Shamir and Ben-Ari, "The Rise of Special Operations Forces."
7 See, among others, a major investigation some years ago at USSOCOM following several incidents of misconduct and unethical behaviour: USSOCOM, *Comprehensive Review*.

force multiplier. If not, they can lose the trust of the political and military leadership, as well as the population, and in the worst case evolve into a dangerous tool in the wrong hands deployed for the wrong purposes. Continuous care for ethical self-reflection is therefore a requirement for the survival of SOF (Behnke). Attention to ethical standards and spiritual stability should naturally be central to the recruitment and selection of SOF members, as well as ongoing spiritual guidance (Parker). Ethical issues also influence dealing with the dilemma of political oversight versus the covert nature of SOF operations; a good reputation creates more trust in SOF and can give them more leeway.

Because SOF can be deployed for a wide range of tasks, it is difficult to determine in general terms what combination of factors and elements makes special operations most effective, not only at the technical-tactical executive level, but also at the higher military-strategic and political level. This can vary greatly according to the circumstances and by type of operation. This volume discusses some factors for success and failure (Torkar, Kiss, Medvecký/Čaplovič, Janoušek, Van der Vorm). It is recommended to examine operations and actions from the near as well as the more distant past more systematically for these factors. Here lies a fine task for military historians with expertise, as they can be at some distance from the subject. The past as a mirror of reflection for the present, also for the Special (Operations) Forces.

REFERENCES

Adams, Thomas K. *US Special Operations Forces in Action: The Challenge of Unconventional Warfare*. London: Routledge, 1998.

Horn, Bernd. "Operationalizing SOF Theory: A Function of Understanding SOF Power." In *Special Operations Theory*, edited by Peter McCabe and Paul Lieber, 55-74. JSOU Report 17-6, The JSOU Press, MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, 2017.

Paret, Peter. *Innovation and Reform in Warfare*. Colorado, 1966.

Shamir, Eitan and E. Ben-Ari. "The Rise of Special Operations Forces: Generalized Specialization, Boundary Spanning and Military Autonomy." *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 41, no. 3 (2018): 335-371.

Titulaer, Funs. "Special operations (forces) explained. On the nature of Western special operations and the forces that conduct them." *Militaire Spectator* 190, no. 2 (February 2021): 84-99.

United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), *Comprehensive Review*. January 23, 2020. https://sof.news/pubs/USSOCOM-Comprehensive-Ethics-Review-Report-January-2020.pdf, accessed September 25, 2023.

About the Authors

Jordan Baev received his PhD in Contemporary History at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in 1982. In 1996 he was elected Associate Professor in Security Studies, and in 2013 Full Professor in International History at *Rakovski* National Defense College. Currently he is a visiting professor in intelligence history at Faculties of History and Law of Sofia University. He has written many books and articles on diplomatic, military and intelligence history, international terrorism, peacekeeping and civil-military relations.

Sven Behnke studied Protestant Theology in Frankfurt/Main, Heidelberg and Mainz and earned his doctorate at Humboldt University in Berlin. After professional stations as a research assistant and pastor, he now works as a Protestant theologian at the Center for Military History and Social Sciences of the German Armed Forces (ZMSBW) in Potsdam, where he deals with questions of military ethics and military chaplaincy.

Miloslav Čaplovič studied Czechoslovak History and Political Science in Bratislava and earned his doctorate at the Comenius University in Bratislava. After serving as officer in an anti-aircraft rocket regiment and researcher of the Institute for Military History, he was appointed as director of this institute in 2008 and promoted to colonel in 2013. In his research, he deals with questions related to World War I and the interwar period in the Slovak military history.

Fredrik Eriksson studied History, Political Science and History of Ideas at Stockholm, Södertörn and earned his doctorate in History at Stockholm University. After a period as a researcher at Södertörn University he works at the Swedish Defence University since 2012, at the Departement of Military History. He is an assistant professor in History at Södertörn University, and also assistant professor of Swedish Military History at Finnish Defence University. His reserach focuses on the Baltic Sea Region, Cold War military history and special operations.

Jean-Charles Foucrier is a research fellow at the French Air Force office of the Service historique de la Défense. He holds a doctorate (PhD) in contemporary history from the Paris-IV Sorbonne University and is a specialist in the Second World War and the 20th century military aviation.

Jan Hoffenaar is head of research at the Netherlands Institute of Military History (MOD) in The Hague and professor in Military History at Utrecht University. He is specialized in the political and military aspects of the Cold War, in 'East' as well as in 'West', and in Dutch military history.

Petr Janoušek is a researcher with the Military History Institute in Prague. He has been focusing long-term on international relations in post-war periods. His present interests include modern military history with a particular focus on Czechoslovak/Czech Army missions abroad and NATO enlargement.

Peter A. Kiss served 20 years in the US Army as an airborne infantryman, and subsequently as an intelligence specialist. He earned his MA and MBA at Webster University, in St Louis, and his PhD in military science at the National Public Service University in Budapest, Hungary. He is a senior researcher at the Hungarian Defence Forces (HDF) Scientific Research Centre. His research area frequently changes to follow the information requirements of the HDF senior leadership, but his primary interest is asymmetric warfare.

Matej Medvecký studied History and English language in Bratislava and earned his PhD at the Comenius University in Bratislava. He worked at the Nation's Memory Institute. Since 2013 he works as senior researcher at the Institute for Military History where he deals with topics related to the post World War II development of Czechoslovak military and intelligence.

Linda Parker is an independent historian. She earned her PhD at Birmingham University. Her main historical interests are 20th century history, particularly chaplaincy and military history, as well as polar history and its relevance to military history. She is a founder member of the British Modern Military History Society.

Carmen-Sorina Rîjnoveanu studied History in Bucharest and earned her doctorate in Political Science and International Relations at National School of Political and Administrative Studies in Bucharest. She worked, since 2002, as scientific researcher with the Institute for Political Studies of Defense and Military History, Ministry of National Defense. Since 2019, she is Director of this institute. She is author of various studies and articles on topics related to: Romanian defense policy, military diplomacy, history of alliances, and regional security. She is co-chair of the Conflict Studies Working Group of the Partnership for Peace Consortium of Defense Academies and Security Studies Institutes.

Martin Rink served in the German Armed Forces (Bundeswehr) 1985-1996, latest function while on active service: commander of a parachute company. He studied history, economics and social sciences at the Universität der Bundeswehr, Munich, where in 1998 he earned his PhD. Since 2005 he is associate lecturer at Universität Potsdam, since 2009 also at the Universität der Bundeswehr. Since 2009 he is historian at the (nowadays) Centre for Military History and Social Sciences of the Bundeswehr (ZMSBW). His research interests are: history of asymmetric conflicts and of the contemporary Bundeswehr.

Manuel Stănescu is Deputy Director at the Institute for Political Studies of Defense and Military History, Romanian Ministry of National Defense. He is a graduate of Bucharest University (1998) and received his PhD degree in history at the same university in 2011. For almost 9 years he served as an expert in the Romanian Military Archives. His main research areas are focused on the history of the world wars, theory of warfare, radical movements and civil wars in the interwar period.

Blaž Torkar is assistant professor at the Military School Centre of the Slovenian Armed Forces. His research areas include the history of intelligence services, Allied military missions in Yugoslavia during the Second World War, the Yugoslav People's Army and Territorial Defense, and the Slovenian War of Independence in 1991.

Martijn van der Vorm is a serving officer at the Royal Netherlands Army. He had various deployments in counterinsurgency and counter terrorism context. He holds an MA in History from Leiden University and a MA in Military Strategic Studies at the Netherlands Defence Academy, where he also earned his PhD in 2023. His research focuses on the learning and institutionalization processes of the British and Dutch Armed Forces during their deployments to Afghanistan. He co-authored a book on the Dutch Army Special Forces Regiment and its recent operations (2016).

CSWG

Partnership for Peace Consortium of Defense Academies and Security Studies Institutes

"Strengthening Democracies Through Knowledge"