

= Special Boat Service =

The Special Boat Service ( SBS ) is the special forces unit of the Naval Service of the United Kingdom . Together with the Special Air Service , Special Reconnaissance Regiment and the Special Forces Support Group , they form the United Kingdom Special Forces and come under joint control of the same Director Special Forces .

The Special Boat Service is described as the naval special forces of the United Kingdom and the sister unit of the SAS . The operational capabilities of both units are broadly similar , however , the SBS ( being the principal Royal Navy contribution to UKSF ) has the additional training and equipment to lead in the maritime , amphibious and riverine environments . Both units come under the operational command of HQ Directorate of Special Forces ( DSF ) and undergo an identical selection process , enjoy significant interoperability in training and on operations .

In times of armed conflict and war , the Special Boat Service ( SBS ) and 22 Special Air Service Regiment ( 22 SAS ) are required to operate in small parties in enemy @-@ controlled territory . Operations of this nature require men of courage and high morale who have excellent tactical awareness be it knowledge of special tactics or simply knowing one 's place in a polyvalent unit . Self @-@ discipline neatly ties into this . Intelligence , reliability , determination and also being physically fit are key skills . These men possess mental , moral and physical stamina .

Principal roles of the SBS are Surveillance Reconnaissance ( SR ) , including information reporting and target acquisition ; Offensive Action ( OA ) , including direction of air strikes , artillery and naval gunfire , designation for precision guided munitions , use of integral weapons and demolitions ; and Support and Influence ( SI ) , including overseas training tasks . The SBS also provide immediate response Military Counter Terrorism ( CT ) and Maritime Counter Terrorism ( MCT ) teams .

The SBS can trace its origins to the Second World War , when they were formed as the Special Boat Section in 1940 . They became the Special Boat Squadron after the Second World War and the Special Boat Service in the 1980s .

The SBS is manned by ranks drawn mostly from the Royal Marines and carries out a role that is similar to the Special Air Service , but with a traditionally stronger focus on amphibious operations . Their training involves parachute exercises , helicopter training and boat training , which recruits will get the chance to earn their licence for .

All of the SBS 's four squadrons , C , Z , M and X , are configured for general operations. and rotate through the Maritime Counter Terrorism Role , also known as Black Role . The SBS also operates on land , with recent operations in the mountains of landlocked Afghanistan and in the deserts of Iraq . Their main tasks include intelligence gathering , counter @-@ terrorism operations ( surveillance or offensive action ) , sabotage and the disruption of enemy infrastructure , capture of specific individuals , close protection of senior politicians and military personnel , plus reconnaissance and direct action in foreign territory .

= = History = =

= = Second World War = = =

The Special Boat Section was founded in July 1940 by a Commando officer , Roger Courtney . Courtney became a commando recruit in mid @-@ 1940 , and was sent to the Combined Training Centre in Scotland . He was unsuccessful in his initial attempts to convince Admiral of the Fleet Sir Roger Keyes and later Admiral Theodore Hallett , commander of the Combined Training Centre , that his idea of a folding kayak brigade would be effective . He decided to infiltrate HMS Glengyle , a Landing Ship , Infantry anchored in the River Clyde . Courtney paddled to the ship , climbed aboard undetected , wrote his initials on the door to the captain 's cabin , and stole a deck gun cover . He presented the soaking cover to a group of high @-@ ranking Royal Navy officers meeting at a nearby Inveraray hotel . He was promoted to captain , and given command of twelve men , the first Special Boat Service / Special Boat Section .

It was initially named the Folboat Troop , after the type of folding canoe employed in raiding operations , and then renamed No. 1 Special Boat Section in early 1941 . Attached to Layforce , they moved to the Middle East , they later worked with the 1st Submarine Flotilla based at Alexandria and carried out beach reconnaissance of Rhodes , evacuated troops left behind on Crete and a number of small @-@ scale raids and other operations . In December 1941 Courtney returned to the United Kingdom where he formed No2 SBS , and No1 SBS became attached to the Special Air Service ( SAS ) as the Folboat Section . In June 1942 , they took part in the Crete airfield raids . In September 1942 , they carried out Operation Anglo , a raid on two airfields on the island of Rhodes , from which only two men returned . Destroying three aircraft , a fuel dump and numerous buildings , the surviving SBS men had to hide in the countryside for four days before they could reach the waiting submarine . After the Rhodes raid , the SBS was absorbed into the SAS due to the casualties they had suffered .

In April 1943 , 1st SAS was divided into two with 250 men from the SAS and the Small Scale Raiding Force , forming the Special Boat Squadron under command Major the Earl Jellicoe . They moved to Haifa and trained with the Greek Sacred Regiment for operations in the Aegean .

They later operated among the Dodecanese and Cyclades groups of islands in the Dodecanese Campaign and took part in the Battle of Leros and the Battle of Kos . They with Greek Sacred Band took part in the successful Raid on Symi in July 1944 in which the entire German garrison was either killed or captured . In August 1944 , they joined with the Long Range Desert Group in operations in the Adriatic , on the Peloponnese , in Albania , and , finally , Istria . So effective were they that , by 1944 , 200 ? 300 SBS men held down six German divisions .

Throughout the war , No.2 SBS did not use the Special Boat Squadron name , but instead retained the name Special Boat Section . They accompanied Major General Mark Clark ashore before the Operation Torch landings in November 1942 . Later , one group , Z SBS , which was based in Algiers from March 1943 , carried out the beach reconnaissance for the Salerno landings and a raid on Crete , before moving to Ceylon to work with the Special Operations Executives , Force 136 and later with Special Operations Australia . The rest of No. 2 SBS became part of South @-@ East Asia Command 's Small Operations Group , operating on the Chindwin and Irrawaddy rivers , and in the Arakan , during the Burma campaign .

= = = Postwar = = =

In 1946 , the SBS , whether of Commando or SAS parentage , were disbanded . The functional title SBS was adopted by the Royal Marines . It became part of the school of Combined Operations under the command of " Blondie " Hasler . Their first missions were in Palestine ( ordnance removal ) and in Haifa ( limpet mine removal from ships ) . The SBS went on to serve in the Korean War deployed on operations along the North Korean coast as well as operating behind enemy lines destroying lines of communication , installations and gathering intelligence . It was during the Korean War that the SBS first started operating from submarines . In 1952 , SBS teams were held at combat readiness in Egypt in case Gamal Abdel Nasser 's coup turned more violent than it did . The SBS were also alerted during the Suez Crisis of 1956 and coup against King Idris I of Libya ( 1959 ) , but in both cases they did not see action . In 1961 , SBS teams carried out reconnaissance missions during the Indonesian Confrontation ( see Operation Claret ) . In the same year , Iraq threatened to invade Kuwait for the first time , and the SBS put a detachment at Bahrain . In 1972 , the SBS and SAS came into prominence when members of a combined SBS and SAS team parachuted into the Atlantic Ocean after a bomb threat on board the cruise liner RMS Queen Elizabeth 2 . A thorough search of the ship found no evidence of any device drawing the conclusion that it was a hoax .

= = = Special Boat Squadron = = =

In 1977 , their name was changed to the Special Boat Squadron and in 1980 the SBS relinquished North Sea oil rig protection to Comacchio Company . In 1982 , after the Argentinian invasion of the

Falkland Islands , they deployed to South Georgia . The only losses to the SBS during the Falklands War occurred when the SBS and SAS were operating behind the lines and two members of the SBS were shot by an SAS patrol , who had mistaken them for Argentinians .

= = = Special Boat Service = = =

In 1987 , they were renamed Special Boat Service , and became part of the United Kingdom Special Forces Group alongside the Special Air Service and 14 Intelligence Company . In the Gulf War , there was no amphibious role assigned to the SBS , an " area of operations line " was drawn down the middle of Iraq , the SAS would operate west of the line and the SBS to the east . As well as searching for mobile scuds , their area contained a mass of fibre @-@ optic cable that provided Iraq with intelligence , the location of the main junction was 32 miles from Baghdad ; On 22 January 1991 , 36 SBS operators were inserted by 2 chinook helicopters from No. 7 Squadron RAF , into an area full of Iraqi ground and air forces as well as spies and nomads , they avoided them and destroyed a 40 @-@ yard section of the cable with explosives @-@ destroying what was left of the Iraqi communication grid . The SBS carried out one of its most high profile operations when it liberated the British Embassy in Kuwait , abseiling from helicopters hovering above the embassy . They were also responsible for carrying out diversionary raids along the Kuwaiti coast which in effect diverted a number of Iraqi troops to the SBS area of operations and away from the main thrust of the coalition build up . In September 1999 the SBS were involved in operations in East Timor . A small SBS team landed and drove out the back of a C @-@ 130 Hercules transport aircraft in Land Rover Defenders at Presidente Nicolau Lobato International Airport in Dili .

= = = 21st century = = =

In September 2000 , the SBS was involved in Operation Barras , a hostage rescue operation in Sierra Leone . In November 2001 the SBS had an extensive role in the invasion of Afghanistan and were involved in the Battle of Tora Bora . The SBS was used in vital phases of the invasion of Afghanistan . A small SBS contingent secured Bagram Airbase prior to the deployment of larger forces that would become the main staging area for allied forces during Operation Enduring Freedom . Members of the SBS helped quell an Afghan prison revolt during the Battle of Qala @-@ i @-@ Jangi near Mazar @-@ i @-@ Sharif , in November 2001 .

In the invasion of Iraq in 2003 , M squadron was involved in a fierce firefight , which has since been commended by senior British officials . Sixty Men from M squadron with the call sign Zero Six Bravo travelled 1 @, @ 000 km ( 620 mi ) into Iraq to take the surrender of the Iraqi 5th Corps . The call @-@ sign was engaged in a fierce firefight that saw most of its vehicles destroyed . The SBS squadron escaped by splitting up , two men escaped on quad bikes to Syria . C squadron also had a 3 @-@ month tour in early 2003 . Corporal Ian Plank , an SBS operator attached to the SAS was killed by Iraqi insurgents during a house @-@ to @-@ house search for a wanted high @-@ ranking Islamist terrorist in an insurgent compound in Ramadi on 31 October 2003 , he was the first UKSF combat casualty of the Iraq War . The SBS was also very active as part of Task Force Black , C squadron deployed to Baghdad as part of the task force in 2004 , in its four @-@ month deployment it mounted 22 raids .

In Spring 2005 , the Director of Special Forces rebalanced British special forces deployments so that Afghanistan would be the responsibility of the SBS and Iraq would be the 22nd SAS Regiment 's . In Spring 2006 , the British military deployed over 4 @, @ 000 troops to southern Afghanistan and the SBS were assigned to take the lead in supporting the deployment . The main objective of the SBS ( and later on other British special forces units with Afghan forces ) was targeting Taliban leaders and drug barons using " Carrot and stick " tactics . On 27 June 2006 , Captain David Patten , SAS ( other sources say SRR ) and Sergeant Paul Bartlett , SBS , were killed and another serviceman seriously injured in a Taliban ambush in Helmand province , southern Afghanistan . They were part of an SBS patrol that had arrested 4 Taliban organisers when they were ambushed by a large Taliban force , their vehicles were destroyed and the team were pursued by at least 70

Taliban insurgents , they were rescued by a platoon of Gurkhas who were supported by US and British aircraft , however in the chaos ; Bartlett and Patten became separated from the main group , their bodies were later found . One SBS member was awarded the MC On 12 May 2007 , an SBS team killed the Taliban leader Mullah Dadullah in Helmand province after a raid on a compound where his associates were meeting . On 24 September 2007 , members of the SBS and Italian commando 's rescued two Italian intelligence officers who were kidnapped by the Taliban in Herat province near Farah , they had been kidnapped 2 days before ; the mission was successful the officers were rescued and all 8 or 9 Taliban were killed . On 18 February 2008 , Taliban leader Mullah Abdul Matin and one of his sub @-@ commanders , Mullah Karim Agha , were travelling through the desert in Helmand province on motorbikes when they were ambushed and killed by an SBS unit dropped into his path by helicopter . In February 2009 , members of the SBS took part in Operation Diesel , which resulted in the seizure of £ 50 million of heroin and the killing of at least 20 Taliban insurgents . On 9 September 2009 , a joint SAS @-@ SBS team supported by the SFSG rescued Times journalist Stephen Farrell after he was captured by the Taliban in Kunduz Province . On 1 July 2010 whilst carrying out an operation against insurgents in Haji Wakil , Helmand Province , Corporal Seth Stephens of the SBS was killed during a heavy firefight whilst clearing a compound , as a result of his actions during that operation , he was awarded the Conspicuous Gallantry Cross . On 15 April 2012 , during the Taliban attack on Kabul SBS operators cleared Taliban militants from a central location overlooking foreign embassies .

On 27 February 2011 , during the Libyan Civil War , the BBC reported that C Squadron assisted in the evacuation of 150 oil workers in three flights by RAF C @-@ 130 Hercules from an airfield near Zella to Valletta .

On 8 March 2012 , a small Special Boat Service ( SBS ) team , attempted to rescue two hostages , Chris McManus ( British ) and Franco Lamolinara ( Italian ) , being held in Nigeria by members of the Boko Haram terrorist organisation loyal to al @-@ Qaeda . The two hostages were killed before or during the rescue attempt . All the hostage takers were reportedly killed . In 2013 , Captain Richard Holloway was serving with the SBS when he was killed by two Taliban bullets while conducting an operation to suppress the Taliban in a joint SBS @-@ Afghan forces raid ( with air support ) on Taliban insurgents in a valley east of Kabul ahead of the Afghanistan elections .

= = Present day = =

= = = Organisation = = =

The Ministry of Defence does not comment on special forces matters , therefore little verifiable information exists in the public domain . The SBS is under the Operational Command of Director Special Forces and are based in Hamworthy barracks , Poole , Dorset .

In 1987 , when renamed the Special Boat Service , the SBS was also reformed along SAS lines , with 16 man troops instead of the traditional sections . About 200 ? 250 men make up the SBS at any one time , and once qualified , personnel are known as " Swimmer Canoeists " . They are experts in swimming , diving , parachuting , navigation , demolition and reconnaissance .

There are four active squadrons and a reserve unit :

Since the SBS joined the UKSF Group in the 1980s it has been restructured . Instead of one squadron being tasked with a permanent role the unit adopted the same system of squadron rotation as the SAS . Each Squadron rotates through Counter Terrorism Duties and Conventional Operations and tasking . For example , in December 2001 it was C squadron who were on MCT Role and were called in to intercept the MV Nisha while M and Z Squadron were deployed in Afghanistan .

C Squadron

X Squadron

Z Squadron

M Squadron

SBS Reserve or SBS ( R ) ? provides individual reservists to augment the regular SBS , rather than forming independent teams . Only candidates with previous military experience are eligible to enlist . The SBS ( R ) is located at locations throughout the United Kingdom , but training is carried out in the South of England .

= = = Recruitment , selection and training = = =

In the past , the SBS was staffed almost entirely by the Royal Marines . Volunteers for the SBS are now taken from all branches of the British Armed Forces , although volunteers still predominantly come from the Royal Marines Commandos . Candidates wishing to serve with the SBS must have completed two years regular service and will only be accepted into the SBS after completion of the selection process .

Until recently , the SBS had its own independent selection programme in order to qualify as a Swimmer Canoeist , but its selection program has now been integrated into a joint UKSF selection alongside candidates for the SAS . All male members of the United Kingdom armed forces can be considered for special forces selection , but historically the majority of candidates have an airborne forces background . There are two selections a year , one in winter and the other in summer , and all the instructors are full members of the Special Air Service Regiment .

Before being loaded on to a UKSF Selection course , a candidate must complete a two @-@ week Special Forces Briefing Course . The course tests the candidates physical fitness and looks of their willingness to conduct water @-@ borne operations .

The UKSF course is broken down into two main parts , Selection and Continuation Training .

#### Selection

Aptitude Phase ( hill phase ) ? 4 weeks . This phase is conducted in the Brecon Beacons , South Wales .

The Aptitude Phase is designed to select those individuals who are suitable for Special Forces training . The initial three weeks are devoted to gradual physical training and progressive exercises designed to develop physical and navigational ability . Volunteers will be expected to complete the Basic Combat Fitness Test ( Infantry ) on the first day of the course . Exercise HIGH WALK ( Fan dance ) will take place on Day 6 and takes the form of an escorted hill march over approximately 23 km ( 14 mi ) . As with all assessment marches , additional time may be added for inclement weather conditions . Exercise HIGH WALK identifies those individuals that are not adequately prepared to continue on the course . All other training during this initial period is directed at preparing volunteers for " Test Week " which is the fourth and final week of Aptitude . " Test Week " consists of five timed marches of between 23 ? 28 km ( 14 ? 17 mi ) conducted on consecutive days followed by a final Endurance march of 64 km ( 40 mi ) ; this must be completed within 20 hours . Bergen weights carried during " Test Week " increase from 40 lb ( 18 kg ) to 55 lb ( 25 kg ) for the Endurance march ; in addition a rifle is carried on all marches . Volunteers are also required to pass the UKSF swimming test that consists of ; high water entry ( 3 m ( 9 @.@ 8 ft ) ) , treading water for nine minutes followed immediately by a swim of 500 m ( 1 @,@ 600 ft ) wearing Combat 95 . The test finishes with an underwater swim of 10 m ( 33 ft ) including a retrieval of a small weight .

#### Continuation Training

Tactics , Techniques and Procedures ( TTPs ) ? 9 weeks

Those who pass the Aptitude Phase will undertake an intensive period of instruction and assessment of Special Forces Tactics , Techniques and Procedures ( TTPs ) , including SF weapons and Standard Operation Procedures . The majority of this period is spent in the jungle , an environment that is suitable for SF training and ideal to achieve the purpose of this phase . Much of the training is aimed at discovering an individual 's qualities . Continuation training , which consists of SOP and Tactical training in temperate and jungle environments , lasts nine weeks . This is conducted in the UK and Brunei .

Employment Training ? 14 weeks

Employment Training consists of surveillance and reconnaissance training ( 2 weeks ) , army combat survival ( 2 weeks ) , SF parachute training ( 4 weeks ) , counter terrorist course ( 3 weeks )

, signals training ( 1 week ) , patrol training and squadron induction training ( 2 weeks ) , and 1 week officers week for potential officers . At the end of the resistance to interrogation phase the surviving candidates are transferred to an operational squadron .

When accepted into an operational squadron , the candidates must complete the SBS Swimmer Canoeist Course , SC3 Course . The course lasts for several months and covers long distance Dives , Swims and Kayaks in open sea , often in poor weather . Underwater demolitions , Maritime counter terrorism , are also practised . On completing SBS troopers will be put on one year probation .

#### Reserve selection

For SBS ( R ) selection , only candidates with previous military experience are eligible to enlist . Training is carried out in the South of England and candidates are required to complete the following tests over the four @-@ day initial selection course :

Combat Fitness Test ( CFT ) ? 12 @.@ 8 km ( 8 mi ) carrying 25 kg ( 55 lb ) within 1 hour 50 minutes .

Swim test ? 500 m ( 1 @,@ 600 ft ) using any stroke in uniform and retrieve an object from 5 m ( 16 ft ) .

#### Gym tests .

Advanced CFT 1 ? 15 km ( 9 @.@ 3 mi ) carrying 25 kg ( 55 lb ) .

Advanced CFT 2 ? 24 km ( 15 mi ) carrying 30 kg ( 66 lb ) .

The Special Boat Service wear the green commando beret , but with their own cap badge .