

= Special Air Service Regiment =

The Special Air Service Regiment , officially abbreviated SASR though commonly known as the SAS , is an elite special operations force of the Australian Army . Formed in 1957 , it was originally modelled on the British SAS sharing the motto , " Who Dares Wins " , and draws on the experiences of Australian Services Reconnaissance Department , independent companies , Coastwatchers and M and Z Special Units during World War II . Based at Campbell Barracks , in Swanbourne , a suburb of Perth , Western Australia , the regiment is a direct command unit of the Special Operations Command . It has been involved in operations in Borneo during the Indonesia ? Malaysia confrontation , the Vietnam War , Somalia , Kuwait , East Timor , Iraq and Afghanistan , as well as many other peacekeeping missions . It also provides a counter @-@ terrorist capability , and has been involved in a number of domestic security operations .

= = Role = =

= = = Tasks and capabilities = = =

A direct command unit of Special Operations Command , the Special Air Service Regiment ( SASR ) is a special forces unit of the Australian Army and " is tasked to provide special @-@ operations capabilities in support of the Australian Defence Force . This includes providing unique capabilities to support sensitive strategic operations , special recovery operations , advisory and training assistance , special reconnaissance , precision strike and direct action " . The SASR is primarily structured to conduct covert long @-@ range reconnaissance and surveillance in small teams in enemy @-@ controlled territory , while commando units are utilised to conduct raids in larger groups . In addition to warfighting during conventional conflicts , the regiment is also tasked with maintaining a specialist counter @-@ terrorist capability . Other capabilities include training local or indigenous forces , recovery of Australian citizens and humanitarian assistance . The SASR is also trained in counter @-@ insurgency operations .

= = = Warfighting and special reconnaissance = = =

In the long @-@ range reconnaissance role , the SASR typically operates in small patrols of between five and six operators with the task of infiltrating enemy @-@ held territory and providing intelligence on enemy activities and capabilities . During such tasks the SASR seeks to evade rather than confront the enemy . SASR soldiers also direct fire support including air strikes to destroy enemy installations and disrupt or kill enemy forces whenever possible . SASR reconnaissance patrols can be inserted by air ( either by helicopter , standard parachute or HALO ) , land ( on foot or by vehicle ) or sea ( including by submarine , small boats , canoes or closed @-@ circuit breathing apparatus ) and have proven capable of covering large distances and staying concealed in jungle , desert and mountain terrain . SASR patrols may also conduct sabotage and short @-@ duration raids on high @-@ value targets , including headquarters , airfields and communications nodes .

= = = Counter @-@ terrorism and special recovery = = =

One of the primary roles of the regiment is to provide a counter @-@ terrorist capability , with an element of the SASR forming Australia 's domestic Tactical Assault Group ( West ) , while the 2nd Commando Regiment provides Tactical Assault Group ( East ) . TAG West maintains a short @-@ notice capability to conduct military operations beyond the scope of state and federal police tactical groups . Offensive counter @-@ terrorist operations may include direct action and hostage recovery . A capability to board ships whilst underway and off @-@ shore oil platforms is also maintained . The TAG is kept at high readiness for a period of 12 months , before being replaced by another squadron in this role .

= = History = =

= = = Early years = = =

The SASR draws on the experiences of the Australian Services Reconnaissance Department , independent companies , Coastwatchers and M and Z Special Units which operated in the South West Pacific Area against the Japanese during World War II . These units had been disbanded soon after the war as part of the demobilisation of the Australian military ; however , after observing the operations of the British Special Air Service during the Malayan Emergency in the 1950s the Australian Army decided to raise its own SAS unit . The 1st Special Air Service Company was established on 25 July 1957 at Swanbourne , a suburb of Perth , Western Australia , with a strength of 16 officers and 144 other ranks . In 1960 , the company became part of the Royal Australian Regiment ( RAR ) and was given the responsibility for commando and special forces operations . As part of the pentropic organisation adopted by the Australian Army at the time , the regiment 's primary wartime role was divisional @-@ level reconnaissance . On 20 August 1964 , the SAS gained regimental status and was expanded to two sabre squadrons and a headquarters , severing the link with the RAR . The raising of a third squadron was approved on 30 April 1965 as part of an overall expansion of the Australian Army .

= = = Borneo = = =

The SASR first saw action in 1965 as part of the British Commonwealth force stationed in north Borneo during the Indonesian Confrontation . The Australian SASR troopers operated alongside their British and New Zealand counterparts in operations aimed at stopping Indonesian infiltration into Malaysia , taking part in Operation Claret . 1 Squadron conducted reconnaissance patrols in Sarawak from February to July 1965 , and conducted cross @-@ border operations between May and July . They suffered their first fatality on 2 June when a soldier was gored by an elephant . 1 Squadron completed operations on 1 August and returned to Australia . 2 Squadron arrived in Borneo in January 1966 for a four @-@ month deployment , and despite the suspension of Claret operations it also conducted reconnaissance patrols and cross @-@ border operations , undertaking a total of 45 patrols on both sides of the border . On 19 March two soldiers drowned during a river crossing . On 21 July , 2 Squadron was relieved by a British SAS squadron and returned to Australia in August . Despite often being deployed in the reconnaissance role , the SASR killed at least 20 Indonesian soldiers in a series of ambushes and contacts . Three SASR soldiers were killed during these operations .

= = = Vietnam = = =

Based in Nui Dat the SASR was responsible for providing intelligence to both the 1st Australian Task Force ( 1 ATF ) and US forces , operating throughout Phuoc Tuy Province as well as Bien Hoa , Long Khanh and Binh Tuy provinces . From 1966 SASR squadrons rotated through Vietnam on year @-@ long deployments , with each of the three Sabre Squadrons completing two tours before the last squadron was withdrawn in 1971 . Missions included medium range reconnaissance patrols , observation of enemy troop movements , and long range offensive operations and ambushing in enemy dominated territory . Operating in small groups of four to six men they moved slower than conventional infantry through jungle or bushland and were heavily armed , employing a high rate of fire to simulate a larger force on contact and to support their withdrawal . The primary method of deployment was by helicopter , with the SASR working closely with No. 9 Squadron RAAF which regularly provided rapid and precise insertion and extraction of patrols into jungle landing zones at tree top height . On occasion SAS patrols would also be deployed by M @-@ 113 armored personnel carriers ( APCs ) with a method devised to deceive the Viet Cong as to their insertion and

the location of their drop @-@ off point despite the noise they made moving through the jungle . An operational parachute jump was also undertaken .

A fourth squadron was raised in mid @-@ 1966 , but was later disbanded in April 1967 . The SASR operated closely with the New Zealand SAS , with a troop being attached to each Australian squadron from late 1968 . Completing its final tour in October 1971 , 2 Squadron was disbanded on return to Australia , with Training Squadron raised in its place . During its time in Vietnam the SASR proved highly successful , with members of the regiment known to the Viet Cong as Ma Rung or " phantoms of the jungle " due to their stealth . In a six @-@ year period the Australian and New Zealand SAS in Vietnam conducted nearly 1 @, @ 200 patrols and inflicted heavy casualties on the Viet Cong , including 492 killed , 106 possibly killed , 47 wounded , 10 possibly wounded and 11 prisoners captured . Their own losses totalled one killed in action , one died of wounds , three accidentally killed , one missing and one death from illness . Twenty @-@ eight men were wounded . During the period of its deployment 580 men served in the SASR in Vietnam . The remains of the last Australian soldier who went missing in action in 1969 after falling into the jungle during a suspended rope extraction were found in August 2008 . Australian SASR personnel also worked with US Army Special Forces in Vietnam , and provided instructors to the MACV Recondo School , and then to the LRRP Training Wing at the AATTV @-@ operated Van Kiep Training Centre from 1967 . Some members of the regiment also served with MACV @-@ SOG units , with soldiers often serving on exchange with American Special Forces .

= = = Defence of Australia and counter @-@ terrorism = = =

The Australian withdrawal from Vietnam brought to an end the doctrine of ' forward defence ' through involvement in Southeast Asian wars . Instead , the Australian military 's new focus was on the defence of continental Australia against external attack . In line with this change , the SASR took the lead in developing the Australian Army 's capability to conduct patrol operations in Northern Australia , although this role was later taken over by the Army 's three Regional Force Surveillance Units following their formation in the early 1980s . During this time the SASR also continued to train overseas with other special forces units . On one such exercise in the Philippines , a US special forces C @-@ 130 Hercules crashed into the South China Sea shortly after take @-@ off from Subic Bay on 26 February 1981 , killing 23 passengers including three Australians from the SASR , as well as a number of Americans , Filipinos , and New Zealanders . Meanwhile , following the Sydney Hilton bombing in February 1978 , the SASR was given responsibility for providing Australia 's military counter @-@ terrorism response force , for which 2 Squadron was raised again in 1982 . In addition to being able to respond to terrorist attacks in Australian cities , the SASR counter @-@ terrorism unit was required to develop a capability to board ships underway and off @-@ shore oil platforms . In May 1987 a squadron from the SASR was alerted for a possible deployment to Fiji as part of Operation Morris Dance , but did not leave Australia . The regiment was not involved in operations during the Gulf War in 1991 although two troops were again placed on standby for deployment at short notice , while other elements remained on high alert to respond to a terrorist incident in Australia if required .

= = = Peacekeeping = = =

The first SASR units to deploy on active service after the Vietnam War did so as part of Australian peacekeeping deployments . Small numbers of SAS personnel were involved in Operation Habitat in Turkey and Northern Iraq as medics to assist Kurdish refugees between May and June 1991 . Personnel were also provided by the regiment as part of the Australian contribution to the UN Special Commission established to oversee the destruction of Iraq 's weapons of mass destruction between 1991 and 2000 . SASR medics deployed with some of the weapons inspection teams , and at times were also employed as drivers and for " personal protection " tasks . Several SAS signallers from 152 Signal Squadron also deployed to the Western Sahara between September 1991 and May 1994 as part of the Australian contingent there . Contrary to some reports , the SASR did not

provide a security team for service in Cambodia although some SASR @-@ qualified signals sergeants from 152 Signal Squadron were deployed as part of the Australian military contribution to the United Nations Advance Mission in Cambodia ( UNAMIC ) and Force Communications Unit between 1991 and 1993 . A small number of members of the regiment served on exchange with the British SAS and Special Boat Service ( SBS ) in Bosnia in the early 1990s , including a sergeant who commanded an SBS detachment in April 1993 .

In April 1994 , a 10 @-@ man SASR team from J Troop was attached to Australian forces in Somalia to provide an elite response , VIP protection and force protection to the Australian Service Contingent in Mogadishu . Known as " the Gerbils " , the small team operated from Toyota Landcruisers and Datsun utility vehicles and two M @-@ 113 APCs . They were subsequently involved in a number of actions , including an incident on 21 May when they were flown to the scene of a downed Canadian civilian helicopter 20 kilometres ( 12 mi ) north of Mogadishu to protect the crew , and another on 16 August when they were involved in a skirmish during a convoy which resulted in two Somalis being killed after one of them aimed an AK @-@ 47 at the Australians . They returned to Australia in November 1994 . SASR @-@ qualified medical sergeants were also deployed as part of the contribution to the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda , some of whom were present during the Kibeho Massacre in April 1995 , for which one SAS soldier and two other Australians were awarded the Medal of Gallantry for their actions . In addition , individual members of the SASR have been attached to a wide range of Australian peacekeeping deployments as observers , including in Kashmir , Lebanon and in the Sinai .

= = = Blackhawk accident = = =

Deaths during training accidents make up the majority of the SASR 's fatalities . The worst accident in the regiment 's history occurred on the evening of 12 June 1996 when two S @-@ 70 @-@ A9 Blackhawk helicopters from the 5th Aviation Regiment carrying SASR troopers collided during a live @-@ fire counter @-@ terrorism / special @-@ recovery operation exercise at Fire Support Base Barbara in the High Range Training Area near Townsville , Queensland . This activity was part of Exercise Day Rotor 96 and took place on the second day of the exercise , sometime after 18 : 30 , requiring the pilots to use night vision goggles . Six aircraft had been approaching the target area when , 30 seconds from the landing zone , one of the helicopters veered to the right , clipping the tail rotor of another helicopter . One Blackhawk crashed immediately killing 12 personnel on board , while the other was able to make a crash landing but burst into flames , killing six . Crash survivors , soldiers from the other helicopters and exercise staff risked the flames and exploding ammunition to rescue their comrades and retrieve the bodies of the dead . Fifteen members of the SASR and three from the 5th Aviation Regiment lost their lives in the accident . Fourteen personnel were later officially recognised for their part in the rescue and evacuation operation .

= = = Cambodia and Bougainville = = =

In July 1997 an eight @-@ man SASR team deployed at short notice to Butterworth in Malaysia to provide close protection and communications to the Australian ambassador and embassy staff in Cambodia if required , in preparation for the evacuation of Australian nationals in the wake of civil unrest which occurred following a coup in that country . The evacuation operation was subsequently completed successfully , with RAAF C @-@ 130s supported by Airfield Defence Guards and other military personnel evacuating 455 Australians and other nationals from Cambodia as part of Operation Vista . Later , following the agreement of a truce in October 1997 which ended the conflict in Bougainville , Australian personnel were deployed as part of the New Zealand @-@ led Truce Monitoring Group , with an SASR officer being included in the reconnaissance party and later serving on its headquarters . In April 1998 , Australia took over leadership of the mission , which was renamed the Peace Monitoring Group . Numerous SASR personnel served in Bougainville over a four @-@ year period as part of Operation Bel Isi , both in headquarters positions and as part of the monitoring teams .

== = Kuwait = = =

In 1998 , the SASR made its first squadron @-@ strength deployment since Vietnam when 1 Squadron , with an attached New Zealand SAS troop , was deployed to Kuwait in February as part of the American @-@ led Operation Desert Thunder . The force , known as Anzac Special Operations Force ( ANZAC SOF ) , was fully integrated , with the New Zealanders providing the squadron 's third troop . While the crisis was resolved peacefully , if military action had been taken the SASR would have been used in the Combat Search and Rescue ( CSAR ) role to recover aircrew shot down by Iraqi air defences . The force returned to Australia in June 1998 . Regardless , the operation represented the first time that SASR tactical headquarters had been deployed outside of Australia .

== = East Timor = = =

The SASR played a key role in the Australian @-@ led international peacekeeping force ( INTERFET ) in East Timor between September 1999 and February 2000 . Initially involved in the operation to evacuate Australian and UN personnel from East Timor as a result of violence in the lead up to the referendum for independence , the SASR was subsequently involved in intelligence gathering tasks prior to the landings , and provided the initial forces to secure the point of entry at Dili airport . 3 Squadron , along with Allied Special Forces elements from the NZ SAS and British SBS , then made up INTERFET 's special forces element , known as Response Force ( RESPFOR ) . The SASR spearheaded most operations conducted by the international force during the early days of the intervention in East Timor and , as in Vietnam , served as the eyes and ears of the force , patrolling extensively through militia @-@ controlled areas in vehicles and on foot as INTERFET expanded to take control of the rest of East Timor . During operations in East Timor the SASR was involved in a number of significant contacts with pro @-@ Indonesian militia , including at Suai on 6 October 1999 during which two SASR soldiers were wounded , and later at Aidabasalala on 16 October 1999 . Other tasks included VIP protection and other special forces tasks as required by the task force commander . 3 Squadron was later awarded a Meritorious Unit Citation on 25 March 2000 . 1 Squadron replaced 3 Squadron in December 1999 , and completed its tour in February 2000 .

== = Domestic security and controversy = = =

The regiment formed a key element of the security force in place for the Sydney Olympic Games in 2000 , and in the lead @-@ up to the event the regiment underwent a period of modernisation , acquiring new equipment and capabilities , including the ability to respond to chemical , biological and radiological threats , as well as developing techniques for the clandestine boarding of moving ships at night . During the Games two SASR squadrons were available for counter @-@ terrorist operations , with one designated to respond to incidents in Sydney and Canberra , while the other was on standby for incidents elsewhere . The domestic security role increased in prominence after the terrorist attacks in the United States on 11 September 2001 , and the SASR has since formed part of the security force for events such as the 2003 Rugby World Cup , 2006 Commonwealth Games , and other international events . The SASR currently provides one of Australia 's two elite Tactical Assault Groups , designated TAG ( West ) , the other TAG being provided by the 2nd Commando Regiment .

In April 2001 the fishing vessel South Tomi was detected poaching Patagonian toothfish near Heard and McDonald Islands in the Southern Ocean . Following a 6 @,@ 100 @-@ kilometre ( 3 @,@ 800 mi ) pursuit , the Togo @-@ flagged vessel was boarded by an SASR troop off the southern tip of Africa . In August 2001 , the SASR was involved in the Tampa affair when its counter @-@ terrorist squadron was ordered to Christmas Island and to board the MV Tampa once it illegally entered Australian waters . While the members of the SASR involved did what they could to improve conditions on the Tampa , the use of an elite military unit to prevent asylum seekers landing

in Australia was not supported by all members of the regiment and remains controversial . Less controversial was the SASR 's involvement in the boarding of a North Korean freighter , the MV Pong Su ? which was suspected of drug smuggling ? off Newcastle on 20 April 2003 .

= = = Afghanistan = = =

In October 2001 , the Australian government announced that it was sending a special forces task group built around an SASR squadron to participate in the campaign against al @-@ Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan designated Operation Slipper . After staging through Kuwait , 1 Squadron arrived in Afghanistan in December 2001 with the other SASR squadrons rotating in at approximately six @-@ monthly intervals . The SASR 's main role in Afghanistan was to conduct reconnaissance and surveillance of al @-@ Qaeda and Taliban positions , activities and capabilities . SASR force elements also conducted some offensive operations . After arriving at FOB Rhino , the SASR initially operated in southern Afghanistan with US Marines from Task Force 58 , conducting long @-@ range vehicle mounted patrols over several hundred kilometres around Kandahar and into the Helmand Valley near the Iranian @-@ border . On 16 February 2002 Sergeant Andrew Russell was killed when the Long Range Patrol Vehicle ( LRPV ) he was travelling in hit a land mine during an operation in the Helmand Valley . Two other soldiers were wounded in the incident . Later the SASR operated under command of Task Force 64 .

The SASR then moved to eastern Afghanistan where it played a key role in Operation Anaconda in March 2002 . During the operation SASR teams were to provide on @-@ location , in @-@ depth operational intelligence and reconnaissance after they infiltrated the Shahi @-@ Kot Valley ten days prior to the operation , and also saved the lives of 24 soldiers of the US 75th Ranger Regiment after their helicopter was shot down , by providing sniper overwatch and guiding in precise air strikes to end the enemy advance as they attempted to overrun the isolated Americans . Up to 300 al Qaeda fighters were later estimated to have been killed as a result of the airstrikes they called @-@ in . Two SASR advisory and liaison officers were attached with the US 10th Mountain Division to help plan the division 's air assault operations , and were subsequently involved in heavy fighting after the unit they were with became pinned down and took a number of casualties . Supported by heavy close air support they were evacuated by helicopter that evening .

Four days into the operation , SASR elements identified a potential escape route for the al @-@ Qaeda leadership . Other coalition special forces had attempted to establish observation posts , but had quickly been discovered by shepherds or villagers . The Australians inserted a patrol undetected to monitor the escape route . From more than 1 @,@ 200 metres ( 1 @,@ 300 yd ) high on a mountain , the patrol spotted a group of al @-@ Qaeda figures dressed in Russian camouflage and wearing black balaclavas . They carried more advanced weapons than normal insurgents , and appeared to be guarding a white @-@ robed older man with a cane as they fled the battlefield . US intelligence at first believed it was Osama bin Laden but later revised the identification to his second @-@ in @-@ command , Ayman al @-@ Zawahiri . An airstrike was called in ; however , there was later doubt about whether it was successful . Australian forces later uncovered a number of arms caches and destroyed an anti @-@ aircraft piece , while other elements were tasked with screening possible escape routes to the south and killed a number of fighters as they attempted to withdraw . The initial task group was replaced by another squadron in March and April 2002 , while a third squadron rotated into Afghanistan in August 2002 . The SASR withdrew from Afghanistan in November 2002 after all three sabre squadrons had served in the country .

A Special Forces Task Group ( SFTG ) was deployed to Afghanistan in August or September 2005 , operating in the southern province of Uruzgan . The SFTG consisted of elements from the SASR , 4 RAR ( Commando ) , the Incident Response Regiment ( IRR ) and logistic support personnel . Two CH @-@ 47 Chinook helicopters from the 5th Aviation Regiment were deployed to Afghanistan in March 2006 to support the SFTG . A forward operating base was subsequently established at Tarin Kowt . This task group was withdrawn in September 2006 , after a year of operations working closely with special forces from the United Kingdom and the Netherlands . During this period the task group was on patrol for 306 days , involved in 139 contacts , and sustained 11 soldiers

wounded . The SFTG was replaced by a Reconstruction Taskforce made up of engineers and conventional infantry .

A 300 @-@ strong Special Operations Task Group ( SOTG ) was redeployed to Afghanistan to support the Reconstruction Taskforce in April 2007 , including an SASR squadron , commando company group , and an integral combat service support team . The commando element was mostly used to conduct direct action tasks , with the SASR returning to conducting strategic reconnaissance . On 16 January 2009 , Trooper Mark Donaldson was awarded the Victoria Cross for Australia , the highest award for gallantry in the Australian honours system , for gallant acts performed whilst serving with the SASR in Afghanistan on 2 September 2008 when his patrol was ambushed , resulting in the wounding of nine Australians . In addition to the SASR 's contribution to the SOTG , the regiment also provided " Defence Support Teams " to protect Australian Secret Intelligence Service ( ASIS ) agents in Afghanistan .

On 23 January 2011 , Corporal Ben Roberts @-@ Smith was awarded the Victoria Cross for single @-@ handedly neutralising two machine @-@ gun positions during an operation in Tizak on 11 June 2010 . On 26 March 2013 , it was announced that Special Operations Command would receive the Australian Army 's first battle honour since the end of the Vietnam War for outstanding performance during the Shah Wali Kot Offensive in Afghanistan from May to June 2010 . The battle honour , titled " Eastern Shah Wali Kot " , was awarded in recognition of the operational actions of the SASR and 2nd Commando Regiment from the Australian Special Operations Task Group Rotation XII . The SASR has also been collectively awarded the Meritorious Unit Citation and Unit Citation for Gallantry for its actions in Afghanistan .

During an operation in April 2013 an SASR corporal cut the right hands from the corpses of three insurgents after being told by a military lawyer that this would be an acceptable way of obtaining fingerprints . After this incident was reported to the senior Australian command at Tarin Kowt the SOTG was withdrawn from operations for a week @-@ long " operational pause " . One soldier remained under investigation for this incident in August 2015 . The bulk of SOTG was withdrawn from Afghanistan in late 2013 as part of the Australian drawdown , although some special forces remain as part of the small Australian force in the country . SASR casualties in Afghanistan include five soldiers killed in action .

= = = Iraq = = =

The SASR provided the majority of the ground @-@ force element of the Australian contribution to the 2003 invasion of Iraq , known as Operation Falconer , moving in quickly and successfully , thus enhancing Australia 's standing amongst its allies . The Australian Special Forces Task Group was built around 1 Squadron , with a platoon from the 4 RAR ( Commando ) and a troop from the IRR available to support the SASR . 1 Squadron operated in western Iraq where it was successful in securing its area of operations . Elements of the SAS Squadron crossed the Iraqi border on the night of 19 March by vehicle , penetrating 30 kilometres ( 19 mi ) before being engaged in one of the first actions of the war . Other patrols were inserted by helicopter more 600 kilometres ( 370 mi ) from their staging areas and subsequently fought a number of actions over the following month . Australian patrols were the closest coalition elements to Baghdad for a number of days , observing key roads and facilities . Towards the conclusion of the 42 @-@ day campaign the SAS secured the huge but undefended Al Asad air base , approximately 200 kilometres ( 120 mi ) west of Baghdad , capturing more than 50 aircraft . 1 Squadron was withdrawn from Iraq without replacement shortly after the end of the war , and was subsequently awarded a Unit Citation for Gallantry .

Yet some members of the SASR continued to operate in Iraq over the next few years in a number of roles . In 2004 claims appeared in the media that Australian special forces were involved in counter @-@ insurgency operations inside Iraq , although this was denied by the government . An SASR team was deployed to Iraq in May and June 2005 as part the effort to free Douglas Wood , an Australian engineer kidnapped in Baghdad ; however , he was later recovered alive by US and Iraqi forces . In 2007 , British media reports suggested that SASR elements were still operating in Iraq , along the southern border with Iran , targeting arms smugglers . Later , a small number of SASR

personnel were deployed to Iraq in June 2014 to protect the Australian embassy when the security of Baghdad was threatened by the 2014 Northern Iraq offensive , while others were reported to have been tasked with providing security to Royal Australian Air Force aircrew aboard transport aircraft delivering arms and munitions to forces in Kurdish @-@ controlled northern Iraq during September 2014 .

= = = Timor Leste , the Philippines and Fiji = = =

An SASR troop was deployed to Timor Leste in May 2006 as part of Operation Astute , operating alongside a Commando Company Group as part of the Special Forces Component following renewed unrest there . On 4 March 2007 , along with the commandos , SASR personnel took part in the Battle of Same during which five rebels were killed during an unsuccessful attempt to apprehend the rebel leader , Alfredo Reinado . It was reported in October 2006 that 20 SASR operators were in the southern Philippines , supporting Filipino operations against the Abu Sayyaf and Jemaah Islamiah terrorist groups , but this was denied by the Department of Defence . Meanwhile , following tensions in Fiji between the military and the government the Australian Government dispatched three naval vessels in November and December 2006 as part of Operation Quickstep , in preparation for a potential evacuation of Australian citizens . On 29 November 2006 , a Blackhawk helicopter from the 171st Aviation Squadron carrying four crew and six soldiers from the SASR crashed while attempting to land on HMAS Kanimbla and sank in international waters off Fiji . The helicopter 's pilot and a soldier from SASR were killed in the crash .

= = = Africa = = =

In March 2012 , the Sydney Morning Herald claimed that operators from 4 Squadron ? reportedly reformed in 2005 and based at Swan Island in Victoria ? had been operating in Africa , specifically Zimbabwe , Nigeria and Kenya , gathering intelligence on terrorism and developing plans to rescue kidnapped Australian civilians . Professor Hugh White from the Australian National University was quoted as saying that , as soldiers , they would not have the legal cover ASIS would have if caught . The Herald also reported that the then Minister for Foreign Affairs Kevin Rudd had argued for 4 Squadron to be used in Libya during the civil war , but was overruled by the Minister for Defence , Stephen Smith , and the Chief of the Defence Force , General David Hurley . Smith denied SASR personnel were operating " at the outer reaches of Australian and international law " but did not confirm or deny the operation in Africa .

= = Organisation = =

The size of the SASR is classified and its reported strength varies , with figures of between 500 and 700 personnel appearing in different sources . Based at Campbell Barracks in Swanbourne , it is a battalion @-@ sized element and is known to be made up of a regimental headquarters , four sabre squadrons , an operational support squadron , a base squadron and a signals squadron . Two sabre squadrons maintain the regiment 's warfighting capability and train for operational contingencies , while a third squadron is maintained on rotation for counter terrorist or recovery operations in support of State or Federal police forces . The existence of the SASR 's fourth sabre squadron has been reported in the media but has never been officially acknowledged . The regiment is currently believed to be organised as follows :

Regimental headquarters

1 Squadron

2 Squadron

3 Squadron

4 Squadron

Base Squadron

Operation Support Squadron



## 152 Signal Squadron

Each sabre squadron is approximately 90 @-@ strong and is divided into three troops ( Water Troop , Free @-@ Fall Troop and Land Troop ) . A troop comprises four patrols with five or six operators in each patrol , and is commanded by a captain with each patrol commanded by a sergeant . For surveillance operations the SASR usually operates in patrols ; however , for CT operations it usually employs larger force elements . Support personnel include signallers , mechanics and technicians , medical staff , storemen , drivers , caterers and various specialists . It was reported in 2012 that six female soldiers were being trained in the United States for their work with 4 Squadron . As of 2003 , 152 Signal Squadron comprised four troops . Military dogs , designated Special Operations Military Working Dog ( SOMWD ) , are new members of the SASR since 2005 , seeing service in Afghanistan and have their own memorial .

While the SASR is a regular army unit , it also has a pool of Army Reserve personnel . These soldiers are former regular Army members of the SASR or specialists .

= = Uniform and equipment = =

The standard dress of the regiment is the new Multicam @-@ design camouflage which became standard issue to special forces troops in 2012 , and is now being introduced to all other Australian Army soldiers in Afghanistan and will eventually become the standard Operational Combat Uniform ( OCU ) . Although SASR parade , working and field uniforms are generally the same as those used by the rest of the Australian Army , special uniforms ? including black coveralls ? are used depending on the tactical situation . Qualified SASR members wear a sandy @-@ coloured beret with a metal , gold and silver badge , depicting the sword Excalibur , with flames issuing upwards from below the hilt , with a scroll across the front of blade inscribed with the regimental motto " Who Dares Wins " , on a black shield . This differs from the British Special Air Service , which wears a woven cloth cap badge of the same design . SAS ' Ibis ' -style parachute wings ( rounded at the bottom and straight on top ) are worn on the right shoulder on general duty , ceremonial and mess dress uniforms only . A garter blue lanyard is worn . Members of the regiment often dispense with rank , use first names , and wear long hair and beards on operations or when in the field .

Soldiers are armed with a variety of weapons systems depending on what the mission dictates . These include the M4A1 carbine ( designated as the M4A5 in Australia ) , which is used as their primary weapon . The shortened version of the M4 , known as the Mk 18 CQBR , is also used . Primary weapons are complemented with the two issued sidearms , the Hk USP Tactical and the Glock 19 . For medium to long range engagements the Heckler & Koch HK417 , SR @-@ 25 marksman rifle , and Mk 14 Enhanced Battle Rifle are also used . Support weapons used include the Mk48 Maximi Modular , MAG 58 and the Para Minimi . The regiment also uses a number of direct and indirect fire support weapons including the 66 mm M72 rockets , 84 mm M3 MAAWS , FGM @-@ 148 Javelin , M2 @-@ QCB Browning .50 calibre machine guns , Mk 19 grenade launcher , and mortars .

A range of different vehicles are used , including the Supacat High Mobility Transporter ( HMT ) Extenda purchased in 2008 designated the Special Operations Vehicle @-@ Special Reconnaissance ( SOV @-@ SR ) , named " Nary " after a SASR warrant officer killed during pre @-@ deployment training in 2005 , which due to technical problems did not enter service until 2011 replacing the Long Range Patrol Vehicle ( LRPV ) which had seen extensive service in Afghanistan and Iraq . New SOV @-@ Logistics trucks are being acquired to replace the Mercedes @-@ Benz Unimog for supply , support and recovery of the SOV @-@ SR . A lighter , less protected vehicle , more akin to the LRPV ? the Polaris Defense DAGOR ( Deployable Advanced Ground Off @-@ road ) ? was being trialled in 2015 . Motorcycles are also used for long range strategic reconnaissance seeing service in Afghanistan . Polaris six @-@ wheel all @-@ terrain vehicles are also used , seeing service in Afghanistan . Heavily modified up @-@ armoured Toyota Land Cruiser four wheel drive vehicles designated SOV @-@ Support are used for domestic counter @-@ terrorism and special recovery .

= = Selection and training = =

The SASR regiment has high personnel standards , and selection into the regiment is considered the most demanding of any entry test in the Australian Army . Members of the SASR are required to work in small teams for extended periods and often without support , and are specially selected for their ability to work in this environment , rather than as individuals . Selection is open to all serving Australian Defence Force personnel . After initial screening candidates must complete the " Special Forces Barrier Test " , which tests their physical fitness . About 80 to 85 percent of applicants pass this phase . Successful candidates then continue on to the 21 @-@ day SASR selection course conducted at Bindoon , Western Australia which assesses both the individual 's strength and endurance ( mental and physical ) , as well as overall fitness , ability to remain calm in combat , and to work effectively in small teams . The course is conducted by staff from the Special Forces Training Centre , which was established in 1998 . Only 25 to 30 percent pass selection . These candidates then progress onto the 18 month reinforcement cycle , during which they will complete a range of courses including weapons , basic patrolling , parachuting , combat survival , signaller / medic , heavy weapons , demolitions , method of entry , and urban combat , before posting to a sabre squadron if successful . Officers must complete additional courses to qualify as an officer in the regiment , with requisite expertise in operations , administration and command . Most candidates are generally in their late @-@ 20s and are on average older than most soldiers . Despite a possible reduction in rank , SASR operators receive significant allowances , which make them among the highest @-@ paid soldiers in the Australian Defence Force , with a trooper ( equivalent to a private ) earning about \$ 100 @,@ 000 per annum .

All members of the SASR are parachute qualified , and each member of a patrol has at least one specialisation , including medic , signaller , explosive expert or linguist . Each of the three sabre squadrons works on a three @-@ year training and operational cycle , although the system is flexible and can be accelerated or varied depending on operational requirements and deployments . In the first year new members of the regiment develop their individual skills and practice the new techniques they have been taught , while more experienced members undertake advanced courses . In the second year mission skill sets for conventional warfare are trained , while in the third year clandestine tasks are practiced and the squadron becomes the online counter terrorist squadron . Counter terrorist training includes close quarters battle ( CQB ) , explosive entry , tubular assault ( in vehicles such as in buses , trains and aircraft ) and in high rise buildings , as well as room and building clearance . This training is conducted in a range of advanced facilities , including electronic indoor and outdoor CQB ranges , outdoor sniper range , and urban training facilities at Swanbourne . Additional facilities include a special urban complex , vertical plunging range , method of entry house , and simulated oil rig and aircraft mock @-@ ups in order to provide realistic training environments for potential operational scenarios . SASR personnel also provide training in weapons handling and the use of explosives to intelligence agents and members of elite police units at Swan Island in Victoria .

The SASR maintains close links with special forces from the United States , United Kingdom and New Zealand , regularly participating in joint exercises and individual personnel exchange programs with the British SAS and SBS , as well as the New Zealand SAS , US Navy SEALs and United States Special Forces . The regiment also regularly conducts exercises with and trains soldiers from South East Asian nations , and participates in exercises with regional special forces . From 1992 this has included close links with the Indonesian Kopassus , a relationship which has at times been politically controversial . Since its formation the SASR has lost more men in training than in combat , due to the nature of the training regime . In 2014 , the regiment celebrated its 50th anniversary . During this period 48 soldiers have been killed during operations or in training accidents , while another 20 died in " other circumstances " . More than 200 have been wounded . The names of those killed are recorded on a plaque on a memorial made of a large piece of granite outside the SASR headquarters at Campbell Barracks , known as " The Rock " .

= = Alliances = =

United Kingdom ? Special Air Service