

= Special Air Service =

The Special Air Service (SAS) is a special forces unit of the British Army . The SAS was founded in 1941 as a regiment , and later reconstituted as a corps in 1950 . The unit undertakes a number of roles including covert reconnaissance , counter @-@ terrorism , direct action , hostage rescue and human intelligence gathering .

The corps presently comprises 22 Special Air Service Regiment , the regular component , under the operational command of United Kingdom Special Forces , and 21 (Artists) Special Air Service Regiment (Reserve) and 23 Special Air Service Regiment (Reserve) , which are reserve units under the operational command of 1st Intelligence , Surveillance and Reconnaissance Brigade .

The Special Air Service traces its origins to 1941 and the Second World War , and was reformed as part of the Territorial Army in 1947 , named the 21st Special Air Service Regiment (Artists Rifles) . 22 Special Air Service Regiment , part of the regular army , later gained fame and recognition worldwide after successfully assaulting the Iranian Embassy in London and rescuing hostages during the 1980 Iranian Embassy siege , lifting the regiment from obscurity outside the military establishment .

= = History = =

The Special Air Service was a unit of the British Army during the Second World War , formed in July 1941 by David Stirling and originally called " L " Detachment , Special Air Service Brigade ? the " L " designation and Air Service name being a tie @-@ in to a British disinformation campaign , trying to deceive the Axis into thinking there was a paratrooper regiment with numerous units operating in the area (the real SAS would " prove " to the Axis that the fake one existed) . It was conceived as a commando force to operate behind enemy lines in the North African Campaign and initially consisted of five officers and 60 other ranks . Its first mission , in November 1941 , was a parachute drop in support of the Operation Crusader offensive . Due to German resistance and adverse weather conditions , the mission was a disaster : 22 men , a third of the unit , were killed or captured . Its second mission was a success : transported by the Long Range Desert Group , it attacked three airfields in Libya , destroying 60 aircraft with the loss of 2 men and 3 Willys MB . In September 1942 it was renamed 1st SAS , consisting at that time of four British squadrons , one Free French , one Greek , and the Folboat Section .

In January 1943 , Stirling was captured in Tunisia and Paddy Mayne replaced him as commander . In April 1943 , the 1st SAS was reorganised into the Special Raiding Squadron under Mayne 's command and the Special Boat Squadron was placed under the command of George Jellicoe . The Special Raiding Squadron fought in Sicily and Italy along with the 2nd SAS , which had been formed in North Africa in 1943 in part by the renaming of the Small Scale Raiding Force . The Special Boat Squadron fought in the Aegean Islands and Dodecanese until the end of the war . In 1944 the SAS Brigade was formed from the British 1st and 2nd SAS , the French 3rd and 4th SAS and the Belgian 5th SAS . It was tasked with parachute operations behind the German lines in France and carried out operations supporting the Allied advance through Belgium , the Netherlands (Operation Pegasus) , and eventually into Germany (Operation Archway) . As a result of Hitler 's issuing of the Commando Order 18 October 1942 , the members of the unit faced the additional danger that they would be summarily executed if ever captured by the Germans . In July 1944 , following Operation Bulbasket , 34 captured SAS commandos were summarily executed by the Germans . In October 1944 , in the aftermath of Operation Loyton 31 captured SAS commandos were summarily executed by the Germans .

= = = Post war = = =

At the end of the war the British Government , seeing no further need for the force , disbanded it on 8 October 1945 . The following year it was decided there was a need for a long @-@ term deep @-@ penetration commando unit , and a new SAS regiment was to be raised as part of the

Territorial Army . Ultimately , the Artists Rifles , raised in 1860 and headquartered at Dukes Road , Euston , took on the SAS mantle as 21st SAS Regiment (V) on 1 January 1947 .

In 1950 , a 21 SAS squadron was raised to fight in the Korean War . After three months of training in England , it was informed that the squadron would no longer be required in Korea and so it instead volunteered to fight in the Malayan Emergency . Upon arrival in Malaya , it came under the command of Mike Calvert who was forming a new unit called the Malayan Scouts (SAS) . Calvert had already formed one squadron from 100 volunteers in the Far East , which became A Squadron ? the 21 SAS squadron then became B Squadron ; and after a recruitment visit to Rhodesia by Calvert , C Squadron was formed from 1 @,@ 000 Rhodesian volunteers . The Rhodesians returned home after three years service and were replaced by a New Zealand squadron . By this time , the need for a regular army SAS regiment had been recognised ; 22 SAS Regiment was formally added to the army list in 1952 and has been based at Hereford since 1960 . In 1959 the third regiment , 23 SAS Regiment , was formed by renaming the Reserve Reconnaissance Unit , which had succeeded MI9 and whose members were experts in escape and evasion .

= = = 22 SAS Regiment = = =

Since serving in Malaya , men from the regular army 22 SAS Regiment have taken part in covert reconnaissance and surveillance by patrols and some larger scale raiding missions in Borneo . An operation against communist guerillas included the Battle of Mirbat in the Oman . They have also taken part in operations in the Aden Emergency , Northern Ireland , and Gambia . Their Special projects team assisted the West German counter @-@ terrorism group GSG 9 at Mogadishu . The SAS counter terrorist wing famously took part in a hostage rescue operation during the Iranian Embassy Siege in London . During the Falklands War B squadron were prepared for Operation Mikado before it was subsequently cancelled whilst D and G squadrons were deployed and participated in the raid on Pebble Island . Operation Flavius was a controversial operation in Gibraltar against the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) . 22 SAS also directed NATO aircraft onto Serb positions and hunted war criminals in Bosnia . They were also involved in the Kosovo War helping KLA guerillas behind Serbian lines . According to Albanian sources one SAS sergeant was killed by Serbian special forces .

The Gulf War , in which A , B and D squadrons deployed , was the largest SAS mobilisation since the Second World War , also notable for the failure of the Bravo Two Zero mission . In Sierra Leone it took part in Operation Barras , a hostage rescue operation , to extract members of the Royal Irish Regiment . In the Iraq War , it formed part of Task Force Black and Task Force Knight , with A Squadron 22 SAS being singled out for exceptional service by General Stanley McChrystal , the American commander of NATO forces : during a six @-@ month tour it carried out 175 combat missions . In 2006 , members of the SAS were involved in the operation to free peace activists Norman Kember , James Loney and Harmeet Singh Sooden . The three men had been held hostage in Iraq for 118 days during the Christian Peacemaker hostage crisis . Operations against the Taliban in Afghanistan involved soldiers from 21 and 23 SAS Regiments .

Various British newspapers have speculated on the SAS involvement in Operation Ellamy and the 2011 Libyan civil war , the Daily Telegraph reports that " defence sources have confirmed that the SAS has been in Libya for several weeks , and played a key role in coordinating the fall of Tripoli . " While The Guardian reports " They have been acting as forward air controllers ? directing pilots to targets ? and communicating with NATO operational commanders . They have also been advising rebels on tactics . "

Members of the Special Air Service were deployed to Northern Iraq in late August 2014 , and according to former MI6 chief Richard Barrett would also be sent to Syria , tasked with trying to track down the Islamic State terrorist group that the press labeled the Beatles . In October 2014 , the SAS began executing raids against ISIS supply lines in western Iraq , using helicopters to drop light vehicles manned by sniper squads . It has been claimed that the SAS have killed up to eight ISIS fighters per day since the raids began .

In recent years SAS officers have risen to the highest ranks in the British Army . General Peter de

la Billière was the Commander @-@ in @-@ Chief of the British forces in the 1990 Gulf War . General Michael Rose became commander of the United Nations Protection Force in Bosnia in 1994 . In 1997 General Charles Guthrie became Chief of the Defence Staff the head of the British Armed Forces . Lieutenant @-@ General Cedric Delves was appointed Commander of the Field Army and Deputy Commander in Chief NATO Regional Headquarters Allied Forces North in 2002 ? 2003 .

= = = Influence on other special forces = = =

Following the post @-@ war reconstitution of the Special Air Service , other countries in the Commonwealth recognised their need for similar units . The Canadian Special Air Service Company was formed in 1947 , being disbanded in 1949 . The New Zealand Special Air Service squadron was formed in 1954 to serve with the British SAS in Malaya . Australia formed the 1st SAS Company in July 1957 , which became a full regiment of the Australian Special Air Service Regiment (SASR) in August 1964 . On its return from Malaya , the C (Rhodesian) Squadron formed the basis for creation of the Rhodesian Special Air Service in 1961 . It retained the name " C Squadron (Rhodesian) Special Air Service " within the Rhodesian Security Forces until 1978 , when it became 1 (Rhodesian) Special Air Service Regiment .

Non @-@ Commonwealth countries have also formed units based on the SAS . The Belgian Army 's Special Forces Group , which wears the same capbadge as the British SAS , traces its ancestry partly from the 5th Special Air Service of the Second World War . The French 1st Marine Infantry Parachute Regiment (1er RPIMa) can trace its origins to the Second World War 3rd and 4th SAS , adopting its " who dares wins " motto . The American unit , 1st Special Forces Operational Detachment @-@ Delta , was formed by Colonel Charles Alvin Beckwith , who served with 22 SAS as an exchange officer , and recognised the need for a similar type of unit in the United States Army . The Israeli Sayeret Matkal has also been modelled after the SAS , sharing its motto . Ireland 's Army Ranger Wing (ARW) has also modelled its training on that of the SAS , as well as Delta Force (who in turn have been influenced by the SAS) . The Philippine National Police 's Special Action Force was formed along the lines of the SAS .

= = Organisation = =

Little publicly verifiable information exists on the SAS , as the British government does not usually comment on special forces matters due to the nature of their work . The Special Air Service comprises three units : one Regular and two Army Reserve (AR) units . The regular army unit is 22 SAS Regiment and the reserve units are 21 Special Air Service Regiment (Artists) (Reserve) (21 SAS (R)) and 23 Special Air Service Regiment (23 SAS (R)) , collectively , the Special Air Service (Reserve) (SAS (R)) .

= = = Squadrons = = =

22 SAS normally has a strength of 400 to 600 . The regiment has four operational squadrons : A , B , D and G. Each squadron consists of approximately 65 men commanded by a major , divided into four troops (each troop being commanded by a captain) and a small headquarters section . Troops usually consist of 15 men , and each patrol within a troop consists of four men , with each man possessing a particular skill : signals , demolition , medic or linguist in addition to basic skills learned during the course of his training . The four troops specialise in four different areas :

Boat troop ? are specialists in maritime skills using scuba diving , kayaks (canoes) and Rigid @-@ hulled inflatable boats and often train with the Special Boat Service .

Air troop ? are experts in free fall parachuting , High Altitude @-@ Low Opening (HALO) and High Altitude @-@ High Opening (HAHO) techniques .

Mobility troop ? are specialists in using vehicles and are experts in desert warfare ; they are also trained in an advanced level of motor mechanics to field @-@ repair any vehicular breakdown .

Mountain troop ? are specialists in Arctic combat and survival , using specialist equipment such as skis , snowshoes and mountain climbing techniques .

In 1980 R Squadron (which has since been renamed L Detachment) was formed ; its members are all ex @-@ regular SAS regiment soldiers who have a commitment to reserve service .

Squadron Structure

A Squadron : 1 (Boat) Troop ? 2 (Air) Troop ? 3 (Mobility) Troop ? 4 (Mountain) Troop

B Squadron : 6 (Boat) Troop ? 7 (Air) Troop ? 8 (Mobility) Troop ? 9 (Mountain) Troop

D Squadron : 16 (Air) Troop ? 17 (Boat) Troop ? 18 (Mobility) Troop ? 19 (Mountain) Troop

G Squadron : 21 (Mobility) Troop ? 22 (Mountain) Troop ? 23 (Boat) Troop ? 24 (Air) Troop

= = = Special projects team = = =

The special projects team is the official name for the Special Air Service anti ? hijacking counter ? terrorism team . It is trained in Close Quarter Battle (CQB) and sniper techniques and specialises in hostage rescue in buildings or on public transport . The team was formed in the early 1970s after Prime Minister Edward Heath asked the Ministry of Defence to prepare for any possible terrorist attack similar to the massacre at the 1972 Summer Olympics and ordered that the SAS Counter Revolutionary Warfare (CRW) wing be raised .

Once the wing had been established , each squadron rotated on a continual basis through counter ? terrorist training including hostage rescue , siege breaking , and live firing exercises ? it has been reported that during CRW training each soldier expends as many as 100 @,@ 000 pistol rounds . Squadrons refresh their training every 16 months , on average . The CRW 's first deployment was during the Balcombe Street Siege . The Metropolitan Police had trapped a PIRA unit ; it surrendered when it heard on the BBC that the SAS were being sent in .

The first documented action abroad by the CRW wing was assisting the West German counter @-@ terrorism group GSG 9 at Mogadishu . In 1980 the SAS were involved in a hostage rescue during the Iranian Embassy Siege .

= = = Operational command = = =

= = = = Regular = = = =

22 Special Air Service is under the operational command of the Director Special Forces (DSF) , a major @-@ general grade post . Previously ranked as a brigadier , the DSF was promoted from brigadier to major @-@ general in recognition of the significant expansion of the United Kingdom Special Forces (UKSF) .

= = = = Reserve = = = =

During Operation HERRICK the SAS Reserve were responsible for " mentoring " members of the Afghan National Police . Following a review of the unit 's operational capability they were withdrawn from this tasking and the task handed over to a regular infantry unit . The report found that the SAS reservists lacked a clearly defined role , and also stated that the reservists lacked the military capability and skillset to serve alongside the regular special forces. and , on 1 September 2014 , 21 and 23 SAS left United Kingdom Special Forces and were placed under the command of 1st Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance Brigade alongside the HAC .

= = Recruitment , selection and training = =

The regular elements of United Kingdom Special Forces never recruit directly from the general public . All current members of the UK Armed Forces can apply for special forces selection , but historically the majority of candidates have a Commando or Airborne forces background . Selections

are held twice yearly , in summer and winter , in Sennybridge in the Brecon Beacons . Selection lasts for five weeks and normally starts with about 200 potential candidates . On arrival candidates first complete a Personal Fitness Test (PFT) and an Annual Fitness Test (AFT) . They then march cross country against the clock , increasing the distances covered each day , culminating in what is known as Endurance : a 40 miles (64 km) march with full equipment scaling and descending Pen y Fan in 20 hours . By the end of the hill phase candidates must be able to run 4 miles (6 @. @ 4 km) in 30 minutes and swim two miles (3 @. @ 2 km) in 90 minutes .

Following the hill phase is the jungle phase , taking place in Belize , Brunei , or Malaysia . Candidates are taught navigation , patrol formation and movement , and jungle survival skills . Candidates returning to Hereford finish training in battle plans and foreign weapons and take part in combat survival exercises , the final one being the week @-@ long escape and evasion . Candidates are formed into patrols and , carrying nothing more than a tin can filled with survival equipment , are dressed in old Second World War uniforms and told to head for a point by first light . The final selection test is arguably the most gruelling : resistance to interrogation (RTI) , lasting for 36 hours .

Typically , 15 ? 20 % of candidates make it through the hill phase selection process . From the approximately 200 candidates , most will drop out within the first few days , and by the end about 30 will remain . Those who complete all phases of selection are rewarded with a transfer to an operational squadron .

= = Uniform distinctions = =

Normal barracks headdress is the sand @-@ coloured beret , its cap badge is a downward pointing Excalibur , wreathed in flames (often incorrectly referred to as a winged dagger) worked into the cloth of a Crusader shield with the motto Who Dares Wins . SAS pattern parachute wings , designed by Lieutenant Jock Lewes and based on the stylised sacred Ibis wings of Isis of Egyptian iconography depicted in the décor of Shepherd 's Hotel in Cairo , are worn on the right shoulder . Its ceremonial No 1 dress uniform is distinguished by a light blue stripe on the trousers . Its stable belt is a shade of blue similar to the blue stripe on the No 1 dress uniform .

= = Battle honours = =

In the British Army , battle honours are awarded to regiments that have seen active service in a significant engagement or campaign , generally with a victorious outcome . The Special Air Service Regiment has been awarded the following battle honours :

North @-@ West Europe 1944 ? 45

Tobruk 1941

Benghazi Raid

North Africa 1940 ? 43

Landing in Sicily

Sicily 1943

Termoli

Valli di Comacchio

Italy 1943 ? 45

Greece 1944 ? 45

Adriatic

Middle East 1943 ? 44

Falkland Islands 1982

Western Iraq

Gulf 1991

= = Order of precedence = =

= = Memorials = =

The names of those members of the SAS who have died on duty were inscribed on the regimental clock tower at Stirling Lines . Originally funded by contributions of a day 's pay by members of the regiment and a donation from Handley Page in memory of Cpl RK Norry who was killed in a freefall parachuting accident , this was rebuilt at the new barracks at Credenhill . Those whose names are inscribed are said by surviving members to have " failed to beat the clock " . At the suggestion of the then Commanding Officer , Dare Wilson , inscribed on the base of the clock is a verse from The Golden Road to Samarkand by James Elroy Flecker :

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 other main memorial is the SAS and Airborne Forces memorial in the cloisters at Westminster Abbey . The SAS Brigade Memorial at Sennecey @-@ le @-@ Grand in France commemorates the wartime dead of the Belgian , British , and French SAS and recently a memorial plaque was added to the David Stirling Memorial in Scotland . There are other smaller memorials " scattered throughout Europe and in the Far East " .

The local church St Martins has part of its graveyard set aside as an SAS memorial , over twenty SAS soldiers are buried there . There is also a wall of remembrance displaying memorial plaques to some who could not be buried , including the 18 SAS men who lost their lives in the Sea King helicopter crash during the Falklands Campaign on 19 May 1982 .

= = Alliances = =

Australia : Special Air Service Regiment New Zealand : Special Air Service