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JSOU Report 12-2 “We Will Find A Way”: Understanding the Legacy of Canadian SOF Horn

# **“We Will Find a Way”: Understanding the Legacy of Canadian Special Operations Forces**



Bernd Horn  
JSOU Report 12-2  
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**On the cover:** Canadian Special Operations Forces in Baghran Valley, Afghanistan, 2005. Author's Collection.





*“We Will Find a Way”:  
Understanding the  
Legacy of Canadian  
Special Operations  
Forces*

Colonel Bernd Horn

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# Foreword

Colonel Bernd Horn's monograph on the legacy of Canadian Special Operations Forces (SOF) highlights the colorful history and heritage of SOF from a vital partner nation. The U.S. and Canada not only share historic ties as neighbors but as allies that have endured hardship and mourned the loss of life together.

Horn reaches back to the 17th and 18th centuries with the Canadian Ranger tradition. His recounts of the *la petite guerre* tactics waged by the French-Canadian raiders against the British, and later the British adaption with American Roger's Rangers are weaved together to inspire later generations of Canadian and American SOF.

Canada's entry into World War II (WWII) preceded that of the United States, and its SOF experience was reignited with the British-led Special Operations Executive (SOE). Canadian Royal Air Force Special Duty Squadrons were also commissioned to support the SOE. Beginning in 1941 SOE personnel and even American agents were secretly trained at Camp X near Whitby, Ontario. French Canadians and European immigrants to Canada were specifically recruited into the SOE similar to how immigrants to the U.S. and ethnic groups were later brought into the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). During WWII, from Viking Force, to the Royal Navy Beach Commandos on Juno Beach, to the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion, and finally the U.S./Canadian First Special Service Force (FSSF) that originally operated under the cover of the 2nd Parachute Battalion, Canadian SOF were highly respected and capable warriors. Canadians and Americans of the FSSF trained together in Montana and fought alongside each other in the assault on Kisaka Island in the Aleutians and on the battlefields of Anzio in 1944. This combined U.S./Canadian unit earned the moniker "Black Devils" given to it by the Germans.

Similar to the U.S. experience, Canadian SOF also suffered from neglect, prejudice, and lack of acceptance from the larger military. After WWII the Joint Air School and a Special Air Service company struggled for their existence to the beginning of the 1950s. In 1966 the Canadian Armed Forces acknowledged the need to establish a quick-reaction airborne capable force, and in 1968 the Canadian Airborne Regiment was commissioned. The regiment was later disbanded in 1995 under much controversy following

digressions committed by a few in Somalia. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police Special Emergency Response Team evolved in the 1970s and 1980 as a dedicated counterterrorism (CT) unit. The national CT mission was later transferred to the military, and Joint Task Force 2 was formed.

Since the aftermath of 9/11, modern day Canadian SOF operators from Joint Task Force 2 have expertly fought alongside our U.S. elite SOF in Operation Enduring Freedom in the most harrowing and dangerous missions.

Colonel Horn's brief but exciting recap of Canadian SOF history not only enriches our understanding of SOF from a key ally but also highlights the historic bonds and military experiences that our two great nations share. Canadian Special Operations Forces Command will carry the proud legacy of Canadian SOF into the 21st century and beyond.

Kenneth H. Poole, Ed.D.  
Director, JSOU Strategic Studies Department

## About the Author

Colonel Bernd Horn attended the University of Waterloo where he received a B.A. in Political Science. He entered the Canadian Forces by joining the Militia in 1981, enrolling in the Highland Fusiliers of Canada. Upon graduation in 1983, he transferred to the Regular Force and received his affiliation with the Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR). Assigned to 1 RCR from 1983 to 1987, he held various positions including platoon commander, officer commanding reconnaissance platoon, and executive assistant to the Deputy Chief of Staff, United Nations Force in Cyprus. He attended the Continuous French Language School in Victoria, British Columbia (B.C.) in 1987 and was subsequently posted to the Canadian Forces Officer Candidate School in Chilliwack, B.C. in 1988, where he held the positions of platoon commander/instructor and school adjutant.



Colonel Horn attended the Canadian Land Forces Command and Staff College in 1991 and returned to 1 RCR as the second-in-command of Administration Company upon completion. In the summer of 1992, he was appointed officer commanding Bravo Company and in September took his subunit to the former Yugoslavia on the first deployment of Operation Cavalier as part of the 2 RCR Battle Group. In July 1993, Colonel Horn was posted to the Canadian Airborne Regiment as the officer commanding 3 Commando. Following attendance at the Canadian Forces Command and Staff College in Toronto from 1995 to 1996, he became the staff officer to the Director General of Strategic Planning in National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ).

Colonel Horn received his Master of War Studies in June 1997. He was also awarded the Governor General's Gold Medal for academic achievement for his work. That summer he was posted to the Royal Military College (RMC) in Kingston and commenced his Ph.D. program in War Studies. He graduated in May 2000 and earned the Barry D. Hunt Memorial Award, which is given to the graduate student of highest academic standing in the departments of History and War Studies. In June 1999, prior to completing

his Ph.D. studies, Colonel Horn was selected as the chief of staff to Lieutenant-General R.A. Dallaire and the OPD 2020 Officership Project in NDHQ. The following summer he was posted back to RMC as an assistant professor of History as well as the special assistant to the principal.

From June 2001 until March 2003, Colonel Horn was the commanding officer of the First Battalion, the RCR in Petawawa, Ontario. During this time, in May 2002, he was inducted by the Governor General of Canada as an Officer of the Order of Military Merit. Following command, he completed a yearlong tour as the deputy director of the Army's Directorate of Land Strategic Concepts in Kingston, prior to promotion in June 2004. He was subsequently appointed the director of the Canadian Forces Leadership Institute.

In April 2007, Colonel Horn became the deputy commander of the Canadian Special Operations Forces Command and held the position until August 2009, when he was appointed chief of staff of the Land Force Doctrine and Training System. That year the Governor General of Canada also awarded Colonel Horn the Meritorious Service Medal for his contributions to the professional development of Canadian Forces personnel. On 1 March 2010, Colonel Horn was appointed to his present position, the newly created chief of staff of the Strategic Training and Education Programs at the Canadian Defence Academy in Kingston, Ontario. He is also an associate fellow with the JSOU Strategic Studies Department.

Horn is an adjunct professor of history at RMC and has authored, co-authored, edited or co-edited 30 books and in excess of 100 chapters in books and articles on military history and military affairs.

## 1. Introduction

In October 2001, the Canadian Minister of National Defense (MND) was repeatedly criticized by the media for the perceived failure of not doing enough to assist their American brethren in Afghanistan in the aftermath of the tragic terrorist attack on the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, in the early morning hours of 11 September 2001. During one such situation, the MND finally revealed that Canada was indeed helping. In fact, he made mention that Canadian “commandos” were supporting the American effort in theater.

The revelation came as a shock to most Canadians. Few actually knew that Canada possessed “commandos,” or more accurately special operations forces (SOF). But, the knowledge that such special troops were in action was enough to quiet the outcry. Nonetheless, the larger issue still remained; who were these shadow warriors? Their existence was a well-guarded secret. Neither Canadians, nor anyone else for that matter, knew much about Joint Task Force Two (JTF 2), much less any of the other SOF-like organizations that had existed in the country’s history that made up the Canadian SOF (CANSOF) legacy.

Significantly, Canada’s SOF traditions can be traced back to the Ranger tradition of colonial North America where raiding, or “direct action,” as well as special reconnaissance allowed the embryonic Canadian nation to punch above its weight and achieve strategic impact through tactical action. The national SOF legacy continued in the Second World War with a number of specialized units and into the Cold War period in the form of the Canadian Airborne Regiment.

Canadian SOF’s more modernized form was created in 1986, with the creation of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Special Emergency Response Team (SERT), which was established as a hostage rescue unit. In 1992, the role was taken over by the military and was recreated as JTF 2. The military evolved the unit into a Tier One SOF organization. In 2005, the Chief of the Defense Staff, General Rick Hillier, decided that as part of the continuing transformation of the Canadian Forces (CF) he would create a Canadian Special Operations Forces Command (CANSOFCOM). “We intend,” he declared on 19 April 2005, “on bringing JTF 2, along with all the enablers that it would need, to conduct operations successfully into



one organization with one commander.”<sup>1</sup> As such, on 1 February 2006, CANSOFCOM officially stood up, completing the Canadian SOF evolution with the creation of an independent SOF command.

## 2. The Canadian SOF Legacy

### The Ranger Tradition

The general public has become more attuned to SOF as a result of 9/11 and the war in Afghanistan. In fact, the revelation of an elite Canadian counter-terrorist unit only became widespread knowledge as a result of a media disclosure that they were deploying to Afghanistan in support of the American effort. However, the nation's SOF legacy runs deep. After all, nothing embodies the idea of daring special operations more than the practice of *la petite guerre* by the French-Canadian raiders during the struggle for colonial North America. Facing a harsh climate, unforgiving terrain, and intractable and savage enemies, the intrepid Canadian warriors personified boldness, courage, cunning, and tenacity. Their fearless forays and daring raids behind enemy lines struck terror in the hearts of their Native antagonists, as well as the British and American colonists and soldiers. In fact, for an extended period of time, these tactical actions had a strategic effect on the vicious struggle for North America in the 18th century.

Schooled in the bitter war of annihilation with the Iroquois in the 17th century, the French-Canadians developed a class of fighters who were able to adapt to the new style of warfare required in the New World.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, they demonstrated an intellectual and tactical agility that made them unsurpassed in "raiding" and what would later be dubbed commando operations. Their emphasis on stealth, speed, violence of action, physical fitness, and courage, as well as operations with indigenous allies, created a force that successfully wreaked havoc on their enemy.

This capability, much to the misery of the English, was consistently displayed as the two competing European powers increasingly fought for control of North America. Quite simply, the French consistently relied on the outnumbered Canadians to hold onto French territory through their proficient execution of their distinct Canadian way of war, specifically small parties of experienced *coureur de bois* and partisans who conducted dangerous scouts, ambushes, and raids in English territory.<sup>3</sup> As such, raids against the English in Hudson's Bay in 1686, the Seneca in New York in 1687, the Iroquois in 1693 and 1696, and a number of devastating strikes against English settlements such as Casco, Deersfield, Haverhill, Salmon Falls, and Schenectady during a succession of wars from 1688 to 1761 provided proof

of the effectiveness of the French-Canadian raiders who specialized in the conduct of lightning strikes behind enemy lines.

Many French and Canadian leaders, particularly those with extended exposure to the North American manner of war, or those born and raised in Canada, came to reject the conventional European manner of making war. Rather, they believed that the optimum war fighting technique was achieved by a mixed force that included the military strengths of regulars (e.g. courage, discipline, tactical acumen) with those of the volunteers and Indians (e.g. endurance, familiarity with wilderness navigation and travel, marksmanship) who relied more on initiative, independent action, and small unit tactics than on rigid military practices and drills. The effectiveness of the Canadians was evidenced in the fear they created in their enemies. British generals and numerous contemporary English accounts conceded that the Canadian raiders “are well known to be the most dangerous enemy of any... reckoned equal, if not superior in that part of the world to veteran troops.”<sup>4</sup>

The impact of the French-Canadian raiders was immense. One British colonel confided, “I am ashamed that they have succeeded in all their scouting parties and that we never have any success in ours.”<sup>5</sup> This state of affairs continually blinded the British command and deprived them of intelligence of French preparations or plans. Understandably, this often led to poor and untimely decisions laden with unfortunate consequences, whether the ambush of a British column or the loss of a strategic fort.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the constant depredations, ambushes, and raids of the Canadians and their Indian allies, caused a constant material and economic drain on the British. But equally important, they created an overwhelming psychological and moral blow against the Anglo-American colonies. The British forces seemed unable to strike back. It was a constant series of defeats, thwarted campaigns and offensives, and devastated colonies. Everywhere, the Canadians and Indians would appear as phantoms in hit and run attacks leaving in their wake smoldering ruins and the mutilated bodies of the dead and dying. Despite their small numbers, they consistently inflicted a disproportionately high number of casualties on the enemy. The end result was an utterly paralyzing effect on the English combatants and colonists alike.<sup>7</sup>

The unmitigated success of the French-Canadian raiders forced the British to develop a similar capability of their own. One of the first efforts was in 1744 in the North American theater of operations, as part of the larger War

of the Austrian Succession (1740-1748). During this conflict the British presence in the Maritimes was once again prey to the marauding Abenakis and Micmac Indian war parties that were aligned with the French. As a result, an “independent corps of rangers” also known as the corps of Nova Scotia Rangers, was raised in New England. Two companies were recruited and deployed to Annapolis, Nova Scotia in July 1744 to reinforce the garrison. In September, a third company arrived led by Captain John Goreham.

Goreham’s command was composed of 60 Mohawk and Metis warriors. Familiar with the Indian way of war, they swiftly engaged the French and their Indian allies. Massachusetts Governor William Shirley commended Goreham and his Rangers for their success, stating that “the garrison is now entirely free from alarms.”<sup>8</sup> The majority of the companies later returned to Massachusetts where they originated, leaving Captain Goreham and his company to patrol Nova Scotia alone from 1746-1748. Their success was such that Shirley wrote, “the great service which Lieut. Colonel Gorham’s Company of Rangers has been of to the Garrison at Annapolis Royal is a demonstration of the usefulness of such a Corps.”<sup>9</sup>

Goreham’s Rangers continued to serve on the volatile frontier. Prior to the onset of the French and Indian War, also known in its global context as the Seven Years War (1756-1763), Goreham’s Rangers were used to protect the British settlements in Nova Scotia against Indian raids. However, with the official outbreak of the war, they became increasingly involved in military operations specifically because of their expertise at irregular warfare.<sup>10</sup>

Despite their success, in the most current conflict Goreham’s Rangers were eclipsed by another British effort aimed at matching the effectiveness of the French-Canadian raiders in the strategically important Lake Champlain theater of operations. What the British eventually created was the legendary Rogers’ Rangers. In the early stages of the war, when fortunes seemed to be against the British, Robert Rogers’ knowledge and experience with the “haunts and passes of the enemy and the Indian method of fighting” soon brought him to the attention of his superior, Major-General William Johnson.<sup>11</sup> By the fall of 1755, Rogers was conducting dangerous scouts deep behind enemy lines. Rogers’ efforts soon earned him an overwhelming reputation. These efforts also led Major-General William Shirley, then the Commander-in-Chief of the British Army in North America, to argue:

It is absolutely necessary for his Majesty's Service, that one Company at least of Rangers should be constantly employ'd in different Parties upon Lake George and Lake Iroquois [Lake Champlain], and the Wood Creek and Lands adjacent...to make Discoveries of the proper Routes for our own Troops, procure Intelligence of the Enemy's Strength and Motions, destroy their out Magazines and Settlements, pick up small Parties of their Battoes upon the Lakes, and keep them under continual Alarm.<sup>12</sup>

By the winter of 1756, Rogers' bold forays with his small band of unofficial rangers behind enemy French lines were regularly reported in newspapers throughout the colonies. They provided a tonic to a beleaguered English frontier. In March 1756, Major-General Shirley ordered Rogers to raise a 60-man independent ranger company that was separate from both the provincial and regular units. As such, it was titled His Majesty's Independent Company (later Companies) of American Rangers. His unit was directed to scout and gain intelligence in the Lake Champlain theater, as well as "distress the French and their allies by sacking, burning and destroying their houses, barns, barracks, canoes, battoes...to way-lay, attack, and destroying their convoys of provisions by land and water."<sup>13</sup>

The reputation and accomplishments of the rangers soon had an impact on British officers. All wanted rangers to accompany their expeditions as a foil against the enemy's Canadians and Indians, as well as the rangers' ability to navigate and survive in the merciless wilderness. Without doubt, Rogers' Rangers, as they became universally known, brought to life the ranger tradition in North America and ensured it would forever endure. Their deeds and prowess have with time become legendary, even if not fully deserved. Nonetheless, the Rangers, led by the very adventurous, courageous, and exceptionally tough Robert Rogers, created a very romantic image that seemed to both symbolize, as well as define, the strength of the American Ranger.

Ironically, Rogers was repeatedly bested by his Canadian counterparts and normally suffered horrendous casualties. Generals Jeffrey Amherst and Thomas Gage considered the Canadians, owing to their skill and discipline, superior to the American Rangers.<sup>14</sup> In addition, throughout this period, Goreham's Rangers were also active. In 1758, they played an important part in the capture of the strategic Fortress of Louisbourg and a year later assisted

in the expedition against Quebec. In fact, at the end of the conflict the British high command rated Goreham's Rangers, although rarely mentioned, as the most highly rated ranger organization employed during the war.<sup>15</sup>

Nonetheless, the Canadian and American rangers, in essence, established a tradition that depicted an adventurous, if not daring, attitude that was overly aggressive and always offensively minded. The ranger tradition that was created also embodied the concept of individuals who were seen as mavericks to the conventional military institution and mentality—men who were adaptable, robust, and unconventional in their thinking and war-fighting; men who could persevere the greatest hardships and, despite an inhospitable environment and merciless enemy, achieve mission success.<sup>16</sup>

## The World War Two Experience

This tenacious spirit would remain with Canada's warriors and be resurrected in future generations. The more contemporary component of Canada's SOF legacy coincided with the explosion of special operations forces at the commencement of World War Two (WWII). In essence, modern day SOF are largely a phenomena of this era. As such, they were largely born in crisis from a position of weakness. They were created to fill a specific gap. In the immediate aftermath of the early German victories, the Allies found themselves devoid of major equipment, of questionable military strength and on the defensive throughout the world.<sup>17</sup>

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Despite the still smoldering British equipment on the beaches of Dunkirk, the combative new Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, declared in the British House of Commons on 4 June 1940, "We shall not be content with a defensive war."<sup>18</sup> He was well aware that to win a war meant ultimately offensive action. Moreover, only through offensive action could an army provide the needed confidence and battle experience to its soldiers and leaders. Furthermore, only offensive action could sustain public and military morale. And finally, offensive action represented a shift in initiative.

By striking at the enemy, inherently an opponent is forced to take defensive measures that represent a diversion of scarce resources.

That afternoon, Churchill penned a note to his Chief of Staff of the War Cabinet Secretariat, General Hastings Ismay. “We are greatly concerned ...with the dangers of the German landing in England,” he wrote, “... why should it be thought impossible for us to do anything of the same kind to them?” He then added, “We should immediately set to work to organize self-contained, thoroughly-equipped raiding units.”<sup>19</sup> After all, pondered Churchill, “how wonderful it would be if the Germans could be made to wonder where they were going to be struck next, instead of forcing us to try to wall in the island and roof it over!”<sup>20</sup>

On 6 June, Churchill sent yet another missive to Ismay. “Enterprises must be prepared,” he wrote, “with specially trained troops of the hunter class who can develop a reign of terror down these coasts, first of all on the butcher and bolt policy.” He vividly described, “There comes from the sea a hand of steel that plucks the German sentries from their posts.”<sup>21</sup> He then curtly directed the “Joint Chiefs of the Staff to propose [him] measures for a vigorous, enterprising, and ceaseless offensive against the whole German-occupied coastline.” He added the requirement for deep inland raids that left “a trail of German corpses behind.”<sup>22</sup>

## **Special Operations Executive (SOE)**

As such, during the early years of the war a plethora of SOF organizations and units such as the Special Operations Executive (SOE), the Commandos, the Long Range Desert Group (LRDG), the Special Air Service (SAS), and the American Rangers, to name a few, emerged creating a means to strike back at the seemingly invincible German military machine.

One of the first unconventional efforts was the creation of the SOE, which was a British secret service intended to promote subversive warfare in enemy occupied territory. It was formed in July 1940 in the aftermath of the disastrous retreat from Dunkirk as England braced itself for the inevitable invasion. It was designed as a “full scale secret service, the mere existence of which could not be admitted either to Parliament or to the press.”<sup>23</sup> The SOE became responsible for “all operations of sabotage, secret subversive propaganda, the encouragement of civil resistance in occupied areas, the stirring up of insurrection, strikes, etc., in Germany or areas occupied by her.”<sup>24</sup>

The Canadian connection was not long in coming. Shortly after its creation, the SOE queried the senior Canadian commander overseas, Major-General A.G.L. McNaughton, for Canadian volunteers. Specifically they were looking for French-Canadians for service in France, Canadians of Eastern European descent for the Balkans, and Chinese Canadians for Far East operations. Clearly, the racial, linguistic, and cultural attributes and knowledge of these volunteers would provide the SOE with, in many aspects, ready-made operatives. Inculcating the specific technical skills would just be a matter of training.

The Canadian volunteers, like the remainder of the men and women trained to serve in the SOE during WWII, “were quickly made to forget all thoughts about Queensbury rules and so-called ‘gentlemanly’ warfare... [and they] were taught a vast range of sabotage techniques and bizarre methods of killing.”<sup>25</sup> Moreover, they were thoroughly trained in advising, arming, and assisting members of the various resistance movements in the enemy-occupied countries.

As much of the art and science of SOF was in its infancy, it is not surprising that SOE selection was inefficient. Initially it consisted of a three to four week selection/training course that was deemed too leisurely and ineffective. Many of those in the course were failed out at the end of the process, which proved a waste of time and resources. Therefore, by July 1943, a selection course known as the student assessment board (SAB) was developed. The SAB applied a variety of psychological and practical tests to candidates over a four-day period. In this manner they screened questionable volunteers out early. The SAB took less time and provided better results.

Successful volunteers went through several phases of training. The first phase focused on ensuring all operatives were in top physical condition. In addition, the course provided all with an in-depth proficiency with Allied and German small arms, as well as expertise in explosives and demolition work. The first phase also provided instruction in the recognition of German uniforms and equipment. The next stage of training was conducted at the commando training center in Arisaig, in the Western highlands of Scotland near the Isle of Skye. This phase provided rigorous field training and live-fire exercises. Following the commando training came parachute qualification in Manchester. At the termination of qualification training, operatives were then separated according to their respective skills and sent to specialized training centers.



The Canadian connection to the SOE went beyond the volunteers who served in the organization. It also extended to the establishment of Special Training School (STS) 103 or Camp X, which was located on secluded farmland outside of Whitby, Ontario. The camp served two functions. The first was to train men recruited in Canada, such as French Canadians and refugees from Eastern Europe for service with the SOE in Europe. The second function was to give top secret assistance to the American foreign intelligence service, an activity that could not be done in the U.S. as long as the U.S. remained neutral in the war.<sup>26</sup>

Camp X was the first secret-agent training establishment in North America. It opened on 9 December 1941 and trained individuals according to their cultural groups. The officers, less the camp adjutant, were all British; however, the senior noncommissioned officers were all Canadian. Camp X closed on 20 April 1944.

Throughout the war approximately 227 Canadians served in the SOE in the various theaters of the conflict. In addition, Royal Canadian Air Force personnel and those posted to Royal Air Force units also served in the Special Duty Squadrons used to drop weapons and insert and extract SOE personnel.<sup>27</sup> In the end, the value of the SOE was immense. In a Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) report to the Combined Chiefs of Staff on 18 July 1945, General Dwight “Ike” Eisenhower’s staff noted, “without the organization, communications, training and leadership which SOE supplied...resistance [movements] would have been of no military value.”<sup>28</sup>

## Viking Force

The SOE, however, was not the only innovative, unconventional effort. In a remarkable display of military efficiency, by 8 June 1940, two days after Churchill’s directive, General Sir John Dill, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, received approval



Figure 1. Canadian volunteers undergoing grueling commando training - scaling near vertical cliffs. Photographer Lt. Royal. Photo courtesy Library and Archives Canada (LAC).

for the creation of the Commandos, and that same afternoon Section MO9 of the War Office was established. Four days later, Churchill appointed Lieutenant-General Sir Alan Bourne, the Adjutant-General of the Royal Marines as “Commander of Raiding Operations on Coasts in Enemy Occupation and Advisor to the Chiefs of Staff on Combined Operations.”<sup>29</sup>

The men drawn to the Commando idea very quickly coalesced the concept that was expected. Raiding was their primary role. In essence, they were to be trained to be “hard hitting assault troops” who were capable of working in cooperation with the Navy and Air Force. As such they were expected to capture strong points, destroy enemy services, neutralize coastal batteries, and wipe out any designated enemy force by surprise as detailed by higher headquarters.<sup>30</sup> They were also told that they would have to become accustomed to longer hours, more work, and less rest than the other members of the armed forces.

Predictably, the concept of commandos attracted a like-minded group of aggressive, action-orientated individuals who quickly shaped the essence of the commando idea. “There was a sense of urgency, a striving to achieve an ideal, an individual determination to drive the physical body to the limit of endurance to support a moral resolve,” explained one veteran officer. “The individual determination,” he added, “was shared by every member of the force, and such heights of collective idealism are not often reached in the mundane business of soldiering.”<sup>31</sup> Together they forged a “commando spirit” that comprised determination; enthusiasm and cheerfulness, particularly under adverse conditions; individual initiative and self reliance; and finally, comradeship.<sup>32</sup>

Canada was initially slow to react to the commando concept. Moreover, its commitment to creating an elite commando unit in WWII did not last very long, betraying the nation’s underlining sentiment toward SOF-type units. In fact, the creation of the Canadian “Viking Force” was actually a response to public criticism at home and the opportunity the British raiding program provided. Major-General Harry D.G. Crerar, reacting to public criticism and government pressure to get Canadian troops into the fray—since they had been in England for almost two years and had still not engaged in battle with the enemy—took the initiative as the acting commander of the Canadian Corps and spoke to his immediate superior, Lieutenant-General Bernard Law Montgomery, commander of the Southeastern Army in England, about utilizing Canadian troops in a commando role.

Montgomery was not a proponent of SOF, but he did see raiding as a means to instill offensive spirit and combat experience within his command. As such, Crerar did not have a hard sell. Crerar argued:

I believe that occasions will increasingly present themselves for small raids across the Channel opposite the Army front, in default of a reputation built up in battle the [Canadian] Corps undoubtedly would receive great stimulus if, in the near future it succeeded in making a name for itself for its raiding activities – a reputation which, incidentally, it very definitely earned for itself in the last war.

Montgomery replied, “your men should be quite first class at raiding” and he gave Crerar the green light to run Canadian raiding activities from the port of Newhaven.<sup>33</sup>

Crerar lost no time, and on 6 March 1942 discussed raiding operations with the Director of Combined Operations, Lord Louis Mountbatten. Mountbatten was initially reluctant to accept Canadian participation in raiding because he felt that it would dilute the role of the British Commandos who had a monopoly on the activity. However, Mountbatten was well attuned to political realities and made an exception. He laid out two conditions for the Canadians:

- a. that ample time should be allowed for proper organization and training – this was stated to be six to eight weeks; and
- b. that the enterprise should be known only to the Corps Commander and BGS [Brigadier-General (Staff)] and a limited number of his own (Mountbatten’s) staff.<sup>34</sup>

That afternoon a second meeting among Crerar, BGS Guy Simonds, and Brigadier J.C. Haydon, commander Special Service Force (SSF), transpired.<sup>35</sup> In this forum the senior officers present reached a decision to create a Canadian commando unit of 200 men who were to start training by mid-March.

The Canadian commando unit, named Viking Force, was based on 2nd Division. Within a fortnight, 267 volunteers from the division were training at Seaford in the muddy estuary of the Cuckmere River in Sussex. The

Viking Force organization was based on a British Commando but on a smaller scale. The headquarters section was led by a major and comprised 24 all ranks. A further 36 officers and men staffed the support squadron (i.e. intelligence, signals, and medical sections). The remaining 130 personnel were divided into two troops each consisting of five officers and 60 enlisted men. The Viking Force placed heavy emphasis on firepower. In addition to the standard .303 Lee Enfield rifle, each troop carried four Bren light machine guns and eight Thompson sub-machine guns, as well as two anti-tank rifles and a two-inch mortar.

Within days of the commencement of training, instructors whittled the large group of volunteers down to its official strength of 190 all ranks. From 4 April 1942, personnel from the SSF joined the men of Viking Force to increase the intensity of the training and begin to turn them into hardened commandos. The commanding officer (CO) responsible for whipping the Canadian neophyte commandos into shape was Major Brian McCool of the Royal Regiment of Canada.

During the last half of April 1942, training intensified. It now included speed marches with weapons and 60 pound ruck-sacks, river crossings, leaping from crags into sand pits 15 feet

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*...each troop carried four Bren light machine guns and eight Thompson sub-machine guns, as well as two antitank rifles...*

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below, cliff climbing, and night maneuvers. During these training exercises, if the men did not get back to the beaches in time to be ferried to the mother ship, they had to swim back with their full equipment.

On 30 April Montgomery visited Major-General Andrew McNaughton, the Canadian Corps commander, and they agreed that the Canadians should form the main striking force for a planned raid on the French port of Dieppe. That same day McNaughton's headquarters issued a training instruction to enlarge the scale of combined operations training. This new direction was designed to cover the training of 4 and 6 Brigades for the large conventional raid planned on Dieppe. Therefore, before Viking Force was even fully established, BGS Simonds had already laid the blueprint for their demise. "Personnel of detachments which have completed [combined operations/commando] training in accordance with Instruction No. 7," he ordered, "will be returned to parent units and employed as a cadre to develop combined operations techniques within the latter."<sup>36</sup>

As a result, Viking Force became swept up in the preparations for Operation Rutter (i.e. the Dieppe Raid) and the intensive training that had been reserved for the elite of Viking Force was now extended to the entirety of 4 and 6 Brigades. Quite simply, Major McCool and his cadre became instructors for the others. In this regard, from the end of May to the beginning of July the Viking Force cadre became key to the efforts to help 4 and 6 Brigades master the rigors of amphibious warfare.

However, with the emphasis on conventional forces to take over the raiding role, it was not surprising that Crerar wrote on 4 June 1942, “The opportunity to land on enemy shores may not long be denied us.” He added:

The training of detachments, units and formations of the Canadian Corps, with this end in view has already proceeded some distance... It is the intention that it shall be carried through to the stage when every formation of the Corps is thoroughly capable of taking full part in operations involving the landing on beaches in enemy occupation, and the rapid seizure and development of ‘bridgeheads.’

He ended his missive with a revealing comment: “There must be no need for the Canadian Corps to call upon outside, and special ‘Commando’ units for assistance in initial beach-landing operation.”<sup>37</sup>

The new Canadian approach was the polar opposite to the original intent. Viking Force had been intended as a hard-hitting group of specially trained raiders whose job was to inflict damage on the enemy in limited operations using surprise as a major element and then employing their skills to withdraw before the enemy had time to recover. Diluted among the battalions in 4 and 6 Brigades during the ill-fated Dieppe Raid on 19 August 1942, the original Viking Force commandos were never given the opportunity to do the job they had been trained for. In the aftermath of the disastrous raid no effort was made to resurrect Viking Force.<sup>38</sup>

## **Royal Canadian Navy Beach Commandos**

However, the Dieppe Raid did lead to the establishment of another SOF-like Canadian organization, namely the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) Beach Commandos. Their genesis stemmed from the Dieppe Raid where Royal Naval (RN) Beach Parties (C, D, and H) were responsible for disembarking troops and vehicles from assault landing craft, organizing and supervising

suitable “beach” areas, and loading serviceable vessels at the time of withdrawal. Of the 200 Navy personnel assigned to the Beach Parties during the Dieppe Raid, 63 became casualties. As a result, all three RN Beach Parties had to be totally reconstituted. Not surprisingly, soon after Dieppe the Admiralty decided to change the Combined Operations Beach Party Branch name to “Naval Commandos.” Accordingly, the Admiralty directed that 20 Beach Commandos would be required for the invasion of Occupied Europe (i.e. two each for three assault divisions, one per assault brigade with 100 percent spare in reserve).<sup>39</sup>

The RCN soon created its own capability and in late 1943 established RCN Beach Commando “W.” This unit was modeled upon its Royal Navy counterpart and comprised 84 RCN Volunteer Reserve men (i.e. 12 officers and 72 ratings). The naval beach commando was described as “a unit especially trained in the control and handling of landing craft on the beaches ...[and] is designed to handle landing ships, craft and barges of an assault brigade group and the further ships, craft and barges landed on the same beaches.”<sup>40</sup> Beach commandos were also responsible for neutralizing beach obstacles, mines and booby traps.

RCN Beach Commando “W” was assigned to Force “J” on Juno Beach during the Normandy invasion on 6 June 1944 and served with valor and distinction. Canadian newspapers quickly trumpeted the role of the Beach Commandos and described them as the “leather tough Canadians” and “tough, scrappy and self-reliant.”<sup>41</sup> Beach Commando “W” was disbanded at the end of August 1944.

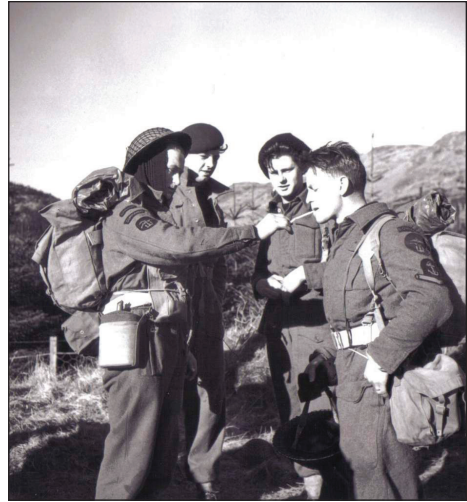


Figure 2. Members of RCN Beach Commando “W” take a cigarette break after a two-day training march, February 1944. Photo courtesy LAC.



## 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion

Canada's SOF legacy in WWII did not end with the Dieppe Raid. One month prior to the disastrous assault, another SOF-like organization that fits into the legacy of Canada's SOF community was created, namely the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion (1 Cdn Para Bn). Although contemporary airborne units are not considered SOF, 1 Cdn Para Bn, like many of the neophyte airborne organizations that sprang up early in WWII, meets many of the SOF criteria. The paratroopers were specially selected, specially trained, and given special missions behind enemy lines. They possessed an indomitable spirit that defied any challenge. In fact, the selection rate for 1 Cdn Para Bn in its infancy was only 30 percent.<sup>42</sup>

At its creation, both the Army's generals, as well as the media at large, were clear on the type of individual and organization they were creating. Robert Taylor, a reporter for the *Toronto Daily Star*, described the volunteers as "action-hungry and impatient to fill their role as the sharp, hardened

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*...your Canadian paratrooper is an utterly fearless, level thinking, calculating killer possessive of all the qualities of a delayed-action time bomb.*

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tip of the Canadian army's 'dagger pointed at the heart of Berlin.'"<sup>43</sup>

Senior military officers described the new Canadian paratroopers as "super-soldiers," and newspapers, with unanimity, invariably described the parachute volunteers as "hard as

nails," representing the toughest and smartest soldiers in the Canadian Army.<sup>44</sup> One journalist wrote, "They are good, possibly great soldiers, hard, keen, fast-thinking and eager for battle," while another asserted that they were "Canada's most daring and rugged soldiers... daring because they'll be training as paratroops: rugged because paratroops do the toughest jobs in hornet nests behind enemy lines."<sup>45</sup> Others painted a picture of virtual super-men. "Picture men with muscles of iron," depicted one writer, "dropping in parachutes, hanging precariously from slender ropes, braced for any kind of action... these toughest men who ever wore khaki."<sup>46</sup> Another simply explained that "your Canadian paratrooper is an utterly fearless, level thinking, calculating killer possessive of all the qualities of a delayed-action time bomb."<sup>47</sup>

But it had not always been that way. Initially, the senior generals had rejected the need for Canadian paratroops citing a lack of role and purpose

for such specialized troops in the Canadian context. However, by the spring of 1942, both the British and Americans fully embraced the concept of airborne forces. And, as the tide of the war began to swing in favor of the Allies, the focus quickly swung from one of defense to that of offense. And nothing embodied raw offensive, aggressive action more than paratroopers. Very quickly, airborne troops became a defining component of a modern army. Not to be left out, senior Canadian military commanders quickly reversed their earlier reservations and recommended the establishment of a parachute battalion to J.L. Ralston, the MND. The Minister readily agreed and on 1 July 1942, the Canadian War Cabinet Committee approved the formation of a parachute unit, namely 1 Cdn Para Bn.

The unit's training was in many ways innovative for the time and exceeded the challenges faced by other combat troops. Greater emphasis was placed on the individual soldier for leadership, weapon handling, and navigation. Orders for exercises and later operations were always given to all ranks so that regardless of circumstances of a parachute drop everyone had an understanding of the mission so they could execute the necessary tasks whether or not officers or senior noncommissioned officers (NCOs) were present. As such, the unit placed an exorbitant emphasis on courage, physical fitness, tenacity, and particularly on individual initiative.

With no domestic defense role in Canada, the unit was offered up to the Commander of Home Forces in England. The British quickly accepted the offer, and the government announced in March 1943 that 1 Cdn Para Bn would be attached to the 3rd Parachute Brigade as part of the 6th Airborne Division. For the remainder of the war the Battalion fought as part of a British formation. It established a remarkable record. The Battalion never failed to complete an assigned mission, nor did it ever lose or surrender an objective once taken. The Canadian paratroopers were among the first Allied soldiers to have landed in occupied Europe, the only Canadians who participated in the "Battle of the Bulge" in the Ardennes, and by the end of the war they had advanced deeper into Germany than any other Canadian unit. Unquestionably, the paratroopers of the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion, at great cost and personal sacrifice, pioneered a new innovative form of warfare and demonstrated agility of thought and action, as well as an unrivalled warfare spirit in their daring assaults behind enemy lines. They were disbanded on 30 September 1945 at Niagara-on-the-Lake.



## The First Special Service Force

Interestingly, in July 1942, at the same time as 1 Cdn Para Bn was established, the Canadian War Cabinet authorized a second “parachute” unit, designated the 2nd Canadian Parachute Battalion (2 Cdn Para Bn). The name of this unit, however, was misleading. It was not a parachute battalion at all, but rather a commando unit. The designation was assigned for security reasons to cover the true nature of its operational mandate.<sup>48</sup> On 25



Figure 3. Members of the FSSF loading a Douglas C-47 aircraft to qualify as parachutists, August 1942. Photo courtesy LAC.

May 1943, the name was changed to reflect this role. It was re-designated the 1st Canadian Special Service Battalion, and it represented the Canadian element of the joint U.S./Canadian First Special Service Force (FSSF).<sup>49</sup>

Nonetheless, its genesis originated in England with Lord Mountbatten’s Combined Operations Headquarters (COHQ) and Prime Minister Churchill’s personal support. The original concept, code named Operation Plough, entailed a guerrilla force capable of operations in Norway to attack the hydro-electric and heavy water plants in that country to disrupt the German war industry and the Nazi atomic weapons program.<sup>50</sup> Some thought was also put to using the force to destroy the Ploesti oil fields in Romania or to destroy hydro-electric facilities in Italy. In all, the planners reasoned that in any of these targets a hard-hitting raiding force would not only damage Germany’s vital war industry, but it would also tie up German forces required to protect facilities and chase down the guerrilla force.<sup>51</sup>

The Americans accepted the project, and Prime Minister Churchill and Lord Mountbatten very quickly convinced the Canadians to participate as

well. As a result, a U.S./Canadian brigade-sized formation was created with Americans and Canadians serving side by side, wearing the same American uniform, in a military command that was completely integrated. At any given moment it was impossible to differentiate Canadian from American and vice versa. Each had officers commanding troops of the other nation. At inception, the Canadians contributed 697 all ranks to the formation, representing approximately a quarter of the total number of troops.<sup>52</sup>

As was the case with 1 Cdn Para Bn, the Canadian Army took their commitment seriously and attempted to pick the best soldiers possible for this unique endeavor. Colonel Robert T. Frederick, the American commander of the FSSF, made it clear that he preferred that Canadian volunteers be chosen in the “lower ranks between 18 and 45 [years old], physically rugged and mentally agile, physically able and willing to take parachute training.”<sup>53</sup> It became obvious to everyone concerned that superior physical fitness, experience, maturity, and youth were the cornerstones on which the FSSF would be forged.<sup>54</sup> In addition, Frederick stressed that it was imperative that each man be able to work efficiently independently or in small groups, regardless of the tactical situation or operational theater. Ross Munro, the renowned Canadian war reporter, noted that the First Special Service Force “will be a continental edition of commandos of the British Army.” He added, “In selecting the men to make it up, emphasis will be placed on ‘youth, hardness and fitness.’”<sup>55</sup>

As the initial focus of the FSSF was to be sabotage, raiding, and guerilla type warfare, the Forcemen were trained in a wide spectrum of skills including parachuting, demolitions, unarmed combat, extensive weapons handling, mountaineering, and arctic warfare. Physical fitness very quickly became the decisive selection tool. Only the hardest of men could persevere the training. For instance, members of the FSSF were “capable of marching 35 miles a day across rough country or 90 miles without rest.”<sup>56</sup>

Indeed, the Force was to be ready to deploy to Norway on 15 December 1942 for an arduous and very dangerous mission. As such, even as the FSSF was in the process of establishing itself, its training regime and tempo were in over-drive. Upon arrival, members undertook their jump training, which in some cases was all of 48 hours as opposed to the more standard three-week course. In August 1942, journalist Don Mason captured the contemporary image of the force that was being created in Helena, Montana where they were based. “The cream of Canada’s hard-fighting army youth,” he

described, “is training in the United States today for ‘aerial commando’ raiding which one day soon will make the German and the Jap think cyclones have struck where they thought they were safe and secure.”<sup>57</sup>

However, by late 1942 it became clear that Operation Plough was not going to happen. There were three major impediments. First, Frederick’s request for the temporary diversion of 750 Lancaster bombers forecast for the middle of January 1943 to insert his formation hit an immediate wall. The intractable architect of Britain’s strategic bombing campaign Air Chief Marshal Charles Portal of the Royal Air Force (RAF) responded, “That is our best bomber.” He continued, “If you can show us where Plough can accomplish more in its operation than one thousand Lancasters could do on the bombing runs we shall consider the plane for your uses.”<sup>58</sup>

Frederick’s next dose of reality occurred when the Combined Operations Command planners briefed him on the Commando raiding program and, more importantly, the work of Brigadier Colin Gubbins’ SOE and their Norwegian sabotage campaign. Although the SOE had never even heard of the Plough Project—or the FSSF for that matter—they too had plans for sabotaging most of the targets that the FSSF was theoretically earmarked to destroy. Significantly, Gubbins’ plan required very few aircraft and only two or three Norwegian soldiers for each target.<sup>59</sup>

The final nail in the coffin resulted from Colonel Frederick’s discussion with Major-General Hansteen, the Commander-in-Chief of the Norwegian Armed Forces. Hansteen bluntly informed Frederick that the King and Prime Minister of Norway opposed the concept of the Plough Project. They were concerned that the large-scale destruction of power would create a greater hardship on the Norwegian people than it would on the Germans. Moreover, although they welcomed any assistance in ousting the occupying German forces, they did not wish to do so by destroying the vital industrial infrastructure that was key to Norway’s economic well-being.<sup>60</sup>

And so, with no apparent aircraft, no host country support, and a competing organization that appeared to have a more efficient, more precise, and less resource-intensive means of achieving the same goal, Colonel Frederick quickly realized that the Plough Project was doomed. Any doubt he may have harbored was quickly dashed when he returned to London to meet with Lord Mountbatten prior to his flight to Washington D.C. The Chief of Combined Operations candidly explained to Frederick that the Plough Project was no longer a pressing issue. By this time, Combined Operations

and the whole raiding concept was under siege by the War Office. The Allied effort, particularly as a result of American might and industrial capacity, was slowly beginning to turn the tide of the war. Raiding and subversive activities, never fully supported by the mainstream military, were further marginalized as large scale conventional operations, such as the invasion of Northern Africa, took shape.

Moreover, Mountbatten had no means of influencing the release of aircraft, and he conceded that SOE provided a more economical means of achieving the desired result, not to mention at a more politically acceptable price for the Norwegian government in exile in London. As such, both men agreed to let Plough die. Frederick quickly sent a message to his formation in Helena, Montana. True to Frederick's character, it was short and to the point:

Suspend effort on present line...New plan may be radically different and not concerned with hydroelectric or other industrial installations...Cease training on hydroelectric installations and ... stress general tactical training, to include attack of fortifications, pill boxes, barracks and troop concentrations. Change in weapons may be necessary to provide greater firepower, so suspend further small arms training pending a decision.<sup>61</sup>

On his return to North America, Colonel Frederick briefed General Marshall, the American Army Chief of Staff. He then left for Montana unsure whether the FSSF would be continued or scrapped. That decision was now left with the General Staff to get a political decision. By 8 October 1942, the Canadian Chief of the General Staff forwarded a telegram to Lieutenant-General McNaughton, Canada's overseas commander, informing him of the latest turn of events. The Canadians were now waiting for the Americans to make known their intentions prior to articulating their continuing support.

However, Major-General Murchie's missive provided some telling clues. The alternatives considered were:

- a. Continue with Special Service Force if Americans so desire.
- b. Amalgamate with 1st Parachute Battalion.
- c. Disband and Disperse Personnel.

d. Retain as an Ordinary Parachute Battalion For Service and Abroad.<sup>62</sup>

Importantly, Murchie highlighted the negative effects of options B, C and D. He stated each has the “disadvantage of unwelcome publicity over cancellation of highly publicized Special Service Forces as have B and C over apparent curtailment of our plans for Cdn [Canadian] Parachute Troops.”<sup>63</sup>

In due course, the Americans decided to proceed with the FSSF. On 17 October, General Marshall informed Major-General Maurice Pope, the Chairman of the Canadian Joint Staff in Washington D.C., that a decision was reached to retain the FSSF as a special unit.<sup>64</sup> It was now up to the Canadians to confirm their continued participation. Although militarily a will to continue seemed to be present, the ultimate decision was the purview of the politicians.<sup>65</sup> As such, the War Cabinet Committee discussed the issue on 28 October 1942. From a Canadian perspective the existence of the “elite” First Special Service Force was considered by the government to be of marginal operational value after its original mission was cancelled. The *Minutes of the War Cabinet Committee* noted, “Though the future employment of the unit was doubtful, beyond its existence as a ‘stand-by’ force, acceptance of the U.S. proposal [continue unit’s existence for special operations] was recommended as a token of intimate co-operation between the two countries.”<sup>66</sup>

As such, the FSSF became in many ways highly-specialized infantry capable of a wide range of operations in virtually any terrain. In August 1943, the FSSF participated in the assault on Kiska Island. As the Japanese had already withdrawn from the Aleutians, the FSSF was quickly returned to the mainland and prepared for operations in Italy. Here the Force made a name for itself because of its successful assault on Monte La Difensa,

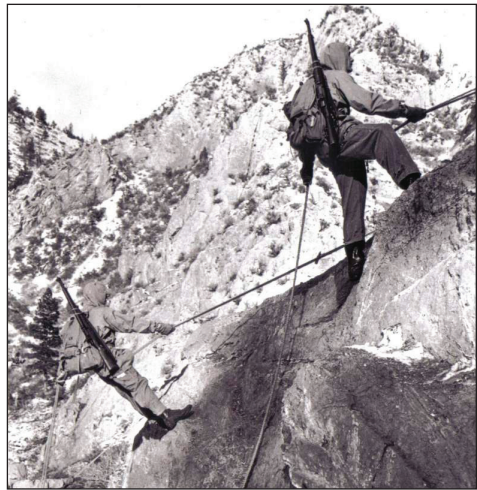


Figure 4. Members of the FSSF undergo mountaineering training, December 1942. Photo courtesy LAC.

a seemingly impregnable German defensive position on the top of a 945-meter-high (3,100 feet) mountain. Until that time, the Germans had repelled numerous Allied attacks and thus, delayed the advance toward the main German Gustav defensive Line and Rome, which lay beyond. On 3 December 1943, by a daring night assault that entailed climbing up the rear cliffs of the mountain, which the Germans considered impassable, the FSSF successfully captured the summit. However, the assault and subsequent struggle to maintain their hold over the saucer-shaped mountain top and extend their grip to the adjacent Monte La Remetanea inflicted a terrible toll on the formation. In the aftermath of the battle, the FSSF would never reach its former level of specialized capability or personnel. Reinforcements were simply pulled directly from normal reinforcement pools and given basic training on weapons and tactics.

Nonetheless, the FSSF reinforced its reputation at Anzio in February 1944 where, despite their light armament and only approximately 1,200 all ranks, they held an extended portion (13 kilometers) of the vital Mussolini Canal sector. Through aggressive night raiding they struck fear into the enemy, who believed they were facing up to a small division. The German soldiers were so terrified by the FSSF raids that they nicknamed them the “Black Devils.” In the subsequent breakout phase the FSSF advanced on Rome. Upon its capture and a brief period of rest and recuperation, the Force seized two of the Hyères Islands in the Mediterranean Sea to protect the left flank of the landings on the French Riviera in August 1944. The FSSF then joined the Sixth Army Group in the advance through Southern France.

The Canadian component of the FSSF, however, proved to be problematic for the Canadian government. Facing a manning shortage and as a result, a conscription crisis, the continuing demands to provide reinforcements for the FSSF, which was difficult to administer and in the context of the dying days of the war was also arguably redundant, prompted the Canadian government to make a simple decision. The time had come to pull the Canadians from the Force. As such, the FSSF was disbanded at Menton on 5 December 1944.

The disbandment of the FSSF was not surprising. As the tide of the war shifted in favor of the Allies, who by late 1942 had begun to field large modern armies, SOF evolved to provide specific capabilities not resident with the larger conventional military and perform distinct tasks such as raiding, sabotage, and economy of effort missions to tie down enemy forces.



These activities were soon eclipsed by tasks such as strategic reconnaissance and unconventional warfare. But even at that, the Allied strategy had become a very attritional conventional approach, much akin to a large steamroller simply flattening the opposition before it. As such, the precision and special capabilities provided by SOF were neither required nor appreciated by most senior military commanders.

In the end, despite the overall success and value of special operations, SOF never fully received acceptance by the larger military community.<sup>67</sup> The irregular nature of the tactics, the unconventional, if not rakish nature of the operators, who were often seen as lacking discipline and military decorum, as well as the almost independent status of the SOF organizations, were alien and distasteful to the more traditional and conservative minded military leadership. Not surprisingly, at the end of the war, as already noted, most SOF organizations were disbanded.

Canada was no different. In fact, Lieutenant-General McNaughton provided a clear picture of his perception of SOF. "I have watched with interest the organization here [England] of such special units as Commandos, Ski Battalions and Paratroops," he noted. He concluded, "The cycle is always the same - initial enthusiasm which is very high, drawing good officers and men from regular units, distracting and unsettling others, and upsetting the units' organization." As a result, he clearly stated his opposition to the formation of such units.<sup>68</sup>

## **The Canadian Special Air Service Company**

Although all Canadian SOF units were disbanded by September 1945, in 1947, a brief breath of air seemed to rekindle the flames of a national SOF capability. Former members of the SOE, FSSF and 1st Cdn Para Bn developed a plan to resurrect a distinct Canadian SOF entity. Their methodology was as shadowy as the unit they intended to build.

The long, costly global struggle had taken its toll, and a debt-ridden and war-weary government was intent on a post-war army that was anything but extravagant. Notwithstanding the military's achievements during the war, the Canadian Government articulated two clear requirements for its peacetime army: First, it was to consist of a representative group of all arms of the service. Secondly, its primary purpose was to provide a small but highly trained and skilled professional force that in time of conflict could

expand and train the citizen soldiers who would fight that war. Within this framework SOF had no relevance.

As the Army worked feverishly at demobilizing and at the same time creating the structure for the post-war Canadian Forces, the CO of the small Canadian Parachute Training Center in Shilo, Manitoba became instrumental in the next phase of Canadian SOF.<sup>69</sup> He selectively culled the ranks of the disbanded 1 Cdn Para Bn, which also included those from the FSSF. Quite simply he chose the best from the pool of personnel who had decided to remain in the Active Force to act as instructors and staff for his training establishment.

Devoid of any direction from Army Headquarters, the CO and his staff focused on making contacts and keeping up to date with the latest airborne developments. These prescient efforts were soon to be rewarded. It was the perpetuation of links with Canada's closest allies, as well as the importance of staying abreast of the latest tactical developments

in modern warfare, specifically air-transportability, that provided the breath of life that airborne and SOF advocates were searching for.

Not surprisingly, Canadian commanders were looking abroad for the way ahead in the post war environment. As such, in 1947, a National defense Headquarters (NDHQ) study revealed that British peacetime policy was based on training and equipping all infantry formations to be air-transportable. Discussions with allies quickly ascertained that both the British and Americans would welcome an Airborne Establishment in Canada that would be capable of filling in the "gaps in their knowledge"—specifically in areas such as the problem of standardization of equipment between Britain and the United States, and the need for experimental research into cold weather conditions. To its allies, Canada was the ideal intermediary.

Canadian military leaders quickly realized that cooperation with their closest defense partners would allow the country to benefit from an exchange of information on the latest defense developments and doctrine. For the



Figure 5. Cdn SAS Coy paratroopers emplaning for a practice jump. Photo courtesy Canadian Airborne Forces Museum (CAFM).



Airborne and SOF advocates, a test facility would allow the Canadian military to stay in the game. In the end, for the sake of efficiency of manpower and resources, NDHQ directed that the parachute training and research functions reside in a single Canadian Joint Army/Air Training Center. As a result, on 15 August 1947, the Joint Air School (JAS), in Rivers, Manitoba was established.

The JAS became the “foot in the door.” It was responsible for the retention of skills required for airborne, and with some ingenuity special operations, for both the Army and the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF). More important, the JAS, which was renamed the Canadian Joint Air Training Center (CJATC) on 1 April 1949, provided the seed from which a SOF organization would eventually grow.<sup>70</sup>

The hidden agenda of the airborne advocates quickly took root. Once the permanent structure of the Army was established in 1947, they quickly pushed to expand the airborne capability within the JAS by submitting a proposal in the spring for a Canadian SAS Company.<sup>71</sup> This new organization was to be an integral sub-unit of the Army component of the JAS with a mandate of filling Army, inter-service, and public duties such as Army/Air tactical research and development; demonstrations to assist with Army/Air training; Airborne Firefighting; Search and Rescue; and Aid to the Civil Power.<sup>72</sup> Its development, however, proved to be quite different as its name implies.

The initial proposal for the special sub-unit prescribed a clearly defined role. The Army, which sponsored the establishment of the fledgling organization, portrayed the SAS Company’s inherent mobility as a definite asset to the public at large for domestic operations. A military appreciation written by its proponents argued the need of the unit in terms of its potential benefit to the public. It explained that the specially trained company would provide an “efficient life and property saving organization capable of moving from its base to any point in Canada in ten to fifteen hours.”<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, the Canadian SAS Company was framed as critical in working in support of the RCAF air search-and-rescue duties required by the International Civil Aviation Organization agreement.

The proposed training plan further supported the benevolent image. The training cycle consisted of four phases broken down as follows: 1.) Tactical Research and Development (parachute related work and fieldcraft skills); 2.) Airborne Firefighting; 3.) Air Search and Rescue; and 4.) Mobile Aid to the

Civil Power (crowd control, first aid, military law).<sup>74</sup> Conspicuously absent was any evidence of commando or specialist training which the organization's name innately implied. After all, the Canadian SAS Company was actually titled after the British wartime SAS that had earned a reputation for daring commando operations behind enemy lines.

In September 1947, the request for approval for the sub-unit was forwarded to the Deputy Chief of the General Staff. Significantly, it now had two additional roles added to it—public service in the event of a national catastrophe and provision of a nucleus for expansion into parachute battalions. However, the proposal also noted that the SAS Company was required to provide the manpower for the large program of test and development that was underway by the Tactical Research and Development Wing, as well as demonstration teams for all demonstrations within and outside the CJATC.<sup>75</sup>

As support for the sub-unit grew, so too did its real identity. An assessment of potential benefits to the Army included its ability to “keep the techniques employed by [British] SAS persons during the war alive in the peacetime army.”<sup>76</sup> Although this item was last in the order of priority in the list, it soon moved to the forefront.

NDHQ authorized the sub-unit with an effective date of 9 January 1948. Once this was announced, a dramatic change in focus became evident. Not only did its function as a base for expansion for the development of airborne units take precedence, but also the previously subtle reference to a war fighting, specifically special forces role, leapt to the foreground. The new Terms of Reference for the employment of the SAS Company, which was confirmed in April 1948, outlined the following duties in a revised priority:

- a. Provide a tactical parachute company for airborne training. This company is to form the nucleus for expansion for the training of the three infantry battalions as parachute battalions;
- b. Provide a formed body of troops to participate in tactical exercises and demonstrations for courses at the CJATC and service units throughout the country;
- c. Preserve and advance the techniques of SAS [commando] operations developed during WWII 1939-1945;
- d. Provide when required parachutists to back-up the RCAF organizations as detailed in the Interim Plan for Air Search and Rescue; and

- e. Aid Civil Authorities in fighting forest fires and assisting in national catastrophes when authorized by defense Headquarters.<sup>77</sup>

The shift was anything but subtle. The original emphasis on aid to the civil authority and public service type functions, duties that were attractive to a war-weary and fiscally-conscious government, were now reprioritized—if not totally marginalized. It did, however, also represent the Army's initial reaction to the Government's announcement in 1946, that airborne training for the Active Force Brigade Group (Regular Army) was contemplated and that an establishment to this end was being created.

The new organization was established at company strength: 125 personnel all ranks. It was comprised of one platoon from each of the three regular infantry regiments, the Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR), the Royal 22nd Regiment (R22eR) and Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI). All members were volunteers, most with wartime airborne experience, who were carefully selected. They were all bachelors in superb physical condition and possessed initiative, self-reliance, self-discipline, mental agility, and an original approach.

If there was any doubt of the intention of the unit, it was quickly dispelled when Captain Guy D'Artois, a wartime member of the FSSF, and later the SOE, was posted to the sub-unit as its second-in-command. However, due to a difficulty in finding a qualified major he became the acting officer commanding.<sup>78</sup> After all, his credentials were impeccable. D'Artois had dropped by parachute into Mont Cortevaix in France, then under German occupation, in April 1944. Prior to the sector being liberated, he had trained

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*They were all bachelors in superb physical condition and possessed initiative, self-reliance, self-discipline, mental agility, and an original approach.*

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600 partisans, established the Sylla underground, developed an 800-kilometer secure telephone line, and he attacked the occupying Germans troops on numerous occasions within his area of operation. Moreover, he instilled in his French allies a taste for victory. For his feats, D'Artois was awarded the Distinguished Service Order and the French *La Croix de Guerre avec palme* from General Charles de Gaulle. His service with the underground earned him the praise: "Major D'Artois is the embodiment of nobility in

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figure, strength and stature but more importantly, nobility in simplicity and kindness.”<sup>79</sup>

D’Artois brought his experience to the Canadian Special Air Service Company (Cdn SAS Coy). He trained his sub-unit of carefully selected paratroopers as a specialized commando force. His intractable approach and trademark persistence quickly made him the “absolute despair of the Senior Officers at Rivers [CJATC].” Veterans of the SAS Company explained that “Captain D’Artois didn’t understand ‘no.’ He carried on with his training regardless of what others said.” Another veteran recalled that “Guy answered to no-one, he was his own man, who ran his own show.”<sup>80</sup>

But the issue was soon moot. To date, the continued survival of the JAS and its limited airborne and SOF capability, as represented by the Canadian SAS Company, was largely due to a British and American preoccupation with airborne and air-transportable forces in the post war period. This was based on a concept of security established on smaller standing forces with greater tactical and strategic mobility. In essence, possession of paratroopers represented the nation’s ready sword. This was critical in light of the looming 1946 Canada/U.S. Basic Security Plan (BSP) which imposed on Canada the requirement to provide one airborne/air-transportable brigade, and its necessary airlift, as its share of the overall continental defense agreement. By the summer of 1948, the SAS Company represented the total sum of Canada’s operational airborne and SOF capability. Clearly, some form of action was required.

As a result, the Chief of the General Staff (CGS) directed that training for one battalion of infantry for airborne/air-transported operations be completed by 1 April 1949. After all, the BSP dictated that by 1 May 1949, the Canadian government be capable of deploying a battalion combat team prepared to respond immediately to any actual Soviet lodgment in the Arctic, with a second battalion available within two months, and an entire brigade group within four months.<sup>81</sup> This was the death knell for the Cdn SAS Coy.

The Canadian Army was now finally moving toward its airborne/air-transportable Active Brigade Group, which was titled the Mobile Striking Force (MSF). Its effect on the Canadian SAS Company was devastating. The respective highly trained SAS platoons provided the training staff for each of the Regular Force infantry regiments (i.e. RCR, R22eR, PPCLI) that rotated through the JAS for parachute qualification and, upon completion, returned

to their parent regiments to provide an experienced airborne cadre for each of these regular force infantry regiments. The slow dissolution of the Canadian SAS Company was formalized by the CGS when he announced that the sub-unit would not be reconstituted upon the completion of airborne conversion training by the R22eR, who represented the last unit of the three Active Force infantry regiments to undertake it. The actual disbandment was so low key that no official date exists. Its personnel just melted away. Nonetheless, the SAS Company served a critical function in Canadian airborne and SOF history. It was the “bridge” that linked 1 Cdn Para Bn and the three infantry battalions that conceptually formed an airborne brigade (i.e. the MSF). In so doing, it perpetuated the airborne spirit and kept the requisite parachute skills alive. It also perpetuated, albeit briefly, the concept of a selected, highly trained commando force capable of special operations in keeping with the SOE and SAS traditions of WWII.

### The Canadian Airborne Regiment

At this point, the nation’s SOF lineage went into a hiatus. Neither the existence of the MSF or its successor, the Defense of Canada Force, represented any form of a SOF capability. For that matter, arguably, neither even provided a real airborne capability. As always, external factors influenced internal organizational shifts. By the early 60s the notion of an Army rapid reaction and Special Forces capability gathered momentum, largely fuelled by the American involvement in Vietnam. In 1966, Lieutenant-General Jean Victor Allard, the new Commander of Force Mobile Command (FMC – i.e. Canadian Army) decided that the Canadian Army would develop a similar capability. Specifically, he aimed to have a completely air-portable unit, with all its equipment, deployed and in the designated operational theater as quickly as 48 hours. Therefore, on 12 May 1966, the MND announced, “FMC would include the establishment of an airborne regiment whose personnel and equipment could be rapidly sent to danger zones.”<sup>82</sup>



Figure 6. Paratroopers from the Cdn AB Regt conduct counter-insurgency operations in Jamaica, April 1972. Photo courtesy CAFM.

For the Army Commander, the new airborne regiment represented flexibility and a higher order of professionalism and soldiering. The Army Commander clearly believed that “this light unit is going to be very attractive to a fellow who likes to live dangerously, so all volunteers can go into it.” His creation was to be open to all three services and manned exclusively by volunteers. “We intend,” he asserted, “to look at the individual a little more rather than considering the unit as a large body of troops, some of whom might not be suited for the task.”<sup>83</sup>

In the spring of 1966, General Allard, then the Chief of the Defense Staff (CDS), took the next step and discussed the formation of what he fondly labeled the new “airborne commando regiment.” Colonel Don H. Rochester was appointed as the commander-designate, and he was given a further year to refine the ‘Concept of Operations,’ organization, and structure. The prospects seemed unlimited. The “exciting thing about General Allard’s concept,” recalled Rochester, “was that this unit was to be radically different. Except for aircraft, it was to be self-contained with infantry, armor, artillery, engineers, signals and supporting administration.” Furthermore, he explained, “all were to be volunteers and so well trained in their own arm or service that they could devote their time to specialist training.”<sup>84</sup>

The Canadian Airborne Regiment (Cdn AB Regt) was officially established on 8 April 1968.<sup>85</sup> It consisted of an airborne headquarters and signal squadron (80 personnel), two infantry airborne commandos (278 personnel each), an airborne field battery (80 personnel capable of providing two, three-gun troops of pack howitzers, or two groups of six medium (82mm) mortars, an airborne field squadron (81 personnel), and an airborne service commando (i.e. combat service support and administration, 89 personnel).

The Regiment’s mandate was impressive if not overly optimistic. The Cdn AB Regt was required to be capable of performing a variety of tasks which included: the defense of Canada; the United Nations (UN) ‘stand-by’ role; peacekeeping operations; missions in connection with national disaster; ‘Special Air Service’ type missions; coup de main tasks in a general war setting; and responsibility for parachute training in the CF. The respective Canadian Forces Organizational Order (CFOO) stated, “the role of the Canadian Airborne Regiment is to provide a force capable of moving quickly to meet any unexpected enemy threat or other commitment of the Canadian Armed Forces.”<sup>86</sup> In addition, the Army Commander, Lieutenant-

General W.A.B. Anderson, ordered the Cdn AB Regt planning team to visit both the U.S. Special Forces Center, as well as the British SAS Regiment, to gather the “necessary stimulus and factual data upon which to develop your concept.”<sup>87</sup> Moreover, he directed that an element of the Regiment must be proficient at: high altitude low opening (HALO) team parachute descents; deep penetration patrols; underwater diving; obstacle clearance and laying of underwater demolitions; mountain climbing; and “Special Service Forces” type team missions.<sup>88</sup>

Although outwardly a conventional airborne regiment, by design it was clear that the Cdn AB Regt, both officially in accordance with its CFOO and through direction given by the CF chain of command, was intended to be capable of special operations as understood at the time.<sup>89</sup> The emphasis on “SOF-like” capability was also enshrined in the Operational Concept, as well as in the later doctrinal manual, *CFP 310 (1) Airborne - The Canadian Airborne Regiment*. Under the heading ‘Special Operations’ a long list of tasks were included that were clearly Special Forces in nature. Specifically, the document stated:

Canadian Airborne Regiment is to be prepared to carry out the following operations for which it is specially trained: disruption of lines of communications, destruction of critical installations; psychological warfare operations; special intelligence tasks; recovery tasks; deception operations; internal security operations; counter-guerilla operations; and support of indigenous paramilitary forces.<sup>90</sup>

The emphasis on special operations was not lost on the Cdn AB Regt’s leadership, which focused at times almost exclusively on daring direct action commando-like raids. Moreover, as a number of former commanding officers noted, if something happened (e.g. terrorist incident) they knew they would get the call so they attempted to train individuals in the necessary skills required for special operations.

The quality of the original individuals was incontestable. Official recruiting themes stressed the superior attributes of the new genre of warrior. They emphasized the fact that the new paratrooper had to be an excellent athlete, an expert at small arms, and a survival specialist. Furthermore, they underscored the necessity to be robust, courageous, and capable of



a high level of endurance. Not surprisingly, the Cdn AB Regt received a larger percentage of the more ambitious, determined, and energized individuals. They skimmed the cream of the Army. Only experienced officers, noncommissioned officers, and soldiers were accepted. All riflemen within the commandos were required to be qualified to the rank of corporal. This meant that the respective individual had previously served within a regular rifle battalion. As a result, they were already competent and experienced in the basic drills of soldiering. Equally important, they were on the whole older and normally more mature. This allowed the Regiment to direct its training effort toward specialized training such as mountain and pathfinder operations, patrolling courses, skiing, and unarmed combat.

The Cdn AB Regt quickly forged a reputation for undertaking tough, demanding, and dynamic activities. It set new standards for physical fitness and training realism. In consonance with its status as a strategic force capable of global deployment, the Regiment traveled throughout Canada, the United States, as well as exotic locations such as Jamaica, to practice its lethal craft. It conducted training and exchanges with the British SAS, American Rangers and Special Forces, and the French Foreign Legion. By the early 70s the Airborne Regiment was at its zenith of power. It had the status of a mini-formation, direct access to the Commander of the Army, and an increased peacetime establishment of 1,044 all ranks.

The Cdn AB Regt deployed to Montreal, Quebec during the Front de la Liberation du Quebec (FLQ) Crisis in October 1970 and four years later was dispatched to Cyprus during the Turkish invasion of that island. However, in all cases the Regiment functioned solely as conventional infantry. On 26 November 1976, the Cdn AB Regt was moved from Edmonton to Petawawa, and its formation status was stripped.<sup>91</sup> It now became a simple unit within the newly re-roled Special Service Force (SSF), which provided the Army with a relatively light, airborne/air-portable quick reaction force in the demographic center of the country which could be moved quickly to augment either of the flanking brigades for internal security tasks, to the Arctic, or to UN-type operations.<sup>92</sup>

The restructuring inflicted additional wounds. The Regiment was dramatically pared, and it lost its preferred standing within the Army for both manning and exemptions from the mundane taskings that other units endured. Out of necessity it began to accept more junior members across the board (i.e. officers, senior NCOs and men) with the corollary degradation



of capability. Moreover, it became increasingly under attack by senior CF leaders who were not favorable to “special soldiers,” particularly during a period of constantly shrinking defense budgets.

Adding to the frustrations of the members of the Cdn AB Regt was the fact that, despite the Regiment’s CFOO and international standby status, it was never deployed. Senior CF leadership argued that to deploy the Regiment would strip Canada of its strategic reserve. More realistically, the problem centered around the make up of the airborne unit itself. It lacked the necessary mobility (i.e. armored and wheeled vehicles) as well as support capability to deploy for extended periods of time. As a result, it was easier to send conventional units to do the operations, which were all conventional in nature anyway.

Continued downsizing of the Regiment to battalion status in 1992 further degraded both the status and capability of the Cdn AB Regt. Nonetheless, in December of that year, the Cdn AB Regt deployed to Somalia on a



Figure 7. A member of Pathfinder platoon, the Cdn AB Regt, practices a freefall insertion into a denied area. Photo courtesy CAFM.

peacemaking operation under Security Council Resolution 794. Unfortunately, the Cdn AB Regt experienced disciplinary problems in theater that detracted from their actual performance.<sup>93</sup> The Regiment pacified its sector in less than three months earning the praise of Hugh Tremblay, the Director of Humanitarian Relief and Rehabilitation in Somalia, who stated to all who would listen, “If you want to know and to see what you should do while you are here in Somalia go to Belet Huen, talk to the Canadians and

do what they have done, emulate the Canadians and you will have success in your humanitarian relief sector.”<sup>94</sup>

Nonetheless, the mission was ultimately redefined in the media and the public consciousness as a failure due to the poor leadership and criminal acts of a few. The inexplicable and lamentable torture killing of Shidane Arone, a Somali national, caught stealing within the Regiment lines, became the defining image of the Cdn AB Regt’s operation in Africa. The public outcry and criticism of the Department of National Defense (DND) as a result of

the attempted cover-up at NDHQ and later revelations of hazing videos within the Cdn AB Regt created a crisis of epic proportions, and senior political and military decision makers desperately sought a quick and easy solution to their troubles. They swiftly found one. During an official press release on the afternoon of 23 January 1995, David Collenette, the MND, announced, “although our senior military officers believe the Regiment as constituted should continue, the government believes it cannot. Therefore, today under the authority of the National defense Act, I have ordered the disbandment of the Canadian Airborne Regiment.”<sup>95</sup>

In the end, the Cdn AB Regt represented Canada’s only capability to conduct special operations from 1968 to 1993. A widespread feeling by former members of the Cdn AB Regt was captured by Brigadier-General Jim Cox. “In our hearts,” he revealed, “we equated ourselves with the SAS and the SF [Special Forces] in the U.S.”<sup>96</sup> In the end, although, especially toward the latter years of its existence, the Regiment did not share all the characteristics of a pure SOF organization; it did have both the official mandate and the implicit understanding of the senior CF leadership that it would be the entity that conducted special operations if required. Moreover, the Cdn AB Regt did practice direct action and special reconnaissance type tasks. In addition it exercised regularly and conducted small-unit exchanges with SOF organizations in the United States and Britain. As such, it fills an important position in Canada’s SOF history.

### **Special Emergency Response Team (SERT)**

But even before the Cdn AB Regt was disbanded the genesis of Canada’s true contemporary SOF capability began to germinate. A fundamental shift in the threat picture to Western industrialized nations erupted in the late 1960s. Political violence, or more accurately terrorism, became recognized as a significant “new” menace. Bombings, kidnapping, murders, and the hijacking of commercial aircraft seemingly exploded onto the world scene. Not only in the Middle East, but also in Europe, countries were thrust into a state of violence as both home-grown and international terrorists waged a relentless war that recognized no borders or limits. The murder of Israeli athletes at the 1972 Olympics in Munich, West Germany became one of the defining images of the crisis, as did the 1975 terrorist assault on the headquarters of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries in Vienna, Austria.<sup>97</sup>

But the problem went beyond a spill over of Middle Eastn conflict and politics. In Germany, groups such as the Baader-Meinhof gang (or Red Army Faction) created death and destruction. Holland was besieged by Moluccan terrorists, and Britain struggled with the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the Northern Ireland question. Even in North America, terrorism raised its ugly head. The Americans saw the growth of radical groups such as the Weathermen, New World Liberation Front, and Black Panther Party to name but a few. In Canada, the FLQ began a reign of terror that culminated in the October Crisis of 1970. In addition, foreign terrorists imported their political struggles and launched attacks against targets in Canada. A few examples include: the storming of the Turkish embassy in Ottawa by three Armenian men (Armenian Revolutionary Army) on 12 March 1985; the paralyzation of the Toronto public transit system on 1 April 1985, as a result of a communiqué sent by a group identifying itself as the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of our Homeland, in which they threatened death to passengers of the transit system; and the downing of an Air India flight off the coast of Ireland on 23 June 1985, killing 329 people as a result of a bomb that was planted prior to its departure from Toronto's Pearson International Airport.

Not surprisingly, much like other countries around the world, Canada decided it needed a counterterrorist (CT) capability of its own.<sup>98</sup> Its first attempt was to create the Hostage Assault and Rescue Program (HARP) under the auspices of the RCMP in 1982. The small team was well-trained by foreign SOF personnel, but unfortunately a bureaucratic failure to reach a suitable administrative arrangement for the force scuttled the project. The RCMP wanted the operators to do tours of three months in Ottawa and then one and a half months back in their home precincts. The members wanted a permanent posting to Ottawa so they could move their families. In the end, no agreement could be reached, and the program was shut down.

Three years later in 1985, with a number of high-profile terrorist acts committed on Canadian soil, specifically the attack on the Turkish Embassy, the Government of Canada could delay no longer; it was time to establish a CT force of its own. The initial discussion of whether the new CT force should be military or police became a struggle between the CDS at the time and the RCMP commissioner. Neither wanted the responsibility of creating or owning the force. The Commissioner of the RCMP felt the proposed entity was more a military commando unit than a police organization. The

CDS was of the mind that the type of individual created in such an organization could be problematic. He feared that once they were done with their tour of service they would invariably become mercenaries of one sort or another; he did not want that type of fallout, and as a result he did not want that type of unit within his Canadian Forces.<sup>99</sup>

In the end, the CDS had his way because the Solicitor General believed the CT task was a policing function. As a result, the following year, in 1986, the RCMP created the 75-member strong Special Emergency Response Team (SERT) as Canada's first Hostage Rescue (HR)/CT organization. The unit quickly established itself by drawing its personnel from existing trained police Emergency Response Teams (ERT) from across the country. They received comprehensive training, much of it initially from a number of international CT experts. Although SERT was constantly busy, it was never deployed for an actual mission.

## **Joint Task Force Two (JTF 2)**

By the early 1990s, the continuing efforts of the Federal government to combat its enormous deficit led to continuing deep budget cuts to all government departments. The RCMP was not immune. Faced with financial constraints, the requirement to pay overtime to members of the SERT—a force that had been in existence for years but had not yet deployed—as well as the requirement to continually rely on military airlift and other support provided the impetus for change. Moreover, the military in the post-Cold War era was also amenable to taking on new roles.<sup>100</sup> The deputy minister at the time, Bob Fowler, was instrumental in pushing for DND to take on the role. As such, in February 1992, senior governmental, RCMP, and DND decision makers decided to transfer the HR/CT responsibilities from the RCMP SERT to a military organization. As such, JTF 2 was born.

The challenge for the unit was immense. It had to select and train its personnel, establish a new unit, and be operational by 1 April 1993. The tight timelines meant that the first CO, Lieutenant-Colonel Ray Romses, had little choice but to utilize the RCMP SERT model for pre-selection, selection, and qualification standards. The RCMP had two distinct entities. The Dwyer Hill Training Center was run by the RCMP inspector who was responsible for the infrastructure and training. However, the command and control of the actual SERT was vested in another RCMP officer. Romses, however, would be responsible for both the operational and training functions.

The RCMP trained the first group of JTF 2 personnel. The newly trained military members now became the training cadre, and from the second serial onwards, took control of instructing the remainder of the military personnel. Increasingly, the RCMP SERT members took on less and less responsibility.

Timelines were tight, but JTF 2 was ready for the 1 April stand-up date. A formal hand-over parade and mess dinner were held at Dwyer Hill on 31 March 1992 to mark the handover of the HR/CT role from the RCMP SERT to the CF JTF 2. The following day, the unit was already undertaking operational tasks.

From the beginning, the CO realized that the unit would have to evolve. The RCMP SERT had been content to remain strictly a police HR type organization. Initial time constraints meant that JTF 2 had to take on that paradigm and the police culture that accompanied it. However, with the black role came the issue of utility. How often would it be used? Romses realized this could also create retention issues. Moreover, for JTF 2 to provide utility to the greater CF, a green (SOF) role would need to be developed.

As such, the unit began to evolve in the mid to late-1990s toward a more military SOF orientation and capability; however, HR/CT remained JTF 2's primary focus. In 1994, the CDS approved growth for JTF 2, as well as a transition from a pure black CT role to other special operations tasks. As a result, the unit undertook tasks around the globe that gave its members both experience in foreign locations, as well as exposure to senior military and civilian decision makers.

Although the unit was expanding to include a green component, as already mentioned, its focus was still almost exclusively on black skills. A "green phase" during initial training was largely an introduction to field-craft for the noncombat arms volunteers. Within the unit there was also



Figure 8. JTF 2 members in their black role practicing a hostage rescue. Photo courtesy DND.

tension between those who favored retaining the exclusive black role and “police culture” and those who wanted to push JTF 2 to be more akin to a military organization such as the British SAS. External events provided the catalyst for change.

On the morning of 11 September 2001, millions watched their television screens mesmerized as events unfolded in New York City. In the early morning hours a passenger jet had plowed into the top stories of the World Trade Center (WTC) in the financial core of the city. As most were trying to absorb what happened, a second large commercial airliner came into view and slammed into the twin tower of the WTC. It would only be a short time later that both towers collapsed onto themselves and crumpled to the ground, killing all those inside. A third aircraft slammed into the Pentagon killing and injuring hundreds more, and a fourth hijacked jetliner heading for Washington D.C. slammed into the ground in Pennsylvania short of its objective due to the bravery of its passengers. In total, almost 3,000 people were killed in the attacks.

Within days it became clear that the Americans would take military action to strike at the terrorist who planned and conducted the attack and those who supported and abetted them. Osama Bin Laden and his al-Qaeda terrorist organization sheltered in Afghanistan by Mullah Omar and his Taliban government quickly became the center of attention. Not surprisingly, the Americans through Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) para-military forces and U.S. Special Operations Forces, in conjunction with the Northern Alliance, an anti-Taliban resistance movement, quickly launched an offensive to oust the Taliban and capture Bin Laden and his associates.

The Canadians quickly moved to support their American allies. The CF mobilized to send ships, aircraft, and ground forces in support of the U.S. mission titled Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). Part of the CF force package was a special operations task force (SOTF) that deployed as part of OEF and was under operational control of the American commander of the Combined Joint Forces Special Operations Component Command. Their tasks included direct action, special reconnaissance, and sensitive site exploitation.<sup>101</sup>

The JTF 2-based SOTF was deployed in theater from December 2001 to November 2002.<sup>102</sup> At the time, JTF 2 was largely an unknown quantity, and their role in theater was initially marginalized. “They were curious



because they [Americans] didn't really know us," conceded one member of the Task Force.<sup>103</sup>

However, it took only one mission to demonstrate their skill sets, and very quickly they became a force of choice. By the end of the tour, according to U.S. military officials, the JTF 2 SOTF had conducted "42 reconnaissance

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*Unquestionably, JTF 2's participation in OEF was a critical turning point in its evolution and CANSOF history.*

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and surveillance missions as well as 23 direct action missions."<sup>104</sup>

Tasks included "snatching senior Taliban officials," manning high altitude observation posts, and

combing mountain cave complexes.<sup>105</sup> Their performance earned them the trust and respect of the U.S. commanders in theater, and the SOTF was given special tasks with American sub-units allocated to it under tactical control (normally Rangers or 82nd Airborne and aviation assets). In the end, the JTF 2 SOTF executed more missions than any other coalition special operations force assigned to the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force – South (CJSOTF-S).

In fact, U.S. Navy Commander Kerry Metz, director of operations for CJSOTF-S, told Congress, "We were fortunate to have the finest special operations... and we challenged our operators to conduct missions in some of the most hostile environments ever operated in." He explained, "we had special reconnaissance teams operating in the mountains of Afghanistan above 10,000 feet for extended periods without resupply."<sup>106</sup> The CJSOTF-S commander, Rear-Admiral Bob Harward, simply acknowledged "that his JTF 2 team was his first choice for any 'direct action' mission."<sup>107</sup>

Unquestionably, JTF 2's participation in OEF was a critical turning point in its evolution and CANSOF history. The value of the JTF 2 contribution, or more importantly, its impact in theater, bolstered Canadian credibility. "We had to shoulder our way into the international SOF community with reps from the British SAS and U.S. [elite special forces]," explained Colonel Clyde Russell, the CO of JTF 2 at the time, "but once we got our seat at the table, now we can hold our own."<sup>108</sup>

Participation in OEF also finalized the debate back at Dwyer Hill in Ottawa. One JTF 2 detachment commander explained, "9/11 put us full throttle into the warfighting game and allowed us to pass a number of hurdles that would have taken years in a peacetime environment." Brigadier-General Michael Day, one of the SOTF commanders at the time and

a former CANSOFCOM commander, assessed, “We progressed the unit in maturity decades that first year [in Afghanistan].”<sup>109</sup>

Quite simply, the operation planted the seeds of CANSOF growth and maturation. “It allowed us to move into a kinetic mode,” asserted Day, “it showed the connection of the counter-terrorism/hostage rescue piece to the expeditionary capability.” It not only revitalized the unit, but it also revealed a very potent international capability. “Stepping out onto the world stage was our first big show,” commented Colonel Russell. “From a strategic perspective,” he added, “it opened the eyes of the grown ups of how SOF can be used as a bit of a strategic place marker in a crisis.” Russell explained, “we had a small footprint but a large impact. The country got a lot of credit.”<sup>110</sup>

Consistently, CANSOF leadership attest to the fact that JTF 2’s participation in OEF in 2001-2002 was a seminal event for the unit and CANSOF. “9/11 and Afghanistan allowed CANSOFCOM to grow into a mature combat capable force,” explained Brigadier-General Day, “It was instrumental in shaping our ability to field kinetic forces, which we now use to leverage our ability to shape a theater.” He concluded, “our first deployment will remain the defining moment of who we are.”<sup>111</sup>

The CANSOF commanders were not the only ones who recognized the importance of JTF 2’s first combat deployment. On 7 December 2004, then U.S. President George Bush, awarded the JTF 2 component of CJSOTF-S/ Task Force K-Bar a Secretary of the Navy, Presidential Unit Citation. American officials sent the request for Canadian approval prior to its actual presentation to the CF members. DND issued a press release the following day to announce the presentation. The Canadian Governor General congratulated JTF 2 on the award on 10 December 2004 through a media advisory. The narrative of the citation read:

For extraordinary heroism and outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy in Afghanistan from 17 October 2001 to 30 March 2002. Throughout this period, Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force – SOUTH / Task Force K-BAR, operating first from Oman and then from forward locations throughout the southern and eastern regions of Afghanistan successfully executed its primary mission to conduct special operations in support of the US efforts as delegated to Commander US CENTCOM through the Joint Forces Special Operations Component Command (CJFSOCC)



to destroy, degrade and neutralize the TB and AQ leadership and military. During its six month existence TF K-Bar was the driving force behind myriad combat missions conducted in Combined Joint Operation Area Afghanistan. These precedent setting and extremely high-risk missions included search and rescue, recovery dive ops, non-compliant boarding of high interest vessels, special reconnaissance, hydrographic reconnaissance, SSE [Sensitive Site Exploitation], DA missions apprehension of military and political detainees, destruction of multiple cave and tunnel complexes, identification and destruction of several known AQ training camps, explosion of thousands of pounds of enemy ordnance and successful coordination of UW operations for Afghanistan. The sailors, soldiers, Airmen, Marines and coalition partners of CJSOTF (S)/ TF K-Bar set an unprecedented 100 percent mission success rate across a broad spectrum of special operations missions while operating under extremely difficult and constantly dangerous conditions. They established benchmark standards of professionalism, tenacity, courage, tactical brilliance and operational excellence while demonstrating superb esprit de corps and maintaining the highest measures of combat readiness.<sup>112</sup>

In the aftermath of the award, the Canadian leadership took the opportunity to heap praise on the shadow warriors. “This citation from the U.S.,” announced Bill Graham, the MND, “signifies the outstanding counterterrorism and special operations capability that has been developed by the Canadian Forces.” He added, “JTF 2 has played a critical role in Canada’s contribution to the war against terrorism and will continue to be an important part of our domestic security.”<sup>113</sup>

Similarly, General Ray Hennault, the CDS at the time, asserted, “The presentation of the U.S. Presidential Unit Citation to members of JTF 2 brings important recognition to a group of incredible CF members whose



Figure 9. Members of JTF 2 conducting a maritime counterterrorism exercise. Photo courtesy DND.

accomplishments normally cannot be publicly recognized in the interest of national security.”<sup>114</sup> He concluded, “Canadians should be very proud of this specialized Canadian military unit.”<sup>115</sup>

The importance of the mission and the recognition of the CANSOF contribution were also evident in the governmental decision to double the size of JTF 2. The MND quickly realized the strategic impact at a relatively low cost, that even a small SOF task force could achieve. As such, he pushed for expansion.<sup>116</sup>

Despite the great effort and incredible results, the JTF 2 initial deployment to Afghanistan ended rather quickly. By late 2002, with the Taliban largely routed and the country entering what appeared to be a period of relative calm, Canada withdrew all of its forces from Afghanistan. However, it returned the following year as a contributor to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Kabul. As part of the redeployment, Canadian SOF also maintained a footprint in Afghanistan. Then in 2004, a request from the Americans prompted Canada to deploy another Canadian SOTF. This was no surprise since JTF 2’s performance had elicited praise from the American ambassador Paul Cellucci. He publicly stated, “Canada’s elite Tier 1 JTF 2 is as capable as any Tier 1 Special Forces in the world [and it] makes a significant contribution whenever deployed.”<sup>117</sup>

The request to deploy the SOTF was strongly supported by both the CDS General Rick Hillier and the deputy minister, D. M. Elcock. They explained:

The deployment of Canadian special operations forces to Afghanistan would make evident our ongoing commitment to an active engagement in the Campaign Against Terrorism and it would also demonstrate our direct burden sharing with our closest allies.

The deployment was also in consonance with ongoing strategic objectives for the CF in the global war on terrorism. The deployment would assist the government of Afghanistan in providing security and stability in the country and in supporting reconstruction activities; it would assist with the elimination of al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and other anti-coalition militants as continuing terrorist threats to international peace and security; and it would support efforts to address the humanitarian needs of Afghans.

Nevertheless, the high-level support was not surprising. After all, they were well versed in the strength of the unit. “One of my first visits,” acknowledged General Hillier, “was to Joint Task Force 2 (JTF 2), our special forces unit based near Ottawa, no strangers to me after the many operations.” He explained:

JTF 2 troopers are the Olympic athletes of soldiering, our version of gold medalists, taking on the most difficult missions and tasks with a level of skill and professionalism that has earned the respect of special forces units around the world. Like the British Special Air Service (SAS), they get the most dangerous and demanding of missions, from hostage rescues to acting as bodyguards for VIPs (like me!) to operating for long periods of time on their own in enemy territory.<sup>118</sup>

By 2005, the JTF 2 SOTF was back in country supporting OEF. Although originally committed for only a year, the mandate was continually extended up until time of writing. Their mission, however, remained largely unchanged. General Hillier affirmed that Canadian SOF had established a presence on Afghanistan battlefields, and that they were effectively disrupting the Taliban leadership.<sup>119</sup> He declared, “What we want to do is take out the [Taliban] commanders who are engaged in orchestrating, facilitating, paying, leading, planning and driving folks to attack us or attack the Afghans or attack the innocent.” He added, “And our special forces are focused very much on that. ... I said, during a recent speech, that we had removed from the battlefield six commanders who were responsible for the deaths of 21 Canadian soldiers.” Hillier explained, “Well that’s changed. We’ve removed seven commanders who have been responsible for the deaths of 27 soldiers.”<sup>120</sup>

Canadian scholars have reinforced Hillier’s revelations. A team studying operations in Kandahar province noted that “insurgent operations in 2007 were increasingly characterized by lack of co-ordination and poor planning, which could be attributed to the growing effectiveness of ISAF’s Special Operations Forces.” They explained:

SOF units from all ISAF contributor nations in the south were pooled for the task of arresting known bomb-making cell leaders,

drug lords, and a legal case prepared for their arrest, Canadian (and other ISAF) SOF troops would be deployed to apprehend the suspect. As often as not, if the target was a Tier 1 Taliban leader, he would try to shoot his way out, with predictable results. Consequently, Taliban command-and-control capacity in the south in 2007 was less effective than the previous fall.<sup>121</sup>

In addition, conventional commanders also spoke to the influence CANSOF was exerting in theater. A Canadian battle group commander noted the impressive effect SOF had on his area of operations in Kandahar.

The SOF strikes had a chilling effect on the Taliban. In one strike they killed an important leader and 16 of his fighters. The Taliban leadership in Kandahar City felt a lot of pressure from SOF. They were moving every day so we saw a reduction in activity. They [Taliban] were being disrupted - they were on the move, on the run.<sup>122</sup>

Brigadier-General Denis Thompson, the commander of CANSOFCOM at the time of publication confirmed, “The Taliban cannot operate with impunity anywhere in Kandahar largely because of all the SOF community, because it is an alliance, but certainly because CANSOF was focused on it.” He asserted that units such as JTF 2 provided force protection “by going after the networks and leadership of the Taliban in the South.” Thompson explained, “we call it force protection because we were protecting our force from all the threats that were out there. They [enemy forces] have not had the freedom of movement they would have liked, largely to the efforts of SOF.”<sup>123</sup>

And this was exactly the effect the CDS expected from his CANSOF SOTF. “Without the proactive operations necessary to precisely track [Taliban leaders] locate them and attack them,” insisted General Hillier, “they with their forces would still be trying to kill us.”<sup>124</sup> And so, as the campaign in the Canadian theater of operations evolved from 2005 to 2011, so too did the specific CANSOF tasks, as well as their tactics, techniques, and procedures, to ensure the standing CANSOF SOTF in Afghanistan provided the necessary effects to support the ongoing counterinsurgency efforts.



Figure 10. Taliban fighter receiving first aid prior to evacuation from the battlefield, 2005. Author's collection.

## Canadian Special Operations Command (CANSOFCOM)

The Afghanistan experience, as already noted, proved to be a watershed for CANSOF. Very quickly the tempo of operations, as well as the execution of the myriad of missions, clearly highlighted force structure concerns that prevented JTF 2 from reaching its full potential. A 2003 study paper written by CANSOF staff examined the lessons learned from the 2001-2002 mission in Afghanistan. It identified the need for a Tier 2 SOF capability within Canada to support JTF 2 operations. This call for additional resources did not fall on deaf ears.

In February 2005, General Hillier, the CDS, told his general officers at a special general/flag officer seminar in Cornwall, Ontario that “We need an integrated Canadian Forces that consists of maritime, air, land and special forces, woven together to make a more effective military.”<sup>125</sup> This was the first time that a CDS spoke of Canada’s SOF capability within the context as a fourth environment within the CF. Later that year, on 19 April 2005, General Hillier declared that he intended “on bringing JTF 2, along with

all the enablers that it would need, to conduct operations successfully into one organization with one commander.<sup>126</sup> This would prove to be a major step for CANSOF. As a result, on 1 February 2006, as part of the CF's transformation program, CANSOFCOM was created.<sup>127</sup>

The purpose of CANSOFCOM was clearly articulated as the need "to force develop, generate and, where required, employ and sustain Special Operations Task Forces (SOTF) capable of achieving tactical, operational and strategic effects required by the Government of Canada (GoC).<sup>128</sup> The command consisted of a small headquarters, JTF 2, a new "Tier 2" combatant unit called the Canadian Special Operations Regiment (CSOR), 427 Special Operations Aviation Squadron (SOAS) and the Joint Nuclear, Biological Chemical Defense Company (JNBCD Company), which was officially changed in September 2007 to the Canadian Joint Incident Response Unit (CJIRU).<sup>129</sup> The respective unit responsibilities were given as:

1. JTF 2 - Its mission is to provide a force capable of rendering armed assistance and surgical precise effects in the resolution of an issue that is, or has the potential of, affecting the national interest. The primary focus is counterterrorism; however, the unit is employed on other high value tasks such as special reconnaissance, DA and Defense, Diplomacy and Military Assistance (DDMA),<sup>130</sup>

2. CSOR - Its mission is to provide high readiness special operations forces capable of force generating for, and conducting, integrated SOTFs to execute operations on behalf of the Government of Canada. It is also responsible for conducting DA, Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations (NEO) and DDMA;

3. 427 Special Operations Aviation Squadron - Its mission is to generate and employ the integrated aviation element of CANSOFCOM high-readiness SOTFs for the conduct of domestic and international operations. Its range of tasks includes CT, DA and DDMA;

4. CJIRU - Its mission is to provide timely and agile broad based Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear (CBRN) support to the GoC in order to prevent, control, and mitigate CBRN threats to Canada, Canadians, and Canadian interests. The unit is a core member of the National CBRN Response Team, and is also responsible for conducting CT, SR and Counter Proliferation (CP). The unit has three key mandates:



- a. Respond to CBRN events in conjunction with other elements of the National CBRNE [explosive] Response Team;
- b. Provide an agile integral part of the CANSOFCOM Immediate Reaction Task Force (IRTF); and
- c. Specialized support to CF expeditionary operations.<sup>131</sup>

Although initially the core of CANSOFCOM was JTF 2, the Command has evolved. “We don’t talk about deploying units,” explained former CANSOFCOM commander Brigadier-General Mike Day, “We talk about deploying special operation task forces which are absolutely an amalgam of all the parts of this command.”<sup>132</sup> One such example was the publicly announced SOTF called “Arrowhead.” This task force (TF) was not created for a long-term mission, but instead was designed to allow the Canadian military to quickly put a “footprint” into a crisis area.<sup>133</sup> “Arrowhead will be the precursor” to a larger special forces task force if needed, Day explained.<sup>134</sup> He stated CSOR would be responsible for creating the necessary command team to coordinate the response to an international crisis or mission. However, the task force would be able to draw from personnel in various CANSOFCOM units as needed, and those assigned to TF Arrowhead would be on 24/7 alert to move out.<sup>135</sup>

The solidification of CANSOFCOM as the fourth service was also advanced when, on 4 February 2008, the CDS granted Honor Bearing status to JTF 2 and CSOR. This honor is “afforded to combatant units whose functional purpose is to close with and conquer, neutralize or destroy the enemy as an effective fighting force. Only combatant military units are entitled to be publicly recognized for active participation in battle against a formed and armed enemy through the award of battle honors and honorary distinctions.”<sup>136</sup> Moreover, the CDS also approved that the 1st Canadian Special Service Battalion (better known as the Canadian component of the FSSF) be perpetuated by CSOR. This meant that CSOR would carry the battles honors of the FSSF from the Second World War.<sup>137</sup>

Five years into its existence, CANSOFCOM has proven itself as an integral national capability. It has conducted operations domestically and around the world and throughout has demonstrated a high level of professionalism and expertise. It has provided DND and the GoC a unique capability that is unmatched elsewhere in the CF or any other governmental department. “I think it is fair to say the worth of Canada’s special forces

has been so completely proven to the chain of command -- the Canadian Forces and the government of Canada -- that the question is not, 'Does it survive? What is its structure?'" opined Brigadier-General Day, but rather, "the question is, 'How much do we want it to grow by?'"<sup>138</sup>

These were not hollow words. Others outside of the command agreed. "There is not a more tactically agile capability in the world," said retired Lieutenant-General Michael Gautier, a former commander of the Canadian Expeditionary Command. "They are," he insisted, "as good as any in the world, and what they do is function effectively in chaotic and complex environments."<sup>139</sup> A former CDS, Vice-Admiral Larry Murray insisted, "I don't know where we would be today if we didn't develop that [SOF] capability back in the 1990s."<sup>140</sup>

The current CDS apparently agreed. General Walter Natynczyk "praised the work of the country's SOF," and stated, "They've proven their worth during the past 17 years in war zones from Bosnia to Afghanistan."<sup>141</sup> Natynczyk insisted, "The units will remain essential in the future [since] we see that irregular warfare, the counterinsurgency we are seeing in Afghanistan, is occurring and could occur in other parts of the world." He noted, "The one strong aspect of special forces is that it is very surgical in nature. They need a high level of ... competence."<sup>142</sup> On 1 September 2011, the MND bestowed a new award on CANSOFCOM, namely the Minister of National Defense Award for Operational Excellence. This was done in recognition of exceptional performance, professionalism, and tremendous dedication in the conduct of operations in support to Canada's national effort in Afghanistan over the past decade.

And so, the national SOF legacy has shown that Canada's SOF organizations throughout their history have demonstrated courage and professionalism. From the earliest Ranger Tradition, through the Second World War and the Cold War, to the current campaign against terrorism, Canada's SOF capability has proven to be among the best in the world. CANSOFCOM continues this tradition at home and on the front lines in Afghanistan and other trouble spots around the world. Moreover, it continues to evolve and adapt to meet the future threats to the nation.





## Endnotes

1. Canada, Canadian Special Operations Command – 2008 (Ottawa: DND, 2008); and Canada, CANSOFCOM Capstone Concept for Special Operations 2009 (Ottawa: DND, 2009), 8.
2. See Bernd Horn, “La Petite Guerre: A Strategy of Survival,” in B. Horn, ed. *The Canadian Way of War. Serving the National Interest* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2006), 21-56; Bernd Horn, “Marin and Langy – Master Practitioners of la petite guerre,” in B. Horn and Roch Legault, eds., *Loyal Service: Perspectives of French-Canadian Military Leaders* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2007), 53-86; Bernd Horn, “Only for the Strong of Heart: Ranging and the Practice of La Petite Guerre During the Struggle for North America,” in B. Horn, ed., *Show No Fear: Daring Actions in Canadian Military History* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2008), 17-64; and B. Horn, “Terror on the Frontier: The Role of the Indians in the Struggle for North America,” in B. Horn, ed. *Forging a Nation: Perspectives on the Canadian Military Experience* (St. Catharines: Vanwell Publishers, 2002), 43-64.
3. With a population of only 60,000, New France faced the danger of being engulfed by its larger neighbor to the south, namely the English colonies that numbered approximately 1,500,000. The scale of the threat was enormous. During the French and Indian War, the English colonies outnumbered New France in manpower by nearly 25 to one. George F. Stanley, *Canada’s Soldiers. The Military History of an Unmilitary People* (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, 1960), 61; W.J. Eccles, “The French forces in North America during the Seven Years’ War,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* [henceforth DCB], Vol III, 1741 to 1770 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), xx; Robert Leckie, *A Few Acres of Snow - The Saga of the French and Indian Wars* (Toronto: John Wiley & Sons, 1999), 103; and A. Doughty, *The Siege of Quebec and the Battle of the Plains of Abraham*, Vol I (Quebec: Dussault & Proulx, 1901), 158.
4. *Impartial Hand. The Contest in America Between Great Britain and France with Its Consequences and Importance* (London: Strand, 1757), 128. The writer also notes that the Indians and Canadians who travel without baggage, support themselves with stores and magazines and who maintain themselves in the woods “do more execution ... than four or fives time their number of our men.” *Ibid.*, 138. See also W.J. Eccles, *The French in North America 1500-1783* (Markham, ON: Fitzheny & Whiteside, 1998), 208; Edward P. Hamilton, ed., *Adventures in the Wilderness. The American Journals of Louis Antoine de Bougainville, 1756-1760* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 333; and M. Pouchot, *Memoirs on the Late War in North America between France and England* (originally Yverdon, 1781-reprint Youngstown, NY: Old Fort Niagara Association, Inc., 1994), 78.
5. Walter O’Meara, *Guns at the Forks* (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 1965), 85. See also Stephen Brumwell, *Redcoats. British Soldiers and War in the Americas, 1755-63* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 2002); and Ian K. Steele, *Guerillas and Grenadiers* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1969).

6. "Memoir on the Defense of the Fort of Carillon," *The Bulletin of the Fort Ticonderoga Museum*, Vol 13, No. 3, 1972, 200-1; Ian K. Steele, *Betrayals. Fort William Henry & the Massacre* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 96; and Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War* ( New York: Vintage Books, 2001), 187.
7. The deep strikes into English territory during the Seven Year's War consistently disrupted British campaign plans and kept them on the defensive from the summer of 1755 until 1758. Moreover, it ravaged frontier settlements, economies, and public morale. The raids terrorized the frontier and tied down large numbers of troops for rear security. The plight of the English colonists could not be ignored by their political leaders. The incursions into Virginia alone caused the governor there to raise 10 militia companies, a total of 1,000 men, for internal defense. Similarly, Pennsylvania raised 1,500 provincial troops and built a string of forts extending from New Jersey to Maryland in an attempt to try to impede the raiders. See Letter from General Shirley to Major-General Abercromby, 27 June 1756, Public Records Office (PRO), War Office (WO) 1/4, Correspondence, 1755-1763. See also Robert C. Alberts, *The Most Extraordinary Adventures of Major Robert Stobo* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company Boston, 1965), 152. See also Anderson, 637; Leckie, 101; Letter From William Shirley (New York) to Principal Secretary of War, 20 December 1755, PRO, WO 1/4, Correspondence, 1755-1763; H.R. Casgrain, ed., *Lettres du Chevalier De Lévis concernant La Guerre du Canada 1756-1760* (Montreal: C.O. Beauchemin & Fils, 1889), 75; Steele, *Guerillas and Grenadiers*, 24; Le Comte Gabriél de Mauris de Malartic, *Journal des Campagnes au Canada de 1755 A 1760* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1902), 52-53; 232; and O'Meara, 161.
8. DCB, Vol III, 260.
9. *Ibid.*, 261.
10. DCB, Vol IV, 1771-1800 (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1979), 308.
11. Rogers was a smuggler prior to the war. On Robert Rogers and his rangers the definitive work is Burt G. Loescher, *The History of Rogers Rangers. Volume I - The Beginnings Jan 1755 - 6 April 1758* (Bowie, Maryland: Heritage Books, Inc., (1946) reprint 2001) and *Genesis Rogers Rangers. Volume II - The First Green Berets* (San Mateo, California, 1969. Reprint - Bowie, Maryland: Heritage Books, Inc., 2000). See also John R. Cuneo, *Robert Rogers of the Rangers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959); DCB, Vol IV, 1771-1800, 679-682; Timothy J. Todish, *The Annotated and Illustrated Journals of Major Robert Rogers* (Fleischmanns, NY: Purple Mountain Press, 2002); and *Warfare on the Colonial American Frontier: The Journals of Major Robert Rogers [Journals of Major Robert Rogers] & An Historical Account of the Expedition Against the Ohio Indians in the year 1764, Under the Command of Henry Bouquet, Esq.* (Reprinted from an original 1769 Edition - Bargersville, IN: Dreslar Publishing, 2001).
12. Cuneo, 33.
13. See Rogers' Journal, 13-14; Loescher, Vol 1, 63-64 and 87; Brumwell, 213; and Cuneo, 32-33.

14. Quoted in René Chartrand, *Canadian Military Heritage*, Vol II, 1000-1754 (Montreal: Art Global Inc., 1993), 49; and Letter, Thomas Gage to Amherst, Albany, 18 February 1759. PRO, WO 34/46A, Amherst Papers.
15. See DCB, Vol IV, 308; and Chartrand, *Canadian Military Heritage*, Vol II, 49.
16. Ironically, despite the apparent utility and arguable success of rangers, as well as the constant calls for their employment, they never became fully accepted by their professional counterparts. During the war they were never taken on to the official strength of the British Army. Moreover, their lax discipline, disheveled if not unruly appearance, as well as their manner of war making was simply unacceptable to most British officers. "I am afraid," lamented Lord Loudoun, "[that] I shall be blamed for the ranging companies." Quoted in Loescher, Vol 1, 164.
17. The last of the British troops were evacuated from the beaches of Dunkirk on 2 June 1940. Approximately 53,000 French troops were evacuated 3-4 June. The British Admiralty estimated that approximately 338,226 men were evacuated between 26 May and 3 June. The British left behind 2,000 guns, 60,000 trucks, 76,000 tons of ammunition, and 600,000 tons of fuel and supplies. Cesare Salmaggi and Alfredo Pallavisini, *2194 Days of War* (New York: Gallery Books, 1988), 4 June 1940; and I.C.R. Dear, ed., *The Oxford Companion to World War II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 312-313. Another account gives the losses as 475 tanks, 38,000 vehicles, 12,000 motorcycles, 8,000 telephones, 1,855 wireless sets, 7,000 tons of ammunition, 90,000 rifles, 1,000 heavy guns, 2,000 tractors, 8,000 Bren guns, and 400 antitank guns. On 6 June the War Cabinet was informed that there were fewer than 600,000 rifles and only 12,000 Bren guns in the whole of the UK. John Parker, *Commandos. The Inside Story of Britain's Most Elite Fighting Force* (London: Headline Book Publishing, 2000), 15. Yet another source gives the losses as: stores and equipment for 500,000 men, about 100 tanks, 2,000 other vehicles, 600 guns, and large stocks of ammunition. A.J. Barker, *Dunkirk: The Great Escape* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1977), 224. A major problem with determining numbers is the actual categorization of equipments.
18. Cecil Aspinall-Oglander, Roger Keyes. *Being the Biography of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Keyes of Zeebrugge and Dover* (London: Hogarth Press, 1951), 380.
19. *Ibid.*, 380.
20. Quoted in John Terraine, *The Life and Times of Lord Mountbatten* (London: Arrow Books, 1980), 83.
21. Hilary St. George Saunders, *The Green Beret. The Story of the Commandos* (London: Michael Joseph, 1956), 118.
22. Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War. Their Finest Hour* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1949), 246-247. See also Colonel J.W. Hackett, "The Employment of Special Forces," *Royal United Services Institute (RUSI)*, Vol 97, No. 585, February 1952, 28. Churchill later penned a note to President Franklin D. Roosevelt that revealed his mind set. "[The] essence of defense," he asserted, "is to attack the enemy upon us - leap at his throat and keep the grip until the life

- is out of him.” Quoted in William Stevenson, *A Man Called Intrepid* (Guilford, Connecticut: The Lyons Press, 2000), 131.
23. William Mackenzie, *The Secret History of SOE* (London: St Ermin’s Press, 2000), xvii.
  24. *Ibid.*, 754. The SOE operated worldwide with the exception of the Soviet Union. It consisted of two branches—one to provide facilities (i.e. money, clothing, forged papers, training, weapons, ciphers, and signals), the other to execute missions.
  25. Denis Riggin, *SOE Syllabus. Lessons in Ungentlemanly Warfare, WWII* (London: Public Records Office, 2001), 1.
  26. *Ibid.*, 11. Once the U.S. was in the war the second function became the most important. Camp X and its staff assisted large numbers of Americans from the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and the Office of War Information to set up their own schools and train their own staff. The OSS was created in June 1942. It functioned as the principal U.S. intelligence organization in all theaters for remainder of WWII. It was the counterpart to British intelligence service MI6 and the SOE. See also Lynn-Philip Hodgson, *Inside Camp X* (Port Perry, ON: Blake Book Distribution, 2000).
  27. Roy Maclaren, *Canadians Behind Enemy Lines, 1939-1945* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), 150, 172. 199-200. Approximately 3,226 personnel including all services and civilian employees were employed in the SOE by 1942. By 30 April 1944, the total strength rose to 11,752. Mackenzie, 717-719.
  28. Cited in Peter Wilkinson and Joan Bright Astley, *Gubbins & SOE* (London: Leo Cooper, 1997), i. The SOE disbanded in January 1946.
  29. *Combined Operations. The Official Story of the Commandos* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1943), 16; and Aspinall-Oglander, 381.
  30. “Hand-out to Press Party Visiting The Commando Depot Achnacarry, 9-12 January 1943,” 2. PRO, DEFE 2/5, War Diary COC.
  31. Brigadier T.B.L. Churchill, “The Value of Commandos,” *RUSI*, Vo 65, No. 577, February 1950, 85.
  32. Charles Messenger, *The Commandos 1940-1946* (London: William Kimber, 1985), 411. For a detailed account of the British raiding policy and the creation of the commandos see Bernd Horn, “Strength Born From Weakness: The Establishment of the Raiding Concept and the British Commandos,” *Canadian Military Journal*, Vol 6, No. 3, Autumn 2005, 59-68.
  33. George Kerr, “Viking Force. Canada’s Unknown Commandos,” *Canadian Military History*, Vol 9, No. 4, Autumn 2000, 28.
  34. *Ibid.*, 29.
  35. In December 1940, the commandos were renamed Special Service Units. However, by February 1941 the Special Service Units were split up and commandos, as independent units, emerged once again. This was a result of the decision to deploy a number of commandos to the Middle East. Nonetheless, the 11 commandos which existed were grouped in a Special Service (SS) Brigade. The SS Brigade’s

primary mission remained that of carrying out raids. However, it was also given the secondary tasks of acting as an elite or shock assault brigade to seize and hold a bridgehead to cover a landing in force, as well as providing specially trained covering forces for any operation. "Organization and Training of British Commandos," Intelligence Training Bulletin No. 3, Headquarters First Special Service Force (FSSF), 11 November 1942, 2. Department of defense (DND) Directorate of History and Heritage (DHH), file 145.3009 (D5), Organization and Instructions for the 1st Canadian Special Service Battalion, July 1944-December 1944.

36. Kerr, 30.
37. *Ibid.*, 33.
38. The ill-fated Dieppe Raid led to recriminations of callousness, incompetence, negligence, and security violations. The original raid, code named Rutter, was cancelled on 7 July 1942 because of bad weather. Mountbatten later resurrected it, under questionable authority, under the code name Jubilee on 19 August. In total, 4,963 Canadians, 1,075 British, and 50 American Rangers took part. In short, a lack of adequate air support and naval gunfire (due to the absence of battleships), as well as the failure of the armor to gain lodgment, compounded by communication errors, the very narrow channeled approaches over open ground for the assaulting forces and the strong German fortifications, led to an unmitigated disaster. The Canadians suffered 3,367 (killed, wounded, or captured) casualties of the 4,963 that participated. The British casualties amounted to 275. The Royal Navy lost one destroyer and 33 landing craft and the RAF lost 106 aircraft. See Brian Loring Villa, *Mountbatten and the Dieppe Raid* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 1994); Brigadier-General Denis Whitaker and Shelagh Whitaker, *Dieppe – Tragedy to Triumph* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1992); and Will Fowler, *The Commandos At Dieppe: Rehearsal for D-Day* (London: Harper-Collins, 2002).
39. E.G. Finley, *RCN Beach Commando 'W'* (Ottawa: Gilmour Reproductions, 1994), 1.
40. *Ibid.*, 2. It is divided into three beach parties each commanded by a beach master. Due to the arduous requirements of employment, special medical requirements (relative to those imposed on other RCN volunteers) were imposed on volunteers: under 35 years of age; mental stability, with no family history of mental disease or disorder; no history of chronic illness (e.g. bronchitis, asthma, TB, rheumatism, arthritis, heart, ear); standard visual acuity and hearing; and free from VD. *Ibid.*, 10.
41. *Ibid.*, viii-5.
42. The conceptual model for selection was such that one journalist quipped, "You've practically got to be Superman's 2IC in order to get in." "Canada's Jumping Jacks!" *Khaki. The Army Bulletin*, Vol 1, No. 22, 29 September 1943, 1. For a detailed examination of 1 Cdn Para Bn see Bernd Horn and Michel Wycyznski, *Canadian Airborne Forces since 1942* (London: Osprey, 2006); B. Horn and M. Wycyznski, *Paras Versus the Reich. Canada's Paratroopers at War, 1942-1945* (Toronto:

- Dundurn Press, 2003); B. Horn and M. Wyczynski, *Tip of the Spear - An Intimate Portrait of the First Canadian Parachute Battalion, 1942-1945* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2002); and B. Horn and M. Wyczynski, *In Search of Pegasus - The Canadian Airborne Experience, 1942 - 1999* (St Catharines: Vanwell Publishing, 2000).
43. Robert Taylor, "Paratroop Van Eager to be Tip of Army 'Dagger,'" *Toronto Daily Star*, 12 August 1942. 1 Cdn Para Bn Assn Archives, Lockyer, Mark, file 10-3.
  44. James C. Anderson, "Tough, Hard-As-Nails Paratroopers Arrive to Open Shilo School," 22 September 1942, 1. Cdn Para Bn Assn Archives, Firlotte, Robert, file 2-11; "Toughest in Canada's Army Back for Paratroop Course," *The Star*, 21 September 1942. 1 Cdn Para Bn Assn Archives, Firlotte, Robert, file 2-11; and Ronald K Keith, "Sky Troops," *Maclean's Magazine*, 1 August 1943, 18-20 & 28. This is simply a representative sample. Virtually every article in newspapers nation wide used similar adjectives to describe Canada's "newest corps elite." See also . "Assembling Paratroopers At Calgary," *Globe and Mail*, Vol XCIX, No. 28916, 18 August 1942, 13. LAC, microfilm N-20035; and Robert Taylor, "Paratroop Van Eager to be Tip of Army 'Dagger,'" *Toronto Daily Star*, 12 August 1942. 1 Cdn Para Bn Assn Archives, Lockyer, Mark, file 10-3.
  45. "Assembling Paratroopers At Calgary," *Globe and Mail*, Vol XCIX, No. 28916, 18 August 1942, 13. LAC, microfilm N-20035; and Robert Taylor, "Paratroop Van Eager to be Tip of Army 'Dagger,'" *Toronto Daily Star*, 12 August 1942. 1 Cdn Para Bn Assn Archives, Lockyer, Mark, file 10-3.
  46. "Assembling Paratroopers At Calgary," *Globe and Mail*, Vol XCIX, No. 28916, 18 August 1942, 13. LAC, microfilm N-20035.
  47. James C. Anderson, "Canada's Paratroopers Don't Have Stage Fright," *Saturday Night*, No. 11, 12 December 1942, 11. LAC, microfilm 56A.
  48. 2 Cdn Para Bn was the higher priority of the two units. National defense Headquarters (NDHQ) directed the commanding officer of 1 Cdn Para Bn to transfer all jump qualified personnel who volunteered to 2 Cdn Para Bn. The rumor that 1 Cdn Para Bn's supposed sister unit would see action before they would quickly circulated through the ranks of 1 Cdn Para Bn. Predictably, many of the aggressive and action-seeking paratroopers transferred to 2 Cdn Para Bn.
  49. The definitive history on the FSSF to date is Lieutenant-Colonel Robert D. Burhans, *The First Special Service Force. A War History of the North Americans 1942-1944* (Nashville: The Battery Press, 1996). He was the FSSF S2 (intelligence officer). See also Major J.W. Ostiguy, Army Historical Section , "The First Special Service Force," 14 March 1951, 1, DND, Directorate of History and Heritage (Hereafter DHH), file 145.3003 (D1); Joseph A. Springer, *The Black Devil Brigade. The True Story of the First Special Service Force in World War II* (Pacifica, CA: Military History, 2001); Robert Todd Ross, *The Supercommandos. First Special Service Force - 1942-1944* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Military History, 2000); Colonel George Walton, *The Devil's Brigade* (Philadelphia: Chilton Books, 1966); and James A. Wood, *We Move Only Forward. Canada, the United States and the First Special Service Force 1942-1944* (St. Catharines, ON: Vanwell, 2006).

50. Norway represented an important source of scarce ores vital to the war effort. For example, Norwegian molybdenum was an important steel-hardening alloy and it represented 70 percent of the German supply, 95 percent of which came from deposits from the Knaben mine in the south of Norway. In addition, Finnish nickel refined in Norway represented 70 percent of the German intake; Norwegian aluminum and copper 8 percent respectively. Burhans, 33.
51. The Romanian and Italian missions were quickly ruled out. In the case of Romania, approximately three million tons of oil was annually supplied to the Axis powers. The oil emanated from approximately 5,000 oil wells clustered in various fields within a 50 mile radius of Ploesti. The magnitude of the objective and the manpower required to effectively neutralize the target (i.e. thousands of wells) particularly in light of the heavy defenses in the area proved no less resource intensive than using a strategic bombing campaign. Therefore, these factors combined with the fact that there was no reasonable extraction plan for the raiding force, it was dropped as a possible target. The Italian option was no less problematic. This hydro-electric capacity was concentrated in only 12 power stations, but, they extended along the northern Po River watershed from the French border to across Italy. More importantly, the actual impact of a temporary stoppage on the German war effort would be minimal. Burhans, 30-33.
52. The actual breakdown of the 697 was: Colonel (2i/c) - 1; Lieutenant-Colonels or Majors - 4; Majors or Captains - 6; Lieutenants - 36; Other Ranks - 650. Message from Canadian Military Attaché to Defensor, Washington, 16 July 1942. LAC, RG 24, file HQS 20-4-32, Mobilization and Organization, (Vol 1), Plough Project, (1 CSSBN). Microfilm reel C-5436.
53. Letter from Lieutenant-Colonel C.M. Drury, Assistant Military Attaché, Canadian Legation, Washington to the Directorate of Military Operations & Intelligence, NDHQ, Washington, 7 July 1942. LAC, RG 24, Vol 15301, 1st Canadian Special Service Battalion, [Hereafter 1 CSSBN] War Diary, August 1942.
54. The average age of the Forcemen between July 1942 and December 1943 was 26 years old. This was considerably higher than other U.S. Army units. Lieutenant-Colonel Paul Adams, the Force's executive officer, later pointed out that this was a very important factor in the Force's cohesion and maturity. Major Scott R. McMichael, "The First Special Service Force," in *A Historical Perspective on Light Infantry*, (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, Research Survey No. 6, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1987), 172.
55. Ross Munro, "Albertan Second in Command Of Allies' Super-Commandos," Unidentified Canadian newspaper clipping, 6 August 1942, LAC, RG 24, Vol 15301, August 1942. 1st Canadian Special Service Battalion, [Hereafter 1 CSSBN] War Diary, Serial 1354, August 1942.
56. Memorandum, CCO to CCHQ, "Plough Scheme," 19 January 1943. PRO, DEFE 2/6, COC War Diary.



57. Don Mason, "Air Commandos' Will Strike Hard at Axis," newspaper clipping, unknown publication, 2nd Canadian Parachute Battalion War Diary, LAC, RG 24, Vol 15301, August 1942.
58. Quoted in Burhans, 35. See also: Memorandum, McQueen to CGS, 8 October 1942. LAC, RG 24, HQS 20-4-32, "Mobilization Organization (1 Special Service Battalion), Reel C-5436; Message, Canmilitary to Defensor (Stuart to Murchie), GSD 2088, 8 October 1942. LAC, RG 24, CMHQ, Vol 12,305, File 3/Plough/1 "Organization and Operation of Proposed Plough Project."
59. Memorandum, McQueen to CGS, 8 October 1942. LAC, RG 24, HQS 20-4-32, "Mobilization Organization (1 Special Service Battalion), Reel C-5436. See also Message, Canmilitary to Defensor (Stuart to Murchie), GSD 2088, 8 October 1942. LAC, RG 24, CMHQ, Vol 12,305, File 3/Plough/1 "Organization and Operation of Proposed Plough Project." James Wood, "Matters Canadian" and the Problem with Being Special. Robert T. Frederick on the First Special Service Force," Canadian Military History, Vol 12, No. 4, Autumn 2003, 21.
60. See Message, Military Attache to DEFENSOR, Ottawa, MA1286 16/7, 12 July 1942. LAC, RG 24, HQS 20-4-32, Mobilization Organization Plough Project (1st SS Bn), Reel C-5436; "Minutes of Meeting Held at C.O.H.Q. On 4.1.43 To Discuss Long – and Short – Term Policy Regarding Norwegian Operations," para 4., "Cobblestone Operations." PRO, DEFE 2/6, COC War Diary; Peter Layton Cottingham, Once Upon A Wartime. A Canadian Who Survived the Devil's Brigade (Private Printing, 1996), 49; and Burhans, 36.
61. Burhans, 37; Letter, Marshall to Pope, "Second Canadian Parachute Battalion," 17 October 1942. LAC, RG 24, HQS-2-32, Employment and Movement Operations, 1st Special Service Battalion, Reel C-5489.
62. Telegram DEFENSOR to CANMILITRY, No. G.S.D. 2088, 8 October 1942. LAC, RG 24, HQS-2-32, Employment and Movement Operations, 1st Special Service Bn.
63. Ibid. Not surprisingly the CGS suggested that McNaughton determine whether the British would welcome the 2nd Parachute Battalion in their Airborne Division, or if he would consider adding it to the First Canadian Army so as to develop options in the event the Americans cancelled their participation.
64. Letter, Marshall to Pope, "Second Canadian Parachute Battalion," 17 October 1942. LAC, RG 24, HQS-2-32, Employment and Movement Operations, 1st Special Service Battalion, Reel C-5489.
65. Letter, Pope to CGS, "Second Canadian Parachute Battalion," 20 October 1942. LAC, RG 24, HQS-2-32, Employment and Movement Operations, 1st Special Service Battalion, Reel C-5489. See also Telegram DEFENSOR to CANMILITRY, No. G.S.D. 2088, 8 October 1942. LAC, RG 24, HQS-2-32, Employment and Movement Operations, 1st Special Service Bn.
66. Minutes of the War Cabinet Committee, 28 October 1942. LAC, RG 2, Series A-5-B Cabinet War Committee, Minutes and Documents of the Cabinet War Committee, Vol 11, Meeting no. 201, 28 October 1942, Reel C-4874.

67. The success of the various SOF raids at the onset of the war drove Hitler to extreme reaction. On 18 October 1942, he issued his famous “Commando Order” that directed that “all men operating against German troops in so-called Commando raids in Europe or in Africa are to be annihilated to the last man.” Enemy intelligence summaries bluntly acknowledged that “men selected for this sort of Commando [mission] by the enemy are well trained and equipped for their task.” So incensed was the German dictator by their constant attacks that he ordered them killed “whether they be soldiers in uniform...whether fighting or seeking to escape...even if these individuals on discovery make obvious their intention of giving themselves up as prisoners.” He insisted that “no pardon is on any account to be given.” See 10 Pz Div Circular, “Sabotage and Commando Operations,” 10 January 1943. PRO, DEFE 2/6, War Diary, COC; John Parker, *Commandos. The Inside Story of Britain’s Most Elite Fighting Force* (London: Headline Book Publishing, 2000), 2-3; and Julian Thompson, *War Behind Enemy Lines* (Washington D.C.: Brassey’s, 2001), 127.
68. Letter, Lieutenant-General McNaughton to Major-General Crerar, 19 August 1941. LAC, RG 24, Vol 12260, File: 1 Para Tps / 1, Message (G.S. 1647).
69. The school itself faced a tenuous future. Its survival hung in the air pending the final decision on the structure of the post-war army.
70. The JAS / CJATC mission included:  
 Research in Airportability of Army personnel and equipment;  
 User Trials of equipment, especially under cold weather conditions;
- a. Limited Development and Assessment of Airborne equipment; and
  - b. Training of Paratroop volunteers; training in Airportability of personnel and equipment; training in maintenance of air; advanced training of Glider pilots in exercises with troops; training in some of the uses of light aircraft.
- See “The Organization of an Army Air Center In Canada,” 29 November & 27 December 1945. DHH 168.009 (D45).
71. For a detailed history of the Cdn SAS Coy, see Bernd Horn, “A Military Enigma: The Canadian Special Air Service Company, 1948-49,” *Canadian Military History*, Vol 10, No. 1, Winter 2001, 21-30.
72. “SAS Company - JAS (Army), 13 June 1947. LAC, RG 24, Reel C-8255, File HQS 88-60-2.
73. “SAS Company,” 30 October 1947, 4 and “Requested Amendment to Interim Plan – SAR,” 11 September 1947. LAC, RG 24, Reel C-8255, File HQS 88-60-2.
74. “SAS Company - JAS (Army), 13 June 1947, Appendix A. LAC, RG 24, Reel C-8255, File HQS 88-60-2.
75. “Special Air Service Company - Implementation Policy,” 12 September 1947. NAC, RG 24, Reel C-8255, File HQS 88-60-2.
76. “SAS Company,” 30 October 1947 (Air S94), LAC, RG 24, Reel C-8255, File HQS 88-60-2.

77. "SAS Terms of Reference," 16 April 1948; "Duties of the SAS Coy," 29 January 1948; SAS Coy - Air Training Directive," December 1948. LAC, RG 24, Reel C-8255, File HQS 88-60-2.
78. "SAS Company," 27 October 1948. LAC, RG 24, Reel C-8255, File HQS 88-60-2.
79. Luc Charron, "Loss of a Canadian Hero," *The Maroon Beret*, Vol 4 No. 2, August 1999, 28.
80. Interviews of former serving members by author. See endnote 73 for additional details.
81. See Bernd Horn, *Bastard Sons: A Critical Examination of the Canadian Airborne Experience, 1942-1995*. (St. Catharines: Vanwell Publishers, 2001); George Kitching, *Mud and Green Fields. The Memoirs of Major-General George Kitching* (St. Catharines, ON: Vanwell Publishing Ltd., 1986), 248; "Command, Mobile Striking Force," 21 October 1948. DHH 112.3M2 (D369); and Sean Maloney, "The Mobile Striking Force and Continental defense 1948-1955," *Canadian Military History*, Vol 2, No. 2, August 1993, 78.
82. "Special Parachute Force is Planned," *The Gazette*, 7 December 1966, 1.
83. Special Committee on defense. *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence*, 21 June 1966, 298-299.
84. Colonel D.H. Rochester, "The Birth of a Regiment," *The Maroon Beret*, 20th Anniversary Issue, 1988, 34.
85. For a definitive history of the Cdn AB Regt see Bernd Horn, *Bastard Sons: A Critical Examination of the Canadian Airborne Experience, 1942-1995* (St. Catharines: Vanwell Publishers, 2001).
86. "Formation of the Canadian Airborne Regiment - Activation and Terms of Reference," 15 May 1967, 3.
87. *Ibid.*, 3.
88. *Ibid.*, 2.
89. The official CF magazine announced the creation of the Cdn AB Regt and underlined its special mandate. It noted, "Some personnel will be trained to carry out deep penetration patrols, while others in all arms of the regiment will be trained in underwater diving techniques. There will be jumpers who specialize in High Altitude Low Opening (HALO) techniques for infiltrations patrols or pathfinder duties...Scattered throughout the Regiment will be soldiers who speak a variety of second languages." Major K.G. Roberts, "Canadian Airborne Regiment," *Sentinel*, June 1968, 2.
90. "Canadian Airborne Regiment - Operational Concept, Annex C" (written by the Cdn AB Regt planning staff) and CFP 310 (1) - Airborne, Volume 1, *The Canadian Airborne Regiment, 1968*, Chapter 1, Sect 2, "Role, Capabilities and Employment."
91. The move and reorganization, however, became a defining moment for the Cdn AB Regt. It signaled nothing short of the organization's eventual demise. Of prime

importance, and instrumental to the Regiment's subsequent decline, was the loss of independent formation status. It was now simply an integral part of the newly created SSF. The Cdn AB Regt became nothing more than just another infantry unit, albeit an airborne one. It lost its special exemption from taskings and was now given assignments in the same manner as the other units within the SSF. However, there was a more serious consequence. As the Regiment became defined and viewed as just another infantry unit, its claim on seasoned officers and soldiers was dismissed. Tragically, it lost its preferred manning. It was no longer in the envious position of receiving only experienced and mature leaders and men. Prior to the reorganization all riflemen within the commandos had to be qualified to the rank of corporal. This of course meant that those soldiers were generally more mature and experienced. However, after the move to CFB Petawawa, the former pre-requisite was no longer followed. The resultant influx of younger, immature, and junior soldiers had an eventual impact on the character and reputation of the Cdn AB Regt. See Horn, *Bastard Sons*, 143-184.

92. The SSF was formerly 2 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group (CMBG). It reverted back to 2 CMBG in 1995.
93. Incidents included: the mistreatment of prisoners on several occasions; the alleged unjustified shooting and resultant death of an intruder; and the torture death of an apprehended thief. These occurrences ultimately defined the Airborne's achievements in the public consciousness. For additional details see Horn, *Bastard Sons*, 185-248.
94. See Horn, *Bastard Sons*, 185-209.
95. *Ibid.*, 217-248.
96. Brigadier-General Jim Cox, interview with author, 27 April 2010.
97. See Peter Harclerode, *Secret Soldiers. Special Forces in the War Against Terrorism* (London: Cassell & Co, 2000); Paul de B. Taillon, *The Evolution of Special Forces in Counter-Terrorism* (Westport: Praeger, 2001); Benjamin Netanyahu, *Fighting Terrorism* (New York: Noonday Press, 1995); Christopher Dobson and Ronald Payne, *The Terrorists* (New York: Facts on File, 1995); Landau, 187-201; Marquis, 62-65; and Brian MacDonald, ed., *Terror* (Toronto: The Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, 1986).
98. New units were created or existing ones assigned new tasks. For example, the Germans established Grenzschutzgruppe 9 (GSG 9) in September 1972; the British assigned the Counter-Terrorist (CT) role to the SAS that year same year; the French formed the Groupe d'Intervention de la Gendarmerie Nationale (GIGN) two years later; the Belgians created the Escadron Special D'Intervention (ESI) also in 1974; the United States formed its premier CT unit in 1977; and the Italians raised the Gruppo d'Intervento Speciale (GIS) in 1978. In the end, most countries developed specialist CT organizations to deal with the problem. See Major-General Ulrich Wegener, "The Evolution of Grenzschutzgruppe (GSG) 9 And the Lessons of 'Operation Magic Fire' in Mogadishu," in Bernd Horn, David Last and Paul B. de Taillon, *Force of Choice- Perspectives on Special Operations*

- (Montreal: McGill-Queens Press, 2004, Chapter 7; David Miller, *Special Forces* (London: Salamander Books, 2001), 18-73; Harclerode, 264-285 & 411; Adams, 160-162; Marquis, 63-65; Weale, 201-235; Colonel Charlie Beckwith, *Delta Force* (New York: Dell, 1983); Connor, 262-356; Neillands, 204-246; and Leroy Thompson, *The Rescuers. The World's Top Anti-Terrorist Units* (London: A David & Charles Military Book, 1986).
99. Discussion between author and a former lieutenant-governor of Ontario who was a member of the federal government at the time, 21 June 2006. This speaks to the perceptions of many senior conventional leaders with regards to SOF at that point in time.
  100. Brigadier-General Ray Romses, the first JTF 2 CO, stated that part of the rationale for the transfer was the government's emphasis on "economizing how it did business." As such, with the Cold War over and DND looking for new roles, the Deputy Ministers of the various departments rationalized that the 75 RCMP officers at SERT, who only trained, would be more beneficial doing actual police work, while DND which was effective at training and looking for a new role could do HR/CT. Interview with author, 21 June 2008.
  101. DND News Release NR-04.098, dated 8 December 2004, "Joint Task Force Two Members Receive U.S. Presidential Unit Citation." Direct Action are short duration strikes and other precise small-scale offensive actions conducted by special operation forces to seize, destroy, capture, exploit, recover, or damage designated targets. Direct action differs from conventional offensive actions in the level of physical and political risk, operational techniques, and the degree of discriminate and precise use of force to achieve specific objectives. Special Reconnaissance are missions conducted to collect or verify information of strategic or operational significance. These actions complement and refine other collection methods but are normally directed upon extremely significant areas of interest. SSE is a type of direct action operation involving the gathering of intelligence and/or evidence from a specific area or location. SSEs may be conducted in friendly, hostile, denied or politically sensitive territory. SSEs may include the destruction of weapons, munitions or equipment if the aforementioned items cannot be recovered. If there is no reasonable expectation of encountering enemy or hostile forces, SOF would not be required.
  102. CANSOF utilizes an integrated operating concept that is based on SOTFs. The concept is predicated on a broad spectrum of SOF capabilities, which in the event of a deliberate deployment or crisis, are tailored and scaled into an integrated force package. SOTFs are developed, generated and, where required, force employed in order to achieve tactical, operational and strategic effects required by the Government of Canada. See Canada, *Canadian Special Operations Command – 2008* (Ottawa: DND, 2008); and Canada, *CANSOFCOM Capstone Concept for Special Operations 2009* (Ottawa: DND, 2009), 11 for additional detail.
  103. Allan Woods, "Canada's elite commandos and the invasion of Afghanistan," *The Star.Com*, <http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/afghanmission/article/800296-forged-in-the-fire-of-afghanistan> accessed 25 April 2010.

104. "Ottawa: Canadian Commandos Were on Afghan Frontlines," [http://circ.jmellon.com/docs/html/jtf2\\_canada\\_super\\_commandos.html](http://circ.jmellon.com/docs/html/jtf2_canada_super_commandos.html), accessed 12 March 2004.
105. Ibid.
106. Martin O'Malley, "JTF 2: Canada's Super-Secret Commandos," CBC News, [http://circ.jmellon.com/docs/html/jtf2\\_canada\\_super\\_commandos.html](http://circ.jmellon.com/docs/html/jtf2_canada_super_commandos.html), accessed 12 March 2004.
107. Cited in Allan Woods, "Canada's elite commandos and the invasion of Afghanistan," The Star.Com, <http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/afghanmission/article/800296--forged-in-the-fire-of-afghanistan> accessed 25 April 2010.
108. All non-attributed quotes are based on interviews with author.
109. Day noted, "we went through a pretty low period before Clyde [Russell] came in [as CO]. We started to suffer training fatigue – we were among the best, if not the best in the world at hostage rescue." But the problem was – they were never deployed. Many worried they had inherited some RCMP cultural affectations – a police mentality in many ways. The "two way range in Afghanistan forced us to adopt a more warrior mentality."
110. Interview with author.
111. Then Colonel Mike Day, 5 March 2008. Day became the second commander of Canadian Special Operations Command, in July 2008.
112. The citation package also provided a brief history of CJSOTF (South): CJSOTF(S)/ TF K-Bar – in October 2001 in response to the terrorist attacks of 9/11 Commander US CENTCOM directed the establishment of a combined joint special operation task force (CJSOTF) to conduct special operations in Southern Afghanistan to destroy, degrade and neutralize Taliban and Al Qaeda forces. Captain (Navy) Robert Harward, US Navy Commander Naval Special Warfare Group One / Commander TF K-Bar began conducting maritime interception operations in the Arabian Sea. Ground combat operations began on 22 November 2001 when attached units conducted a 96 hour clandestine SR in advance of a United States marine corps (USMC) assault on landing zone (LZ) Rhino in Southern Afghanistan while other units conducted advance force operations, reconnaissance and assessment of alternate landing zones. On 24 November his Naval Special Warfare Task Force provided terminal guidance for the USMC assault on LZ Rhino. After seizure of LZ Rhino, Captain Harward stood up CJSOTF(S) on 26 November and forces conducted a series of SR, DA and SSE missions to detect, apprehend and destroy Taliban and AQ forces. The TF provided critical SR in support of conventional forces during Operation Anaconda in March 2002. From October 2001 to March 2002, CJSOTF-SOUTH conducted 42 SR, 23 DA and SSE missions, directed 147 close air support missions, intercepted and searched 12 ships, apprehended 112 detainees and inflicted over 115 enemy casualties. All at a cost of three friendly casualties – one dead – two wounded.
113. DND News Release NR-04.098, dated 8 December 2004, "Joint Task Force Two Members Receive U.S. Presidential Unit Citation."

114. Six awards (1 Meritorious Service Cross (MSC), 1 Meritorious Service Medal (MSM) and 6 Mention in Dispatches (MiD)) were eventually given. Lieutenant-Colonel Mike Beaudette received a MSC; Paul, Devin, Mike and Bruce all received MiDs.
115. DND News Release NR-04.098, dated 8 December 2004, "Joint Task Force Two Members Receive U.S. Presidential Unit Citation."
116. Canadian Alliance, "Expansion of JTF 2 Dangerous," 7 February 2002, [http://circ.jmellon.com/docs/txt/joint\\_task\\_force\\_2\\_expansion\\_dangerous.txt](http://circ.jmellon.com/docs/txt/joint_task_force_2_expansion_dangerous.txt), accessed 12 March 2004.
117. Ambassador Paul Cellucci, Conference of defense Associates Conference, Ottawa, 7 March 2005.
118. General Rick Hillier, *A Soldier First: Bullets, Bureaucrats and the Politics of War* (Toronto: HarperCollins Publishers Ltd., 2009), 368.
119. David Pugliese, "Canadian Forces Make Mark in Afghanistan," *defense News*, 19 May 2008, 18.
120. Paul Robinson, "We can't just take them out; It's tempting to simply fire a missile or sniper bullet and be done with suspected terrorist leaders – but it's a lot more complicated than that", *The Ottawa Citizen*, 27 May 2008.
121. Lee Winsor, David Charters and Brent Wilson, *Kandahar Tour: The Turning Point in Canada's Afghan Mission* (Mississauga: John Wiley & Sons Canada, Ltd., 2008), 167. Tier 1 Taliban refers to the hard-line insurgents who fight for ideological, political and / or religious reasons, as opposed to Tier 2 insurgents who are considered guns for hire, young men driven largely to fight due to monetary considerations or coercion.
122. Lieutenant-Colonel Rob Walker, interview with author, 5 October 2008.
123. Matthew Fisher, "Canadian special forces leaving Afghanistan in better position: general," *Postmedia News*, 25 May 2011.
124. David Pugliese, "Canadian Forces Make Mark in Afghanistan," *defense News*, 19 May 2008, 18.
125. "Talking Points. CF Transformation Initiative," CDS GO/FO Symposium, Cornwall, February 2005, 3.
126. Canadian Special Operations Command - 2008; and CANSOFCOM Capstone Concept for Special Operations (Draft) 2009, 8.
127. Hillier's desire to transform the CF was based on his perception that the CF had to become more responsive, adaptive and relevant. He declared, "We need to transform the Canadian Forces completely, from a Cold War-oriented, bureaucratic, process-focused organization into a modern, combat-capable force, where the three elements- navy, army and air force, enabled by Special Forces – all worked together as one team to protect Canada by conducting operations effectively at home and abroad. I envisioned a flexible, agile and quick-thinking military that would be able to bring exactly the right kind of forces to accomplish whatever mission they were given, whether it was responding to a natural disaster like a



tsunami or an ice storm or fighting a counter-insurgency war in southern Afghanistan.” General Rick Hillier, *A Soldier First: Bullets, Bureaucrats and the Politics of War* (Toronto: HarperCollins Publishers Ltd., 2009), 323.

128. Canada, Canadian Special Operations Command – 2008 (Ottawa: DND, 2008); and Canada, CANSOFCOM Capstone Concept for Special Operations 2009 (Ottawa: DND, 2009), 8.
129. The events of 11 September 2001, led to the immediate CBRN response capability of the CF to be assigned to a new dedicated high readiness unit, the Joint Nuclear, Biological Chemical defense Company (JNBCD Company). By June 2002, the MND had approved the project that enabled the creation of the unit as well as a stand-alone CBRN Response Team (CBRN RT) to form the CF component of the National CBRN RT with the RCMP and Public Health Canada partners. Since 1 February 2006 the unit has been a part of CANSOFCOM. Its name was officially changed to the CJIRU-CBRN in September 2007.
130. Canada, Canadian Special Operations Command – 2008 (Ottawa: DND, 2008); and Canada, CANSOFCOM Capstone Concept for Special Operations 2009 (Ottawa: DND, 2009).

HVT tasks are defined as follows: Special Reconnaissance (SR), which are missions conducted to collect or verify information of strategic or operational significance. These actions complement and refine other collection methods but are normally directed upon extremely significant areas of interest.

Direct Action (DA) are short duration strikes and other precise small-scale offensive actions conducted by special operation forces to seize, destroy, capture, exploit, recover or damage designated targets. Direct action differs from conventional offensive actions in the level of physical and political risk, operational techniques, and the degree of discriminate and precise use of force to achieve specific objectives.

Counter-proliferation (CP) refers to actions to limit the possession, use, acquisition, or transit of weapons of mass effect (WME). It includes actions to locate, seize, capture and recover WME and in some instances under the Proliferation Security Initiative prevent the improper employment of dual use materials.

Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations (NEO), which refer to operations that are conducted to assist the Department of Foreign Affairs in the evacuations of Canadians from foreign host nations. SOTF can play a key-supporting role through the provision of early special reconnaissance, providing strategic communications links and security advice.

Defense, Diplomacy, and Military Assistance (DDMA) refers to operations that contribute to nation building through assistance to select states through the provision of specialized military advice, training and assistance (e.g., CPAT, MTAP). CANSOFCOM contributions are managed within the Command’s areas of expertise.

131. Canada, Canadian Special Operations Command - 2008 (Ottawa: DND, 2008); and Canada, CANSOFCOM Capstone Concept for Special Operations (Draft) 2009 (Ottawa: DND, 2009).
132. David Pugliese, "Canadian Forces Make Mark in Afghanistan," *defense News*, 19 May 2008, 18.
133. David Pugliese, "Military Forms New Quick Reaction Task Force," *The Ottawa Citizen*, <http://www.ottawacitizen.com/news/Military+forms+quick+reaction+task+force/3290244/story.html> accessed 18 July 2010.
134. *Ibid.*
135. *Ibid.*
136. CANFORGEN 030/08 CDS 003/08, 041846Z Feb 08.
137. CANFORGEN 029/08 CDS 002/08, 041846Z Feb 08.
138. David Pugliese, "Getting the drop on Special Ops," *The Ottawa Citizen* July 17, 2010.
139. Ian Elliot, "Special forces different from video game portrayal," *The Whig-Standard*, <http://www.thewhig.com/ArticleDisplay.aspx?e=2882136>, accessed 26 January 2011.
140. Vice-Admiral Larry Murray, interview with Colonel Bernd Horn and Dr. Bill Bentley, 6 October 2010.
141. Cited in David Pugliese, "Getting the drop on Special Ops," *The Ottawa Citizen* July 17, 2010.
142. *Ibid.*



