



## Special Forces, Then, Now, and Tomorrow

Apparently, America's Special Forces are prospering.

Special Operations Forces of the United States currently comprise about 37,000 active soldiers. According to the recent Quadrennial Defense Review, this force size is to be augmented to about 46,000 by 2010. This means that the US has, and continues to have, by far the world's largest Special Operations Forces. Their size is, in part, a result of indigenous factors, above all the status-seeking "arms race" between Army, Navy/Marines and Air Force. Projected Special Forces growth appears to be mainly a response to perceived challenges: in particular, the requirement to fight Islamic terrorism.

It is somewhat sobering to learn, however, that the "teeth" (combat) component of the US Special Operations Forces, the boots on the ground, has been estimated to number less than 6,000 soldiers - to be increased to less than 7,000 by 2010. It almost goes without saying that fighting insurgency in two separate theaters, Afghanistan and Iraq (and possibly also a third contingency?) requires many more fighters: leaving a vast number of tasks to somewhat lesser elite-prone infantry, such as air and helicopter borne, but even more to "ordinary" troops.

At the same time the left is demanding that US Special Operations teeth (combat) forces be employed in so-called nation building. Elite highly trained special forces would be taken out of combat against Islamic imperialism and be employed as day laborers building up the infrastructure and communications networks of America's Islamic enemies. Billions of taxpayer dollars will finance the scheme, as American workers are economically busted, so that fanatic killers can be beneficiaries of international welfare. The left claims that it is "safer" to take on terrorists as economic parasites rather than fight them. After awhile the special operations forces, being used as construction crews, would either quit or become gelded as additions to a burgeoning corps of US military combat aversive eunuchs.

By contrast, Germany has much smaller Special Operations Forces. They number about 1,000 soldiers who all belong to the Army ("Kommando Spezialkräfte" - KSK). Over 400 of German Special Operations Forces can be considered ground fighters (which implies a teeth-to-tail ratio better than in the US). The Federal German Forces have found it rather difficult to attract enough personnel for their special forces, although there are extra pay and other incentives. As a result, Germany's paltry contribution to special ops is too insignificant to be mentioned.

If one were to translate these recruiting difficulties into the American situation, taking into account the difference in population, the result would see the US forces facing serious problems having at any given time more than 1,500 frontline Special Operations Forces fighters. But in reality they have managed to reach a complement nearly four times as strong. How can we understand this? The population of the United States is, on average, younger than that of Germany. In the US the incentives for outstanding personnel appear to be higher, and the military has a somewhat better image. But does this sufficiently explain the recruiting gap? Probably not!

## Flashback: Vietnam War

Only Special Forces realized that when General Westmoreland allowed the US Marines to have total control of South Vietnam's I Corps, it was his biggest mistake of the war. The marines quickly retreated to the coast and turned all of I Corps, 25% of South Vietnam, over to the communists in 1965. Only late in the war, did the US Army occupy part of I Corps and try to take it back from the reds while the marines remained huddled in their coastal enclaves.

In May 1969, the universally hated commander of all military forces in Vietnam, General Creighton Abrams used a trumped-up charge against the 5th Special Forces Group's commander in Vietnam, Colonel Robert B. Rheault, to jail Rheault and several intelligence officers. The intelligence officers involved in the scandal were not Special Forces intelligence. They were part of the amazingly incompetent US Army Military Intelligence Corps, a group of, amateurish, failure-prone low brows. The MI types were trying to play with the big boys but their nerves failed them.

Then Abrams assigned a non-airborne, non-Special Forces officer, Colonel Alexander Lemberes as the new 5th Group commander. Lemberes' mission was to destroy the Special Forces in Vietnam, and run it out of the country. However, before Lemberes was able to get to work, he broke his leg and was replaced by Colonel Michael Healy, another Abrams protégée. "Blind Mike" Healy wore glasses as thick as coke bottles, had a very big ego, and made snap judgments with very little reason for them.

The Rheault incident gave Abrams the opportunity that the MACV/USARV staff had always looked for. Special Forces was gone from Vietnam by 1971. Now Abrams started his "Vietnamization" program by turning over all Special Forces operations to the very corrupt South Vietnamese Army, which was so riddled with North Vietnamese Army spies and agents of influence that it was nearly as much of an enemy of America as was the NVA.

Abrams also instituted the screwed up habits of US Army stateside garrison life in Vietnam. Inspectors began to appear everywhere. They were fixated on trivial garrison-type matters that are supposed to be forgotten in war. Staffs began demanding all sorts of silly requirements that had nothing to do with war. For example, the Special Forces parked their vehicles in revetments facing in. That method prevented radiators from being ruined by shrapnel from enemy mortars and artillery. During NVA attacks the only damage was to tires, which were easier to replace than radiators. However, US Army staffs required the Special Forces to park vehicles facing out, regardless of the stupidity of it.

By 1969, US Special Forces in Vietnam had wised up to US news people. They realized that US "journalists" were leftist traitors who could not be trusted, so they refused to talk with them. (In Iraq, it was Vietnam all over again stupid US generals allowed leftist US journalists to carry out all types of sabotage of US forces.) Special Forces were the first troops to prevent US news crews from tossing wounded US soldiers out of the helicopters that they were riding in before the chopper left the helipad. It seems that the anti-military newsmen felt that their need for more room superceded the need for wounded American soldiers to get immediate care.

Breaker McCoy