

*Ron Kenner*

## SOVIET ARMY SPETSNAZ. THE RED ELITE FROM THE HYSTERIA OF THE 1980s TO THE PRESENT

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Zusammenfassung:

### **DIE SPETSNAZ DER SOWJETISCHEN ARMEE. DIE ROTE ELITE, VON DER SPETSNAZ-HYSTERIE DER 1980ER JAHRE BIS HEUTE**

Anfang der 1980er Jahre sollte sich die tatsächliche oder vermeintliche Bedrohung durch Spetsnaz, die Truppen zur besonderen Verwendung der sowjetischen Armee, im Westen zu einer regelrechten Hysterie entwickeln. Drei Faktoren waren dafür ausschlaggebend: Zum Einen spielten Spetsnaz nicht nur bei der Invasion Afghanistans 1979 eine tragende Rolle, sie wurden auch an vorderster Front zur Bekämpfung des dortigen „konterrevolutionären“ Aufstandes eingesetzt, wo sie sich bewähren sollten; zum Zweiten sollten die Publikationen des GRU-Überläufers Vladimir Rezun (Pseudonym: Viktor Suvorov) zu diesem Thema weite Verbreitung und Beachtung finden; schlussendlich dürfte die Bedrohung durch Spetsnaz der Reagan-Administration als willkommene Rechtfertigung für den Ausbau ihrer eigenen „Low Intensity Conflict“-Kapazitäten gedient haben.

Die Spetsnaz der Sowjetischen Armee wurden in den späten 1950er Jahren als Reaktion auf die Stationierung taktischer Atomwaffen durch die NATO aufgestellt. Sie sollten im Kriegsfall diese Stellungen aufklären und zerstören. Aus dieser Aufgabenstellung heraus entwickelte sich das Konzept eines großflächigen und den Panzerkeilen des Warschauer Paktes vorgelagerten Sabotage-Einsatzes im rückwärtigen Raum der NATO. Nach einer Darstellung des Spetsnaz-spezifischen politisch-militärischen Kontexts und einer Definition sowie des Einsatzprofils von Sondereinheiten beschreibt der Beitrag die Organisationsstruktur, Rekrutierung, Ausbildungsmethoden und Bewaffnung der Spetsnaz. Einen Schwerpunkt bildet der Einsatz der Spetsnaz in Afghanistan, wobei der Schluss gezogen wird, dass sich die Spetsnaz – im Gegensatz zu den konventionellen Streitkräften der Sowjetunion – außerordentlich gut und überraschend innovativ geschlagen haben. In einer abschließenden Betrachtung wird auf die Reduzierung der Spetsnaz-Formationen nach dem Zusammenbruch der Sowjetunion und auf mögliche Verbindungen zwischen Spetsnaz und der Organisierten Kriminalität Russlands eingegangen.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Although the missions of military elite and special formations, such as the British Special Operations Executive (SOE), the US Rangers of World War II or the Brandenburgers of the German Wehrmacht, seem to have been of considerable interest to both historians and military aficionados, this interest rose dramatically in the aftermath of the Vietnam War. It was not the infantile movie “The Green Berets” with John Wayne, not even the famous bestseller by Robin Moore on which the movie was based,<sup>1</sup> but

a serious publication that presented the fact that the US had built up a remarkable unconventional warfare (UW) capability and which helped secure the United States Army Special Forces (USASF) international acclaim.<sup>2</sup> While this ever-growing interest in the USASF certainly helped a humiliated nation to lick its wounds, it did not act as a primer for the question, whether the main opponent then, the Warsaw Pact, also had similar units. There had been rumours about a pre-invasion commando raid by Soviet troops to seize the tower of Prague Airport in 1968 but no systematic approach to investigate Soviet Special

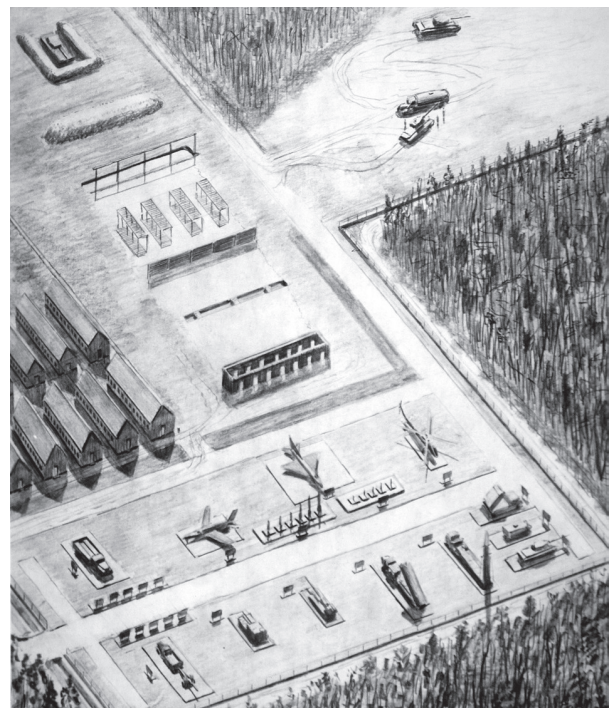
Forces in their entirety had either been undertaken or declassified for the general public.

Not that the fate of the USASF was a success story from the start. At the beginning of the 1960s, they received no support from the Army top brass, which was reluctant to sanction an essentially autonomous elite force. It was largely due to the literally personal sponsorship and constant intervention of President John F. Kennedy that the Green Berets developed into a significant force.<sup>3</sup> After Vietnam, however, the US Army substantially reduced the size of its Special Forces, despite their remarkable fighting history in the Far East, only to restore the units to full strength under the pushy and aggressively anti-communistic President Ronald Reagan during the early 1980s. While the strategic nuclear arsenals of both super-powers were blocked from operational use due to the Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) phenomenon and the second strike capability of both opponents, the US Low Intensity Conflict (LIC) concept seemed a clever way to militarily enhance the US spheres of influence without risking a big war or even a limited nuclear confrontation.<sup>4</sup> It was only then that the Soviet Spetsnaz (спецназ, the abbreviation for подразделения специального назначения, special purpose forces)<sup>5</sup> actually hit the radar screens of military analysts and the Western general public alike.

Several factors were responsible for this sudden increase of curiosity. First of all, Spetsnaz commandos were heavily engaged in the Afghanistan war which was under more than close scrutiny by Western intelligence services, military analysts and the media. The second factor was the defection of former GRU intelligence officer Vladimir Bogdanovich Rezun in 1978. Starting a career as an author (using the assumed name Viktor Suvorov) on the Soviet military in general and the GRU and Spetsnaz in particular, his publications resulted literally in what only can be qualified as a hype on the seemingly ubiquitous Spetsnaz threat to the West.<sup>6</sup> Although Rezun's theories about the outbreak of the Nazi-Soviet War in 1941 instantly led to a fierce and still running dispute among historians<sup>7</sup>, his assertions on the Spetsnaz were taken literally. Whether the third factor was a cause in itself or merely an effect of the former two, is still an unresolved question. The fact is, however, that Western governments and their military branches started to invest enormously in a massive build-up of the physical security of what presently is called

“critical infrastructure”. International competitors of the 1986 military free-fall competition at the home of the 10th Special Forces Group in Bad Tölz, Bavaria, for example, observed a dramatic increase of the perimeter defence in and around the old Kaserne, which had housed an SS Junkerschule in World War II. Questioned whether this was due to a terrorist threat, US officials informed their guests that this was part of a huge and costly “counter-Spetsnaz”-initiative. The Norwegian government went as far as to create the designated “counter-Spetsnaz”-unit HV-016 as part of the Norwegian Home Guard.<sup>8</sup>

Whether the Spetsnaz threat to the internal security of Western democracies was real or part of a wider Soviet diversion and/or propaganda scheme has never been analysed satisfactorily even after the collapse of the Soviet Empire.<sup>9</sup> Bizarrely enough, the Spetsnaz threat, real or not, was used in an (in-) famous propaganda publication of the Pentagon that was widely distributed and received even some academic attention in 1981: *Soviet Military Power*.<sup>10</sup>



This illustration of a Spetsnaz training compound, published in the Pentagon's *Soviet Military Power* in 1981, initialised the Spetsnaz-hysteria in the West.

The aim of this “White Paper” was to grossly exaggerate the Soviet military threat (a time-honoured phenomenon in the 1980s) and to enforce the belief in the myth of a Soviet military superiority in order to support The Pentagon's requests for increased government spending under Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger.<sup>11</sup> Be that as it may, *Soviet Military Power* had a chapter on the Spetsnaz threat with an

illustration of a training compound which was based on Western government buildings, military installations and transport facilities.<sup>12</sup> The Spetsnaz-threat was painted in a dramatic way: “[...] SPETSNAZ would be employed throughout Western Europe for reconnaissance, to disrupt communications, destroy bridges, seize choke points and direct attacking aircraft to prime targets.”<sup>13</sup> While the politicians still concentrated on the nuclear level of the threat to their national security, their internal defence forces rapidly beefed up their preparations to counter a massive pre-war Spetsnaz attack on the West’s critical infrastructure.

To sum up: the perception of the Soviet UW threat, which had taken a backseat in terms of awareness and had been lying dormant within the Western national security planning community for many years, erupted all of a sudden in the early 1980s.

#### **WHAT IS A SPECIAL (PURPOSE) FORCE?**

Although almost anybody interested in military matters has a distinct impression what a military “elite” or “Special (Purpose) Force” is, these terms are hard to define in reality. For example, the highly intellectual computer wizards in today’s Internet Technology (IT) security organisations see themselves as an “elite”, with none of them being in danger of having to see the white in the eye of the enemy in a close combat situation ever. This lack of (close) combat qualification is even inherited in the US Special Operations Command (SOCOM) which is the umbrella organisation not only for the famous US Rangers, Army Special Forces, and Navy SEALs but also for their Civil Affairs (CA) battalion, responsible for the build-up phase in the aftermath of a war or regional conflict and their Psychological Warfare (PW) units.<sup>14</sup> In other words: the CA brick layers and the PW academicians are – by definition – part of the US Special Operation Forces (SOF). This subordinated correlation has added much confusion to already existing common misconceptions about “real” combat-oriented special forces and makes it even more difficult to evaluate how their former counterparts, the Soviet Special Purpose Forces may be defined. Criteria such as a physically demanding selection process, voluntariness and a genuine area of operation (airborne, behind enemy lines, without the support of larger units, high-risk operations) thus seem to describe a special force in a more appropriate way.

A further discrepancy became apparent in the 1980s when the Pentagon subsumed Soviet airborne and air assault divisions, reconnaissance troops, the KGB’s border guard divisions and the divisions of the Soviet Ministry of Interior (MVD) under “Spetsnaz” whereas similar US units (such as the 82nd Airborne Divisions and 101st Air Assault Division) were “not considered by the US Army as SOF”.<sup>15</sup> While it is true that the GRU maintained designated long range reconnaissance “brigades” (they were only 800 men strong), these units were not seen as Spetsnaz by the GRU itself.<sup>16</sup> A further problem is that the term “special forces” is used both as a general term for these unique military units and as well as a brand name for the United States Army Special Forces. The official terminology is not very revealing either. The *Dictionary of Military Terms* defines “Spetsnaz” as “an elite Soviet special forces organization”<sup>17</sup> and “special forces” as “highly trained elite troops, who specialize in unconventional military operations”.<sup>18</sup>

#### **WHAT ARE UNCONVENTIONAL MILITARY OPERATIONS?**

Two aspects seem to justify a closer look into the US concept on that topic. For one, there is absolutely no corresponding, authentic GRU paper available in the public domain. Secondly, as will be shown in this article, there are most remarkable parallels between the missions of US SOF and the Spetsnaz in practise. Thus, while the original Soviet doctrine, hidden in a document still unclassified or even destroyed, might have naturally differed from the US concept in its degree of theoretical foundation, the latter one acts as a perfect guideline to get a better grip on unconventional military operations. The (US) doctrine of unconventional military operations has been developed during the LIC-phase in the 1980s described above and is also commonly referred to as “military operations other than war” (MOOTW).<sup>19</sup>

#### **Unconventional Warfare (UW)**

The definition for UW has undergone numerous changes since the introduction of the term in the 1950s. Although struggles have occurred in defining the details surrounding UW operations, one concept has remained constant: “UW is a form of warfare that usually involves the cooperation of indigenous or surrogate personnel and their resources, coupled

with foreign government assets, to defeat a state, an occupying force, or non-state actors”.<sup>20</sup>

### **Foreign Internal Defense (FID)**

FID is a subset of stability operations. These operations promote and protect a nation’s interests by influencing the threat, political, and information dimensions of the operational environment through a combination of peacetime developmental, cooperative activities and coercive actions in response to crisis. The primary role in FID missions is to assess, train, advise, and assist the host nation’s military and paramilitary forces to enable these forces to “maintain the host nation’s internal stability, to counter subversion, violence and instability in their country”.<sup>21</sup>

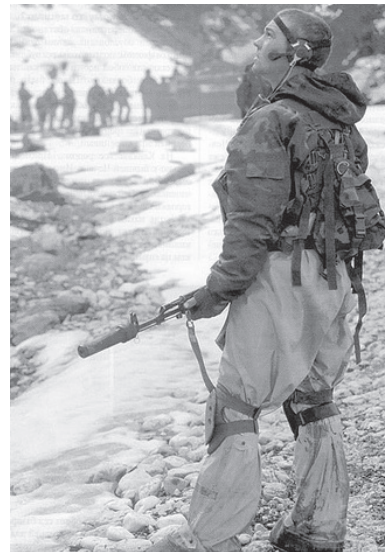
### **Direct Action (DA) missions**

The US Doctrine for Joint Special Operations defines DA as what is more commonly known as a “daring commando raid” or a “surgical strike”: DA operations are “short-duration strikes and other small-scale offensive actions conducted as a special operation in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments and that employ specialized military capabilities to seize, destroy, capture, exploit, recover, or damage designated targets”.<sup>22</sup> DA 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. In the conduct of these operations, SOF may “employ raid, ambush, or direct assault tactics (including close-quarters battle); emplace mines and other munitions; conduct standoff attacks by fire from air, ground, or maritime platforms; provide terminal guidance for precision-guided munitions; conduct independent sabotage; and conduct antiship operations”.<sup>23</sup>

### **Special Reconnaissance (SR) missions**

SR missions are defined as “reconnaissance and surveillance actions conducted as a special operation in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments to collect or verify information of strategic or operational significance, employing military capabilities not normally found in conventional forces”.<sup>24</sup> SR complements national and theatre intelligence collection assets and systems by obtaining specific, well-defined, and time-sensitive information of strategic or operational significance.

All these unconventional warfare missions were most probably part of the grand operation plans in case Warsaw Pact troops would have ever invaded Western Europe but were in fact conducted by the Spetsnaz units, as we may see, in Afghanistan.



Army Spetsnaz non-commissioned officer armed with AKMS automatic assault rifle and PBS suppressor and a hands-free close distance communication device in Afghanistan, probably winter 1985.

## **TWO CATEGORIES OF SPETSNAZ**

According to Rezun (a.k.a. Suvorov) two totally different categories of Spetsnaz existed, a point that never really was made in the West in the Spetsnaz-hysteria of the 1980s: the Spetsnaz GRU and the (Soviet) Army Spetsnaz.

### **Spetsnaz GRU**

The Spetsnaz GRU were – needless to stress – directly subordinated to the GRU, its Third Department, to be precise.<sup>25</sup> Nicknamed “Spetsnaz Department”, it was responsible for the preparation and carrying out of diversionary acts on enemy territory upwards from the operational level. Their primary targets were enemy political and military leaders and the most important lines of communication and supply with the aim of undermining the enemy’s will to continue fighting.<sup>26</sup> The members of Spetsnaz GRU were literally handpicked, their number never surpassing some 1,300 officers who received their training in the Third Faculty of the Military-Diplomatic Academy to the extent of up to six years. Candidates had to speak two foreign languages fluently and were rarely beyond the rank of a captain. As part of the clandestine worldwide GRU network, they were

controlled in the target country by the local GRU resident.<sup>27</sup> Seen this way, the Spetsnaz GRU were no more (but also not less) than the paramilitary arm of the military intelligence service each and every nation maintains.

Just as an aside: also subordinated to the GRU's Third Department were the Soviet professional sportsmen.<sup>28</sup> They had a dual purpose role: in peacetime they collected intelligence on behalf of the GRU during their competitions abroad and were supposed to conduct tailor-made operations in war time, "using" their local contacts and the personal knowledge of locations (mostly the guest nation's capitals) which they had acquired as guests in those countries. What is important, however, is the fact that they never received a full scale training (neither as agents/spies nor as soldiers), which would have interfered with their already demanding sports training program. Rumours about Dynamo Moscow being a killer-team in reality never quite died in the West.<sup>29</sup>

### Army Spetsnaz

To begin with: the term "Army Spetsnaz" is a Western creation to distinguish these units from the Spetsnaz GRU. Even Rezun introduced two different terms: "Diversionary Troops (SPETSNAZ)"<sup>30</sup> and "The Fighting Units of Spetsnaz".<sup>31</sup> In numerical terms the Army Spetsnaz were considerably larger than the Spetsnaz GRU. They were composed of "especially strong, especially tough and especially loyal soldiers" from the drafted ranks.<sup>32</sup> Army Spetsnaz units were not subordinated to the GRU but to the military commander of the respective level.

Each Soviet (motorised rifle or tank) army maintained one Spetsnaz company, with a complement of 115 men. The cadre consisted of nine officers and 11 non-commissioned officers. The respective army's Spetsnaz company operated in the area between 100 and 500 kilometres behind the front line. It consisted of a headquarters, three diversionary platoons and a communications platoon, with the latter closely coordinating the missions according to the advance of the attacking army.<sup>33</sup> Depending on the tasks to be carried out, the Spetsnaz company fought either as a single unit or divided itself into as many as 15 "diversionary" groups. Usually, the Spetsnaz companies parachuted into their areas of operations the night before their army attacked. In peace-time the Spetsnaz companies of the armies were combined in a Spetsnaz battalion as part of the front's Spetsnaz brigade.

According to the Soviet order of battle, three armies made up a front. Each front maintained a Spetsnaz brigade (sometimes misnamed "regiments" by Western intelligence analysts), consisting of a headquarters company and three Spetsnaz battalions, or in Rezun's words "diversionary battalions".<sup>34</sup> Each of the front's three battalions operated in the enemy's rear in exactly the same way as the Spetsnaz companies of the armies, at a depth of between 500 and 1,000 kilometres behind the main battle line. Each battalion could have been split up into as many as 45 "diversionary groups" and the three together could have produced a total of up to 135 individual groups. But, if necessary, a Spetsnaz brigade could have operated at full strength, using between 900 and 1,200 troops together against one single target: "[...] a nuclear submarine base, a large headquarters, or even a national capital".<sup>35</sup>

Analogous organisations have been seen in the Soviet Navy, with two differences: firstly, the brigades were called Spetsnaz Naval Brigades; secondly they operated not on behalf of the respective Soviet Fleet commander but received their orders directly from the GRU's Third Department via the local GRU resident under deep cover in the enemy country, at least according to Rezun's account in his book *Inside the Soviet Army*, published 1981.<sup>36</sup> It has to be noted, however, that Rezun contradicts himself on this particular aspect in *Spetsnaz. The story behind the Soviet SAS*, published 1987: "Naval infantry are commanded by the same commander as naval spetsnaz: every fleet commander has one brigade of the latter and a brigade (or regiment) of infantry".<sup>37</sup> Each naval Spetsnaz brigade had a headquarters company, two to three battalions of combat swimmers, one parachute battalion, supporting units, and an anti-VIP company. It also had a group of midget submarines designed to discreetly deliver combat swimmers or intelligence officers to distant targets. The possible threat by Soviet midget submarines was a constant factor in the threat assessments of coastal North European countries.<sup>38</sup> There are reports that three submarines had successfully penetrated inshore to the sea walls of the residence of King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden.<sup>39</sup>

### A SHORT HISTORY OF THE ARMY SPETSNAZ

The Army Spetsnaz in principle had a long history, would there not have been a period of decline, one

of the many remarkable parallels to the US Green Berets, who see their ancestry in the Rangers and in the special operations of the Office for Strategic Services in World War II. Having been assessed as of no further use and consequently disbanded at the end of World War II, from the mid-1950s a new era in the history of the Army Spetsnaz began with the West's new deployment of tactical nuclear weapons. The Soviet Military High Command was keen to find means of detection that could approach very close to NATO's tactical nuclear weapons launching sites and in each case provide a precise answer to the question of whether they were real or just decoy dummies.<sup>40</sup> The Soviet generals deemed the Army Spetsnaz to be precisely such an instrument, permitting commanding officers at army level and higher to establish independently the whereabouts of the enemy's most dangerous weapons and to destroy them on the spot. This doctrine thus would have circumvented the time delay created by the traditional process of pinpointing them through aerial reconnaissance (chemical film-based then), transmitting the reports from the reconnaissance units to the headquarters for analysis and the preparing and the execution of the appropriate commands for actions.<sup>41</sup> In principle this mission is exactly what is called a "search and destroy"-operation in the West and which has seen its application in the "SCUD-hunting" operations conducted by the British Special Air Service in the first Iraq War in an effort to track down Saddam Hussein's chemical warfare rockets that endangered Israel's security.

In test-manoeuvres in the 1950s the Army Spetsnaz made every effort to find and destroy the "enemy's" nuclear launching facilities but it was simply impossible for them to pinpoint and destroy every single one of these weapons, and only that would have made sense in the initial concept. The discussions that took place after the manoeuvres showed that the Soviet generals, fascinated by the Army Spetsnaz's infiltration procedures and their (unusually) high motivation, were rather quick to adapt their initial plans. While rocket based tactical nuclear warheads were regarded as "NATO's teeth" by Soviet generals, why not go for its brain (the political and military leadership) and its nervous system (the principal centres and lines of government and military communications, the commercial communications companies, including the main radio stations and television studios)? The concept of diversion operations within the enemy's

rear was born and symbolised the beginning of the resurrection of the Army Spetsnaz.

This development was to a large extent due to one man, fanatically devoted to the idea of special operations, another astounding parallel to Western Special Forces units.<sup>42</sup> Viktor Kondratevich Kharchenko, chief of staff of the Independent Guards Spetsnaz Brigade in World War II, is quite rightly regarded as the 'father' of the modern Spetsnaz. In a personal letter to Stalin in the immediate post-war months he stated: "If before the outbreak of war our sportsmen who made up the Spetsnaz units spent some time in Germany, Finland, Poland and other countries, they could be used in wartime in enemy territory with greater likelihood of success".<sup>43</sup> While this might be regarded as the beginning of the Spetsnaz GRU concept, the Army Spetsnaz still had to wait until Kharchenko had completed his studies at the Academy of the General Staff in 1948 because it was he who organised the test-manoeuvres of the 1950s described above.



99 % of Soviet Army Spetsnaz personnel were two-year conscripts.

### SELECTION AND TRAINING METHODS OF ARMY SPETSNAZ IN THE 1980s

Selecting an Army Spetsnaz candidate ran a totally different route than in Western Special Forces. In the West candidates had (and still have) to apply voluntarily for a special operations training after having served several years in some ordinary unit and at least having acquired the rank of sergeant. The selection process of Army Spetsnaz candidates started even before the recruit was actually drafted and had to put on his military uniform. In a hidden

vetting system millions of recruits were carefully screened prior to their conscription and divided into categories in accordance with their political reliability, their physical and mental development. Immediately after their basic training, suitable candidates were summoned to a room where they had to attend an interview with experienced Army Spetsnaz officers. The soldiers who had been picked were immediately convoyed by officers and sergeants to a more or less overt training facility of the Soviet Airborne Corps, where they went through a physically demanding training lasting several weeks. Only the best out of these groups of young soldiers were then sent to a secret training location run by the Spetsnaz Special Training Division. Even then a certain number of the new recruits were sent straight off to the regular divisions on the grounds that they were not at all suitable for being turned into Spetsnaz soldiers, a clear indicator in favour for the Western system based on volunteers.

The rest being deemed to be special forces material indeed returned six months later with the rank of sergeant, a rather rapid promotion for a conscript. Having been recruited into Army Spetsnaz formations only then, the fresh sergeants had to sign an undertaking not to disclose secret information to anybody. They had no right whatsoever to tell even their families where they served or what their service consisted of, except to comment, they served with the Airborne Corps. They were constantly reminded that disclosure of the secrets of Army Spetsnaz was regarded as high treason, punishable by death according to article 64 of the Soviet criminal code.<sup>44</sup> One of the well kept secrets was that – dramatically opposed to the training methods in Western special forces – Army Spetsnaz conscripts were beaten and belted during their training. As a consequence men ran away from Army Spetsnaz units more often than from other branches of the Soviet services. Deserters from Army Spetsnaz units were shot on first sight by the Interior Ministry Division's (MVD) hunting groups.<sup>45</sup> Another secret was that although in Army Spetsnaz units men were fed much better than in any other unit of the armed forces, the workload and permanent stress were so great that the men were permanently hungry.<sup>46</sup>

The battle training within Army Spetsnaz was physically demanding and – astonishingly as it may sound – rather inventive. During the rural survival training small group of three or four men parachuted

into a completely unfamiliar place with only an AK-47 assault rifle and only one round of ammunition each, in addition to a knife and a spade. The food supply was at the minimum, more often than not none at all. The group was not informed as to how long it would have to walk. The men could use their ammunition as they pleased: they could kill whatever animal was unlucky enough to cross their rifle scopes. But what if wolves were to attack and the ammunition were finished?<sup>47</sup> Just to illustrate the specific circumstances: the survival route sometimes started on the highest mountains in the Soviet Union – the peaks named after Lenin (7,134 metres) and Communism (7,495 metres).<sup>48</sup>

For the urban survival week, the Spetsnaz Special Training Division tested their training methods: for this part of their training Spetsnaz soldiers were dressed in black prison jackets and dropped off at night in the centre of a major Soviet town. At the same time the local radio and television stations were under orders to report that a group of especially dangerous criminals had escaped from the local prison. The “criminals” were given the task to return to their company's headquarters while the local police and MVD troops were given the job of capturing them. Only the most senior officers of the MVD knew that it was only an exercise, the middle and lower ranks of the MVD operated as if it were the real thing, not believing their superiors that the “criminals” were not armed at all (they may have stolen a gun at the last moment). And so, contrary to their instructions, they used their guns. Sometimes the “arrested” soldiers were “delivered back to their superior officers in a half-dead state”.<sup>49</sup>

The Spetsnaz Special Training Division's cadre had a reputation of being especially fond of using fire, making the Spetsnaz trainees realise that fire is a constant companion of a soldier's life which is always at his side. For that reason fire was constantly present during battle training from the first to the last day: at least once a day (and night) the trainees were confronted with some kind of fire that was clearly threatening their lives.<sup>50</sup> Like fire, natural blood was a constant attribute of the battle training. It used to be thought that a soldier could be accustomed to the sight of blood gradually, so that he would not have been dangerously surprised in a real close combat situation. For these reasons the Spetsnaz trainees were howled up into some sticky liquid that looked like foul water. But it wasn't water, it was real blood.

“Blood up to the knees, the waist, the chest. On the walls and the ceiling are chunks of rotten flesh, piles of bleeding entrails”.<sup>51</sup>

More specialised training situations were set up according to the specific Military District the respective Army Spetsnaz company was located in: troops of the Leningrad Military District were expected to operate in very severe northern conditions, and their training consequently took place in forests, marshes and the tundra of an arctic climate. Spetsnaz of the Transcaucasian Military District had to operate in high mountains, while those of the Carpathian and Ural Military Districts had to operate in medium-high mountains, training there should eventually pay off in the Afghanistan environment. For Spetsnaz designated to operate in Europe, the natural conditions in the Baltic Military District were perfect because they were very similar to those in Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands, northern Germany and France.<sup>52</sup>

Once the conscript had completed his mandatory two years’ service in this demanding environment, each Spetsnaz soldier had three choices: he could become an officer, if accepted by the Higher School for Officers of the Airborne Forces in Ryazan; he could become a regular member in one of the Army Spetsnaz companies; or the soldier opted to join the Army Spetsnaz reserve for the next five years. Like reserve forces of any other army worldwide, the Spetsnaz reserve multiplied the size of the standing Army Spetsnaz fighting units with reservists at a time of mobilisation, making it very hard for Western intelligence analysts to precisely define their real strength in case of a war.<sup>53</sup>

Although in numbers they amounted to less than half a percent of all the Soviet armed forces in peacetime, Army Spetsnaz were regarded as the best, most carefully selected part of the armed forces, “the cream of the national intake”.<sup>54</sup> What must not be forgotten and what never was mentioned in the Spetsnaz-hype of the 1980s, however, is that 99 percent of the Army Spetsnaz consisted of two-year conscripts rather than professional soldiers. Some Western experts on elite forces considered it impossible to produce a good special operations soldier in such a short time.<sup>55</sup> But what they did not know then was how intense and demanding the Army Spetsnaz training really was.

## WEAPONS

According to Rezun, the standard issue weapon was a “sub-machine gun”.<sup>56</sup> A closer inspection of photos showing Army Spetsnaz fighting in Afghanistan in the 1980s reveals that these soldiers carried AKS-74 assault rifles with a folding stock, a development from the earlier AKM (itself a refined version of the famous AK-47 but suited for a shorter cartridge) having been introduced in 1974. This has also been confirmed in interviews of Army Spetsnaz personnel after the breakdown of the Soviet Empire.<sup>57</sup> Whether this was a deliberate misnomer on Rezun’s part or a flexible Soviet accommodation to the specific needs of the fighting environment in Afghanistan cannot be established.



Army Spetsnaz armed with AKS-74 automatic assault rifle.

Also, according to Rezun, each Army Spetsnaz soldier was issued “a P-6 silent pistol”.<sup>58</sup> Contrary to widespread popular belief, silent handguns are very unreliable and due to their subsonic muzzle velocity not very effective. From this professional point of view Rezun’s revelations may be regarded as an attempt to enforce the assassinator/killer-image of Army Spetsnaz. As reports from the operations in Afghanistan clearly show, handguns played no role at all: not even officers carried the famous Makarov pistol on actual combat missions, regarding them in essence less than an auxiliary weapon.<sup>59</sup> What is true, however, is that each of the Army Spetsnaz groups that saw action in Afghanistan was issued two AKMs with PBS suppressors. But since “subsonic 7.62x39 ammunition was difficult to come across” regular rounds were used.<sup>60</sup> By doing so, the PBS suppressors were not only rendered useless but destroyed in fact, because the suppressors were simply not built for the muzzle pressure produced by regular

ultrasonic ammunition. Fire support at the tactical (group) level was established by (light) RPK-74, (heavy) PKT machine guns, and underbarrel GP-25 grenade launchers mounted on the AKS-74.

Afghanistan should become the testing-grounds for new weapons pretty much the same way as Vietnam had been for the US Special Forces. One of the new items heavily tested in Afghanistan was the SVD sniper rifle, which ultimately proved to be a much superior design than the standard issue Dragunov. A clear indicator of typical Soviet mismanagement, however, was that spare magazines for new SVD sniper rifles were extremely rare, so Spetsnaz snipers were forced to “trade” these much needed items against other pieces of equipment.<sup>61</sup> While the Mujahideen frequently used the reloadable RPG-7 anti-tank rocket launcher, Army Spetsnaz were issued the new disposable RPG-18s, nicknamed “Fly” by the Army Spetsnaz soldiers.<sup>62</sup>

Contrary to Rezun’s claims<sup>63</sup> that Army Spetsnaz were as well stocked with electronic gear as their high-tech-happy US Special Forces counterparts “and very well up-to-date”, quite the opposite was true: even in the Afghan battlefield Soviet Army Spetsnaz neither had beacons for homing in Laser guided munitions nor thermal imaging devices. Only commanding Spetsnaz officers and their deputies had a set of low magnifying night-vision binoculars, only one out of ten Spetsnaz snipers was issued a night vision scope for his SVD.<sup>64</sup> Soviet Army Spetsnaz could not even call a distinctive uniform their very own; their standard uniform was that of the Soviet Airborne Corps (VDV) with light blue VDV berets and unit patches in order to avoid identification. In some cases they were ordered to wear the uniform of a unit which was stationed near the area of operation to blend in. The presently popular bat badge was literally unknown in the 1980s, where the wolf was considered the informal symbol of the Soviet Spetsnaz.<sup>65</sup>

A matter of specific concern in the Spetsnaz-hysteria of the 1980s was the discussion whether Army Spetsnaz were trained in delivering portable nuclear warheads, so-called atomic suitcases, to critical infrastructure installations in the West. Contrary to the Western rhetoric of that time, still supported even to this day by many, doubts are in order because no evidence supporting that allegation has ever been produced.<sup>66</sup>

To sum up: Soviet Army Spetsnaz were issued with an arsenal of good general weaponry rugged enough to take anywhere and to survive even the hardest set of conditions. The Spetsnaz soldier knew his weaponry was reliable and tried to make the best in every combat situation, not requesting better stuff to fulfil his mission, as has constantly been the case with the US Special Forces.

## SPETSNAZ IN AFGHANISTAN



Army Spetsnaz embarking on a mission in Afghanistan.

When a shocked world learned in January 1980 that Warsaw Pact troops had invaded Afghanistan along two ground routes and one air corridor under the command of Marshal Sergei Sokolov in the peaceful Christmas days of 1979, what the public did not know then was that the invasion actually started with several special operations missions, one of them terribly gone awoul. One of the most important goals to be achieved in the initial invasion phase was to get rid of Afghan Prime Minister Hafizullah Amin, who himself had seized power in a palace shootout that resulted in the death of President Taraki only three months before, in September 1979. The Politburo, having lost patience with Amin’s continually growing anti-Moscow course, gave orders for the KGB to get rid of him in a coup preceding the actual invasion. This order was accomplished with Amin gunned down by KGB commandos who had stormed the building under the command of Colonel Bayerenov. Moscow wanted no Afghans left to tell the true tale of what had happened in the palace. The KGB commandos were under strict orders that absolutely nobody should survive, and that possibly fleeing bodyguards (in fact the KGB commandos were heavily inflicted in a tough, room-by-room fight against Amin’s guards) should be shot when leaving the building. No prison-

ers were to be taken! When Bayerenov, in times of peace head of the KGB's paramilitary training centre, left the palace, supposedly to call up reinforcements, the edgy KGB support fire squad outside the palace executed the order by the word and shot their boss dead as well.<sup>67</sup>

Even after more than 30 years only marginal information on Army Spetsnaz missions during the initial phase of the invasion are in the public domain. Taking their usual pre-deployment to a major military operation for granted, Army Spetsnaz most probably were given the task to secure the airfields at Shindand for the 103rd Guards "Vitebsk" Airborne Division and the 56th Separate Airborne Assault Brigade to land, while Bagram Air Base airport was "secured" by a conventional VDV battalion. What is confirmed, however, is that during the night of the coup, KGB commandos and the "Muslim battalion", composed of Army Spetsnaz and of Spetsnaz GRU, together with Soviet Army paratroopers, secured other important targets in Kabul, including the Afghan Defence and Internal Ministries, the intelligence headquarters, and several communications centres.<sup>68</sup> Kabul's most important communications hub had already been taken down by the KGB's Al'fa Group in Afghan uniforms and in vehicles with Afghan markings, thus completely paralysing the Afghan military command structure.<sup>69</sup>

It is a well known fact that the Politburo was more than surprised that the presence of Soviet troops was not welcomed at all and did not have the desired effect of stabilising the country on their terms, although the KGB had tried to explain tactfully but unsuccessfully that a Communist takeover in Afghanistan would present "hair-raising problems".<sup>70</sup> The Afghan Army, so the Politburo believed, would go over to the offensive and the "insurgents" themselves would be reluctant to take on such odds. Soviet troops were just supposed to provide "the initial stiffener".<sup>71</sup> When the initial sporadic battles with various opposition groups slightly turned into what should become a ten year long and bloody, full-scale counter-insurgency campaign against a growing Islamic opposition in Afghanistan, things started to get from bad to worse. The Soviet leadership had made two major errors of judgment: it overestimated the willingness of the Afghan Army to fight and underestimated the upsurge of Afghan resistance.

But also the Soviet General Staff was to be blamed. Prior to Amin's murder and the invasion, two divi-

sions, specially made up of Farsi-speaking troops from neighbouring Tadjikistan and Uzbekistan, had been assembled along the frontier, all in Afghan uniforms. They were supposed to make the intervention go more smoothly, which – in retrospect – turned out to be an incorrect assessment, if not to say a disaster. In no time at all they were black-marketeering (including selling army equipment), buying Korans and robbing the local population. They showed little interest in fighting "their neighbours", the Afghans. Troops from the European Military Districts were soon brought in to replace the unreliable and fraternising Tadjiks and Uzbeks to combat the mujahideen insurgency in order to strengthen the pro-Moscow regime in Kabul.<sup>72</sup>



Army Spetsnaz HQ in Asadabad, Kunar.

On the intelligence front, both KGB and GRU, despite their constant inter-service rivalry, proved to be by far more innovative than the Soviet Army. The Soviet intelligence services were quick to recall their very own lessons of guerrilla warfare learned during the Second World War, and even to recall the Cheka's experience of fighting against the Basmachi of Central Asia in the 1920s and early 1930s.<sup>73</sup> While the KGB and the GRU came up with a number of ways to combat the mujahideen on the operational, political, and intelligence level (including the creation from scratch of a new Afghan intelligence service, the KhAD), Army Spetsnaz did the same on the tactical level: infiltration, sabotage, recruitment of local support, and even operations outside Afghan borders, striking at Pakistan and other mujahideen backers outside the country. The latter aspect is, bizarrely enough, another one of the many parallels to the US Special Forces, which illegally had conducted cross-border strikes against Vietcong support bases in Laos.

When the GRU was able to recruit local informants, guides and other agents to expose hiding places and weapons caches of the rebels, Army Spetsnaz were called in by helicopter to destroy these facilities, either by way of fire, explosives or especially by booby-trapping those caches, thus inflicting both a severe loss of badly needed weaponry as well as additional human casualties on the mujahideen in a single operation.<sup>74</sup> Spetsnaz under the direction of the GRU, along with their comrades from the KGB commandos, even were not shy to copy a British infiltration technique known as the “pseudo-gang” or “counter-gang” concept: British soldiers, posing as rebels, had penetrated successfully and ultimately eliminated Mau Mau groups in Kenya, in the late 1950s, which proved to become an innovative and effective development in the British counter-insurgency campaign.<sup>75</sup> Consequently, Soviet Spetsnaz soldiers disguised themselves as mujahideen and tried to establish contact with them on known smuggling routes or “secret” meeting points, blown by traitors within the ranks of the mujahideen.<sup>76</sup> With their faces painted black, dressed up in local garment and operating exclusively during night hours (all to minimise the risk of being compromised by the rebels at a too early stage), these “black-faces” earned a solid reputation as a deadly effective counter-insurgency force.<sup>77</sup> A manifold risky undertaking!

As KGB and GRU would often not share intelligence data with each other, both organisations were conducting counter-insurgency missions within one and the same area of operation. According to Colonel Alexander Morozov, deputy KGB station chief in Kabul from 1975 to 1980, the KGB unintentionally harmed efforts of the GRU, which operated “largely independent” of the KGB and maintained its own closely guarded network of agents and informers.<sup>78</sup> What is worth mentioning, however, is that both intelligence services earned a good record of establishing precious actionable intelligence. Once they gained information on mujahideen whereabouts, either from their clandestine networks, from ground sensors or the observation post network, through analysis or by way of interrogation or torture, these targets were strived mostly by two remarkable close air support (CAS) platforms: the Mi-24 helicopter gunship (NATO-designation: HIND) and the highly manoeuvrable Su-25 CAS-bomber.

The underlying concept of the HIND was absolutely innovative, had no direct NATO counterpart and took the Western military community by surprise. Until then, only two basic categories of helicopters were known: transport- and attack-helicopters. The HIND combined both concepts in a single frame: armed with 80-mm rockets and a 23-mm machine cannon, heavily armoured against impacts from .50 anti-aircraft rounds from all angles (including the titanium rotor blades), the helicopter could carry up to 14 troops as well. The unique combination of gunship and troop transport in one dangerous package ideally represented the two most basic principles of military operations of any scale: fire and movement. Once the HINDs had delivered the Army Spetsnaz on the ground, they could provide them with CAS, effectively suppressing any counter-fire of the mujahideen forces, so that the Army Spetsnaz could advance and attack in those “hunter-killer” sweeps. These heliborne raiding parties attacked known mujahideen strongholds, command posts, Islamic committees, supply caches and other mujahideen targets, captured opposition ringleaders and leaders of the “counter-revolutionary underground” on the run, interdicted their supply caravans, burned mosques and food supplies in remote Afghan areas to heighten tension between warring mujahideen factions, and blocked off possible withdrawal routes during larger battle operations of conventional Soviet military formations. It really does not come as a surprise that the rebels hated and feared the Mi-24, nicknaming them “Shaitan-Arba” (Satan’s Chariot).<sup>79</sup> Army Spetsnaz were definitely in favour of “their” HINDs since they could remain on the battlefield much longer than the fast-moving Su-25 CAS bombers, which more often than not had to return to base to refuel, right at the climax of a bloody ground operation.



A Soviet Army Spetsnaz group prepares for a heliborne hunter-killer mission in Afghanistan, 1988 (Photocredit: Mikhail Evstafiev).

The situation should get considerably worse for both Mi-24 crews and Spetsnaz, when the CIA started supplying the Afghan rebels with Stinger shoulder-launched, heat-seeking, surface-to-air (SAM) missiles, as part of Operation CYCLONE, in 1986.<sup>80</sup> Light to carry and easy to operate, these fire-and-forget SAMs locked on to infra-red signals emitted by the aircraft's engines and thus did not need any tremendous technical skills on the operative's part. Recruited by the CIA, but trained by the British SAS in secret camps in remote parts of Scotland, the mujahideen Stinger crews were reportedly able to gun down, amongst other fighters, transporters and bombers, some 200 HINDs, effectively breaking Soviet air superiority, a probably decisive impact on the war.<sup>81</sup>

Clearly, the Stinger SAMs were regarded as a high priority target by the Soviet intelligence agencies. There was an order across the ranks that anyone who captured a Stinger missile would immediately be awarded a Gold Star of the Hero of the Soviet Union.<sup>82</sup> Despite the mujahideens' continuous emphasis on security and on the need to prevent any Stingers getting lost to the enemy, it is confirmed in at least one case that Army Spetsnaz were able to accomplish their priority task. When in 1987 a group of mujahideen were on their way back to their base of operations with three Stingers, they were successfully attacked by a Spetsnaz unit. The advance had been caught napping by an Army Spetsnaz ground reconnaissance patrol, which was quick to call in their comrades in HINDs. Far from being shot down, the gunships landed and disgorged their Spetsnaz who proceeded to kill or capture the entire group, "with the exception of one man who escaped".<sup>83</sup> However, when Soviet top brass started investigating who deserved to win the Gold Star and started looking into the background of the Spetsnaz who took part in this operation, they were miraculously quick to dig up "dirty things" on every one of them. As a result some deskbound staff officer in the rear echelon, never having seen any real close combat for the whole of the Afghan campaign ever, was awarded the Gold Star, "for providing logistical support".<sup>84</sup>

To summarize and conclude: historically speaking, Soviet Spetsnaz actually had a lot of experience fighting insurgencies and crushing them. In the Afghan war, despite several initial setbacks due to the notoriously abysmal Soviet Army management, they proved themselves adaptable and highly capable on this specific battlefield, as, for example, their record

of reducing mujahideen supply caravan traffic by 75% over a period of two years clearly shows.<sup>85</sup> The failures of the war, as Grau and most scholars note<sup>86</sup>, were political and not military. Sadly enough, Russian politicians did not learn from the Afghanistan experience and persisted with forcing a military solution to Chechniya. What remains remarkable, however, is that Spetsnaz, pioneering a number of effective counterinsurgency strategies and tactics, their tough personnel, individual bravery, demanding training, and a certain rough (although sometimes on the brink of violating international human rights norms brutally) competence earned the respect and the acceptance of the traditionally anti-communistic Western special operations community.



An Afghan Mujahideen operating a Stinger surface-to-air missile.

## SPETSNAZ'S FATE AFTER THE COLLAPSE OF THE SOVIET UNION

The end of the Soviet Union resulted in a tremendous reduction of military formations, including Spetsnaz units. The strategic change from "enemy" to "partner" after the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact (some former Soviet Bloc countries are now NATO members) not only rendered the concept of sabotage-strikes deep into the enemy's rear basically obsolete but also meant a further special forces shrinking to Russia: at least half a dozen Spetsnaz formations remained with the newly independent states. While the US now seems to have inherited the Soviet Union's counter-insurgency problem in Afghanistan, both the US and Russia are confronted with the terrorism threat. The basic difference between these threats is, however, that Russia's terrorism problem is entirely domestic. As opposed to the operational successes in Afghanistan in the 1980s, a series of Russian SOF domestic counter-terrorism mishaps and failures in the 1990s and continuing to the present have made the Kremlin's special operations

establishment presently “appear much like Russia’s old Mir space station – wired together, unpredictable, and subject to sudden, startling failures”.<sup>87</sup> The September 2004 hostage disaster at North Ossetia’s Beslan Middle School No. 1 tragically symbolises that statement: the 52-hour debacle resulted in the death of some 344 civilians (including more than 170 children), in addition to unprecedented losses of Russian Spetsnaz and the dispatch of most Chechen/allied hostage-takers themselves.<sup>88</sup> What must be kept in mind, however, is that most of the domestic counter-terrorism in Russia was conducted not by Army Spetsnaz but by the regimental-size Separate Division of Operational Designation (still informally called the Dzerzhinsky Division as in Soviet times) of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), and by the FSB’s two major counter-terrorist forces, the Al’fa and Vypfel groups, which are part of the FSB “Special Designation Centre” and are regarded as Russia’s premier counter-terrorist units.<sup>89</sup> Al’fa’s personnel quite certainly has seen its decent share of combat: Al’fa has been targeted against Chechen terrorism (100% of its members have served in Chechnya) as well as being engaged in tracking down Chechen leaders and combatants. At Beslan, Al’fa had lost three officers.



Unit patch of present-day Russian Army Spetsnaz.

The inevitable liquidation of Russian Army Spetsnaz formations (such as the Berdsk Spetsnaz Brigade in 2009) revealed a serious problem: the link of dismissed Army Spetsnaz members to criminal groupings and criminal activities of their own in present-day Russia.<sup>90</sup> This is by no means a groundless suspicion: “If the members of the spetsnaz will remain without work the probability of their enormous demand by the organized criminal groupings or foreign recruiters is high”.<sup>91</sup> The USSR’s dissolution was followed

by burgeoning military crime of all kinds, no type of unit seemed immune and that included the Army Spetsnaz forces.<sup>92</sup> The sheer number and variety of crimes officially reported and prosecuted over the last decade suggests that corruption among former special operations personnel has been more than only occasional.<sup>93</sup> Dubious business dealings and corrupt practices of former Army Spetsnaz resulted in a loss of its formerly undisputed reputation. A mid-2004 Russian investigative article addressing the linkages between Spetsnaz personnel and prominent organized crime rings (OC) even raised the spectre of institutionalised relationships with Russian OC.<sup>94</sup>

Of special concern in this rather shady context are the influential airborne and Spetsnaz veterans groups. Many have the ostensible mission of providing camaraderie, employment and family assistance, and other benefits to former members, though some are allegedly selling out their services to the Russian OC, including contract killing, it is supposed.<sup>95</sup> Targets for such killings ranged from rival OC leaders to businessmen, entrepreneurs, and bankers whose activities brought them into confrontation with aggressive competitors or professional OC gangs.<sup>96</sup> In times when the Russian special operations establishment should be heavily engaged in developing lessons learned from past operations, the responsible Russian authorities are most directly distracted and undercut by a “a widening perception – real or not – that serving and veteran special operations officers may be complicit in organized extra-judicial punishment of designated enemies and the pursuit of other than their own state goals”.<sup>97</sup> Regrettably, this last statement clearly shows that the actual percentage of corrupt Spetsnaz members does not really seem to matter. The formerly blameless reputation of the Spetsnaz in the perception of the Russian (and international) public has been ruined irremediably.

## CONCLUSION

Initially born as a force to counter NATO’s tactical nuclear launching sites in the 1950s, Soviet Army Spetsnaz eventually developed into a deep strike sabotage formation that should create chaos and confusion in NATO’s rear area. Whether this concept could have been successfully put into reality, and whether the Spetsnaz-hysteria in the West of the 1980s therefore was justified or not, cannot be assessed reliably (like any other mere theoretical doctrine that never has

seen real operational application). There can be no doubt, however, that Soviet Army Spetsnaz fought remarkably well in the Afghan War, an environment in which presently even the technologically superior US forces encounter severe problems. That said,

current rumours on corruption and links of Russian Army Spetsnaz members to the local OC seem to be a symbol more for the present situation in Russia in general than that of an axiomatically decadent elite force.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Robin Moore, *The Green Berets. The Amazing Story of the U.S. Army's Elite Special Forces Unit* (New York 1965).
- <sup>2</sup> Center for Military History, *U.S. Army Special Forces 1961-1971* (Washington, DC 1973).
- <sup>3</sup> Alan Axelrod, *Encyclopedia of the Armed American Forces* (New York 2005), 196.
- <sup>4</sup> The US LIC concept has its roots in a trailblazing British study: Frank Kitson, *Low-intensity Operations. Subversion, Insurgency and Peacekeeping* (London 1971). With the closing down of the US Center for Low Intensity Conflict in 1996, the last official US document on this meanwhile officially outdated doctrine is: United States Department of the Army, *Field Manual 100-20. Military Operations in Low Intensity Conflict* (Washington, DC 1990). What must be noted, however, is that the present term "Asymmetric Warfare" (AW) seems to have a lot in common with LIC, although nowadays AW is regarded by the US as a method used by America's adversaries only.
- <sup>5</sup> Quite a lot of different versions are used in the transliteration of спецназ: Speznas, Speznaz, Specnaz, SpN, and SPETSNAZ, to name just a few. The author has decided to use Spetsnaz, following Victor Suvorov, *Spetsnaz. The story behind the Soviet SAS* (London 1987).
- <sup>6</sup> Viktor Suvorov, *The Liberators* (London 1981); Viktor Suvorov, *Inside The Soviet Army* (London 1981); Viktor Suvorov, *Inside Soviet Military Intelligence* (London 1984); Suvorov, *Spetsnaz*.
- <sup>7</sup> Viktor Suvorov, *Suicide. For what reason Hitler attacked the Soviet Union?* (Moscow 2000); Viktor Suvorov, *The Chief Culprit: Stalin's Grand Design to Start World War II* (Annapolis, MD 2008).
- <sup>8</sup> Icon Group International, Inc., *Protectors: Webster's Quotations, Facts and Phrases* (San Diego, CA 2008), 502.
- <sup>9</sup> Attempts were made but never came to a definite conclusion in this particular matter. See: Kirsten Amundsen, William H. Burgess, *Inside Spetsnaz: Soviet Special Operations: A Critical Analysis* (Novato, CA 1989).
- <sup>10</sup> US Department of Defense, *Soviet Military Power. An Assessment of the Threat* (Washington, DC 1981).
- <sup>11</sup> Tom Gervasi, *SOVIET MILITARY POWER. The Pentagon's Propaganda Document, Annotated and Corrected* (New York 1988).
- <sup>12</sup> US Department of Defense, *Soviet Military Power*, 47.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>14</sup> David Tucker, Christopher J. Lamb, *United States Special Operations Forces* (New York 2007), 28, 39-41.
- <sup>15</sup> Ross Kelly, NATO's Special Operation Forces, in: *Defense and Foreign Affairs* 2 (1985), 32.
- <sup>16</sup> Department of the Army, *FM 3-50. Smoke Operations* (Washington, DC 1990), 1-2; Department of the Army, *FM 100-2-1. Soviet Army Operations and Tactics* (Washington, DC 1986), 5-25.
- <sup>17</sup> Richard Bowyer, *Dictionary of Military Terms* (London 2007), 228.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 227.
- <sup>19</sup> Department of the Army, *FM 3-05.102. Army Special Operations Intelligence* (Washington, DC 2001), 1-5. For the development of the US LIC-doctrine and the state of the US SOF in the 1980s see: Wolfgang R. Lehner, US Special Operations and Special Operations Forces, in: *Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift* 25 (1987), 36-46.
- <sup>20</sup> Department of Defense, *JP 1-02. Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC 2006), 2-1.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-2.
- <sup>22</sup> Department of the Army, *JP 3-05. Doctrine for Joint Special Operations* (Washington, DC 2003), 2-2.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-3.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-4.
- <sup>25</sup> Suvorov, *Soviet Military Intelligence*, 141.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.
- <sup>28</sup> Suvorov, *Spetsnaz*, 47.
- <sup>29</sup> For a more thorough assessment on the Soviet sports clubs under GRU control, see: Chapter 6. Athletes, in: Suvorov, *Spetsnaz*.
- <sup>30</sup> Suvorov, *Soviet Military Intelligence*, 140.
- <sup>31</sup> Suvorov, *Spetsnaz*, 49.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>33</sup> Suvorov, *Soviet Army*, 76.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>36</sup> Suvorov, *Soviet Military Intelligence*, 83.
- <sup>37</sup> Suvorov, *Spetsnaz*, 121.
- <sup>38</sup> Bengt Gustafsson, The Soviet Threat to Sweden during the Cold War, [http://php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/coll\\_sovthreat/Introduction.cfm?navinfo=46465](http://php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/coll_sovthreat/Introduction.cfm?navinfo=46465) (accessed 8 January 2010); Kirsten Amundsen, Soviet Submarines in Scandinavian Waters, in: *The Washington Quarterly* 2 (1985), 113; Lynn M. Hansen, *Soviet Navy Spetsnaz Operations on the Northern Flank. Implications for the Defense of Western Europe* (College Station, TX 1984), 29.
- <sup>39</sup> Erin E. Campbell, The Soviet Spetsnaz Threat to Nato, in: *Airpower Journal* II, No. 2 (1988), 83; Thomas Ries, Soviet Submarines in Sweden. Psychological Warfare in the Nordic Region?, in: *International Defense Review* 6 (1984), 695.
- <sup>40</sup> Suvorov, *Spetsnaz*, 37.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.
- <sup>42</sup> The creation of the British SAS is without any doubt exclusively connected with (then) Captain David Stirling as is the US

primary anti-terrorist unit Delta Force with Colonel Charlie Beckwith.

<sup>43</sup> Suvorov, *Spetsnaz*, 29.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Christopher N. Donnelly, Operations in the Enemy Rear, in: *International Defense Review* 13, No. 1 (1980), 14.

<sup>47</sup> Suvorov, *Spetsnaz*, 106.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>50</sup> Viktor Suvorov, *Spetsnaz*. The Soviet Union's Special Forces, in: *Military Review* 3 (1984), 43.

<sup>51</sup> Suvorov, *Spetsnaz*, 109.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>54</sup> Mohammad Yousaf Mark Adkin, *The Bear Trap. Afghanistan's Untold Story* (London 1992), 48.

<sup>55</sup> John M. Collins, *Green Berets, Seals and Spetsnaz. U.S. and Soviet Special Military Operations* (Washington, DC 1987), 112.

<sup>56</sup> Suvorov, *Spetsnaz*, 139.

<sup>57</sup> David M. Fortier, Humping a Ruck Across Sunny Afghanistan, Summer of 1986. Snipers Paradise Interviews A Soviet SPETSNAZ Vet Of The War In Afghanistan, in: *Snipers Paradise* 10 (2003), 23.

<sup>58</sup> Suvorov, *Spetsnaz*, 139.

<sup>59</sup> Fortier, Humping a Ruck, 25.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>63</sup> Suvorov, *Spetsnaz*, 141.

<sup>64</sup> Fortier, Humping a Ruck, 25.

<sup>65</sup> Suvorov, *Spetsnaz*, 56.

<sup>66</sup> William C. Potter, *The Post-Soviet Nuclear Proliferation Challenge* (Monterey, CA 1997), 7.

<sup>67</sup> Adkin, *Bear Trap*, 72.

<sup>68</sup> Egor Evsikov, Soviet Intelligence in Afghanistan. The Only Efficient Tool of the Politburo, in: *Baltic Security & Defence Review* 11 (2009), 48.

<sup>69</sup> John Barron, *KGB today. The hidden hand* (New York 1983), 15.

<sup>70</sup> "TIME", 22. November 1982, 7.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>73</sup> Vasil Mitrokhin, *The KGB in Afghanistan. English Edition. Working Paper No. 40. Cold War International History Project* (Washington, DC 2009), 143.

<sup>74</sup> Evsikov, Soviet Intelligence, 50.

<sup>75</sup> Colin McInnes, *Hot war, cold war. The British army's way in warfare 1945-95* (London 1996), 132.

<sup>76</sup> Evsikov, Soviet Intelligence, 50.

<sup>77</sup> "Der Spiegel", 13. May 1985, 158.

<sup>78</sup> Diego Gordovez, Selig S. Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan. The Inside Story of the Soviet Withdrawal* (New York 1995), 19.

<sup>79</sup> "The Independent", 15. November 2009, 4.

<sup>80</sup> Philip Heymann, *Living the Policy Process* (Oxford 2008), 21, 47-50, 75, 89f.

<sup>81</sup> George Crile, *Charlie Wilson's War. The Extraordinary Story of How the Wildest Man in Congress and a Rogue CIA Agent Changed the History of Our Times* (New York 2007), 351f., 418-428.

<sup>82</sup> Fortier, Humping a Ruck, 27.

<sup>83</sup> Adkin, *The Bear Trap*, 137.

<sup>84</sup> Fortier, Humping a Ruck, 27.

<sup>85</sup> Rod McCoy, *Russian Special Forces. Spetsnaz Commandos* (Sunnyvale, CA 2006), 24.

<sup>86</sup> Lester W. Grau, *The bear went over the mountain. Soviet combat tactics in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC 1996), 198. Rafael Reuveny, Aseem Prakash, The Afghanistan war and the breakdown of the Soviet Union, in: *Review of International Studies* 25 (1999), 607f.

<sup>87</sup> Graham H. Turbiville, Jr., *Russian Special Forces. Issues of Loyalty, Corruption and the Fight Against Terror* (Hurlburt Field, FL 2005), 2.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>90</sup> "Eurasian Secret Services Daily Review", 24. March 2009, 2.

<sup>91</sup> "Izvestia", 23. March 2009, 4.

<sup>92</sup> Turbiville, *Russian Special Forces*, 9.

<sup>93</sup> Graham H. Turbiville, Jr., *Mafia in Uniform* (Leavenworth, KS 1995), 6.

<sup>94</sup> "Novaya Gazeta", 17. June 2004, 4.

<sup>95</sup> Turbiville, *Russian Special Forces*, 14ff.

<sup>96</sup> "Izvestia", 20 October 1994, 1; Penny Morvant, Crime Fighter Expect Increase in Contract Killing, in: *OMRI Daily Digest* 72 (1995), 48.

<sup>97</sup> Turbiville, *Russian Special Forces*, 23.