

# RAID

*Reaction, Assistance, Intervention, Dissuader*  
*"The Black Panthers"*



In June, 1985 the French Police Nationale formed RAID in an effort to combat the rising amount of violent crime and terrorism sweeping through France at that time. Although not as well known as its older counterpart, the GIGN, they have quickly gained an excellent reputation as a intervention unit that is able to respond quickly and professionally. They are known throughout France by their nickname "The Black Panthers" due to the design of their unit insignia and the black overalls and jackets worn by its operators.

RAID is tasked with *"leading the National Police in tactical combat against serious crime and terrorism"*. Its principle missions include the following:

- Intervention in extreme criminal and terrorist attacks involving hijackings and hostage takings.
- Assisting other police and security agencies in dealing with violent criminal and terrorist organizations.
- Assisting other law enforcement agencies in securing large events of national and international importance.
- Protection of French VIPs, as well as foreign presidents and heads of state visiting France.



A pair of stoic looking RAID operators pose for a photo.

RAID, which is currently based Bievres (*on the outskirts of Paris*), is a relatively small unit consisting of 60 operators. The unit is organized into four 10-man assault groups, one 10-man specialist group (*such as EOD personnel, hostage negotiators, and other specialists*), and the balance forming the unit's command cadre.

Prospective RAID operators are selected from experienced Nationale Police officers. The volunteers must be between 25 to 35 years old, have at least five years of job experience, and they must be in excellent physical condition. Volunteers from all over France apply, but only about 10 in 600 makes it through the arduous selection process. After selection, trainees undergo nine months of training before they are considered operators.

The training course is designed to both physically and mentally demanding. The training includes intense physical conditioning, with both trainees and operators already in the unit undergoing at least six hours of physical training daily. Candidates are provided instruction in martial arts, tactical operations, combat and instinctive shooting techniques, rappelling, linear assaults (buses, aircraft, and trains), hostage rescue scenarios, heliborne assaults, high-speed driving techniques, surveillance training, combat medicine, even basic parachuting skills and maritime operations training. Some operators are

also sent to attend military training courses and attain HALO/HAHO, and combat diver qualifications.

RAID's best known operation occurred on May 15, 1993, when a fifteen man RAID assault force ended a two-day stand off between police and a terrorist who had strapped 16 sticks of dynamite on his chest and taken 21 nursery school children and their teacher hostage. When microphones placed around the school by RAID members indicated that the terrorist, an Algerian named Eric Schmidt, was snoring, the unit jumped into action. One group formed a shield that began evacuating the hostages while another raced to the location that intelligence said Eric Schmidt was holed up. Woken by the running boots and sound of escaping children, he began to move menacingly towards the approaching RAID officers. Three .357 rounds ended his extortion attempt. The entire assault had lasted 30 seconds, and none of the hostages were killed.

RAID, along with other French security and law enforcement agencies, has been heavily involved in combating a new wave of Islamic terrorism directed at France due to its support of the Algerian government. In a large scale operation conducted in November of 1994, RAID, and several other police and intelligence, launched a massive sweep to round up suspected members of known terrorist organizations. The sweep was successful in netting a large cache of weapons, explosives, ammunition, and other equipment.

RAID is lavishly equipped with the best materials money can buy. RAID operators are outfitted with flame resistant coveralls, balaclavas, and gloves. RAID uses many of the same weapons GIGN uses but, unlike GIGN, RAID officers are permitted to select their own weapons. RAID's primary entry weapon is the HK-MP5 series of submachine guns. When long range firepower is needed RAID operators use the SIG SG551 5.56mm rifle. The primary pistols in use are the Matra-Manurhin MR-73 .357 revolver, and the Baretta 92FS pistol with the extended 20 round magazine, but personnel weapons such as the Glock 19 and Sig-Sauer family are gaining in popularity among team members.

For its transportation needs RAID has access to the entire Ministry of the Interior fleet of vehicles and aircraft. The unit also maintains several specially modified vehicles at its base for ground transport.

*\*A Special Thanks goes out to [www.komandos.dit.pl](http://www.komandos.dit.pl) for the photo of the RAID operators.\**