

Germany's

KSK

Kommando SpezialKraefte

"The Will Counts"

In 1995, Germany took the initial steps to form a new military special operations unit known as Kommando Spezialkraefte, or KSK for short. With the unification of the two formerly separate Germany's, and their increased influence and business interests outside of Germany's borders, a new force was needed.

That force would have to be capable of rapidly responding to incidents involving German citizens abroad, or protecting Germany's national interests worldwide. The unit would also be capable of operating under conditions that other German military forces were not accustomed to, or normally trained to operate in, such as jungle and desert climates. KSK was formed to fill that need.

According to several reports, the impetus for forming the force was the German experience during the 1994 Rwandan civil war. During the conflict, Belgian and French paratroopers were used to rescue 11 German nationals because no suitably trained German force was available.

KSK's commander, a Brigadier, has emphasized the need for mature, reliable soldiers to man the unit. Despite the unit's hostage-rescue capabilities, reports stress that the KSK is a military unit with military missions -- not another GSG-9 counterterrorist force. KSK does, however, maintain a Hostage Rescue Team capable of resolving a variety of associated tasks.

While GSG-9 and the state police municipal SEK's are all outstanding units, GSG-9 is a Federal Border Guards unit that by law is restricted from conducting foreign military operations, and the SEK's only authorized to operate within their respective jurisdictions.

KSK will operate under the control of the German Crisis Section, and will conduct missions similar to those undertaken by US Special Forces, or British SAS units. They may include:

- Defence of Germany or NATO territory.
- Deterrence and de-escalation of crisis situations
- Peace keeping/peace support missions
- Strategic recon
- Deep penetration raids
- Hostage rescue/CT operations

Although unit missions include operating against high value targets such as lines of communication, enemy headquarters and long range recon, particular emphasis is being placed on ensuring the safety of German citizens in war or conflict zones, evacuating noncombatants, and rescuing hostages or downed pilots.



NVG equipped KSK operator outfitted for a nighttime HALO parachute jump.

The bulk of the unit was formed on April, 1st 1996 when the personnel of the three airborne brigade's commando companies, along with troops assigned to two of the Army's Long Range Scout Companies (the 3rd unit was disbanded) were combined under one command forming the KSK.

By the fall of 1996, approximately 20 soldiers had been successfully trained, and the unit was operational by April 1997. The first companies had a limited operational capacity in early 1999, with a small detachment being deployed to Kosovo to provide close protection details for high ranking German officials. When the unit is declared fully operational, it will consist of 1,000 fully trained operators, and will be organized as follows:

- HQ & Signal Company- HQ Platoon, 3 Signal Platoons, Long Range Recon Signal Platoon (all trained in SATCOM, HF, LOS communication)
- Commando/ Long-Range Recon Company- A HQ element, A Long Range Recon Commando Platoon, A Long Range Recon Platoon. Each Commando Company consists of the following:



KSK Operator with a MP-5A3SD

HQ Platoon

Four Commando Platoons - each specializing in a different area:

- 1st - Land Infiltration
- 2nd - Air Infiltration (*HALO capable*)
- 3rd - Amphibious Operations
- 4th - Mountainous and Arctic climate operations

Each platoon consisting of four teams of four men each. Each of the four men specialize in one of the following areas: communications, explosives, medical, or operations and intelligence, with one of the men acting as team leader. One of the four platoons is trained in conducting hostage rescue/ CT operations. At least some operators are trained in high-speed driving as well.

Support Company- a logistics Platoon, Parachute Equipment Platoon, Medical Platoon, Maintenance/repair Platoon, Training Platoon.

Training for KSK's initial batch of recruits is supposed to last for a period of approximately three years, with all the units operational elements being both military free-fall (HALO/HAHO) and SCUBA trained. The selection process and basic training for new recruits lasts about three months and is a modified version of what the SAS, and US Army Special Forces use (the US, UK, and France were all involved in the initial planning and unit set up).

The following is requirements must be met before a candidate can enter into the KSK's training course:

- Officers have to be under 30 years of age, and NCOs under 32.
- Candidates can come from any part of the Army.
- Candidates must be airborne qualified.
- Candidates must volunteer for at least 6 years of service with the KSK.
- Einzelkaempferlehrgang 1- A training course that all combat arms Officers and most senior NCO's (Staff Sergeants and above) must successfully complete.
 - Selection Process at Calw (KSK's Blackwood training center)
 1. 1 Day Psychological test (computer assisted testing)
 2. 1 Week of selection.

3. 2 Days of physical fitness testing (1 Minute maximum situps, 1 minute max. pushups, 3 10m sprint, stand jumping, 12 minute run)
4. 500m swimming under 15 min.
5. Standard German Assault course in max 1:40 min
6. 7 Km Fieldrun with 20kg backpack in 52:00 min
7. Additional psychological tests (3 days)

Upon successfully completing the basic screening and selection course the new recruit goes on to attend more specialized training courses.

Basic Commando Training

1 week of SERE training under extreme conditions, including a 100 km march in 4 days with heavy load and unexpected incidents, such as abseiling, river crossings, orienteering, and cadre led ambushes.

Psychological screening 1 hour

Basic Commando training part II

A 3 week combat survival course at the International Long Range Recon Patrol School at Pfullendorf.

All specialist training is to be completed before a new recruit is assigned to an operational team. At least some members also receive training in high speed/performance driving techniques.

With KSK, being a military organization, it is able to conduct overseas deployments and participate in NATO exercises where GSG-9 could not (legally) do so, though sometimes did (the rescue of hostages from the Lufthansa Airlines 737 in Mogadishu Airport, in October 1977 for example) and will also be used to protect and project Germany interests world wide.

Due to the many diverse missions and environments that KSK may be forced to operate in, KSK operators are afforded the use a wide variety of weapons and equipment. Uniforms consist of basic German infantry uniforms and LBE, black Nomex coveralls and balaclavas, and Kevlar "Fritz" style helmets. Commo equipment consists of a modified helmet mounted SEM52/SL with throat mike.



KSK operators have access to the entire arsenal of German military weapons, and a large number of weapons purchased exclusively for their use. These weapons are known to include the following: HK G36 5.56mm assault rifles, in both carbine and SAW versions with tactical lights, and lasers attached; P8 9mm pistols; HK MP5-SD3 9mm SMGs; HK G8 assault rifles; HK 512 12-gauge shotguns; G22 Sniper Weapon System (Accuracy International AW with folding stock, and German Optics in .300 Win mag); HK P11 underwater pistols; HK 21 5.56mm LMG HK 23 7.62mm LMGs; MG3 7.62mm GPMGs; and Panzerfaust 3 and Milan AT Weapons.

Vehicles in use with KSK are known to include Unimog 2 ton trucks, and Mercedes Benz G Wagon's. For heliborne operations, the members of KSK practice with the Bell 212's and Sikorsky CH-53's of the German Luftwaffe.

A KSK Sniper dashes for cover.

KSK is known to have sent over 100 operators to Afghanistan to aid in the fight to destroy the terrorist organization Al-Qaeda