

BBE

Bijzondere Bijstands Eenheid - BBE Headquarters: Van Braamhouck Geest kazerne in Doorn the Netherlands The Bijzondere Bijstands Eenheid, or BBE, is the elite counterterrorist unit of the Royal Netherlands Marine Corps. This unit was made famous in 1977 when they brought an end to the hijacking of a train by South Mollucan terrorists. This incident was one of the defining moments in the history of modern counterterrorism and provided lessons which are still being taught today. Today, BBE retains the same basic structure as it did in the scenario described above. During peacetime, the BBE falls under a complex, but typical command structure. The highest level of military command is the Group of Marine Operational Units (GOEM) which controls the 1st Amphibious Combat Group (ACG). The ACG is responsible for the Royal Marines, which, in turn, manages the BBE. This situation changes quickly (as far as the BBE is concerned) when terrorists strike. The Governmental Crisis Management Team takes over control of the team, which has the effect of eliminating the burdensome chains of command that govern the operation of the group in peacetime. Organizationally, BBE is made up two 33-man platoons each comprised of four assault teams. These teams are further broken down into five man units. The remaining troopers compose a type of operational command unit, which is capable of acting as a liaison with the Netherlands Marines, as well as functioning as a highly capable mobile planning and intelligence disseminating body. It is reported that one group from the BBE is expected to be on call at all times, ready to respond where needed within 90 minutes. The BBE is assisted in maritime operations by the 7th Special Boat Squadron, an elite unit made up of four six-man intervention teams. The BBE regularly conducts joint training exercises with the 7th SBS and in the event of a terrorist situation at sea, would deploy with at least one of the four SBS teams. BBE has trained with elite units from numerous nations, including France, Germany, Spain, Belgium, and the United States. Mention should be made of a significant operation in which BBE took part. In May of 1977, a group of 13 men took control of a train (a school was also seized simultaneously) traveling between Rotterdam and Groningen, Holland. Their intent was to force the Indonesian government to recognize South Mollucca as an independent state. They intended to effect this change via the Dutch government by holding its citizens hostage until their demands were met. Any hope of a peaceful outcome was lost when the hijackers killed the engineer and threw his body off the train. For the next two weeks, negotiations went on with little success on either side. Intelligence gathering was fortunately made a priority by the authorities and even managed a significant coup. This happened prior to food deliveries being made, when the terrorists insisted that those bearing the food be naked to insure they were not armed. Some unashful police officers volunteered to make the trips, their trained eyes learning much during their numerous visits. In any event, by June 10, the decision was made that a rescue attempt was the only way to end the siege. During the planning phase, it was decided that the most important aspect of the operation would be the creation of a diversion at the moment the assault began. Planners decided that two F-105 Starfighters would approach the train, then kick in their afterburners as they overflew it. Simultaneously, explosive charges placed at the front of the train would be detonated. On the morning of July 11, two teams of BBE commandos (one for assault, the other for covering fire) approached as the planes neared. When the afterburners and the bombs blasted through the early morning air, they achieved not only the desired effect of distracting the terrorists, but also had the unanticipated benefit of causing the hostages to dive for the floor. The BBE operators burst in firing their highly accurate Heckler and Koch MP5 submachine guns. The result, after a two minute firefight: seven hijackers shot, six captured. Two hostages were killed during the battle. Nonetheless, this assault remains a textbook counterterrorist operation.