

New Zealand

Special Air Service (NZSAS)



Feature

SAS Selection (PDF Download)

This information provided primarily by zeroalpha@specialoperations.com, with some additions from outside sources.

WE ARE THE PILGRIMS MASTER
WE SHALL ALWAYS GO A LITTLE FURTHER

The NZSAS consists of a headquarters support wing, a training wing and two squadrons, each with 3 troops specialties. Boat, Air and Mountain. One of the skills learnt is tracking. NZSAS trackers are well sort after as instructors for 22SAS, SASR and US Special Forces.. The staff get moved between the two squadrons, one of which is trained and equipped for counter terrorist operations and the other for commando-style `special warfare' operations.

Each squadron is divided into small groups which are trained to operate independently. Teams of about 4-6 soldiers, led by a captain or sergeant, are the basic operational elements of the NZSAS.

In addition to specialised training to be able to enter and leave an area undetected, the NZSAS has special weapons, observation equipment (eg night observation equipment), communications equipment and boats for its operations. In recent years this equipment has been upgraded with nearly \$5 million of new communications equipment (including satellite communications units which can be carried in a bag) and more than this on NZSAS "special warfare equipment".

The New Zealand SAS have been involved in special warfare operations in Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam - and many other countries secretly - since their formation in 1955.

On its first overseas deployment in Malaya in 1955-57 the NZSAS was attached to the British 22nd SAS Regiment and spent long periods in the jungle fighting "Communist Terrorists". The operations involved entering areas of the country controlled by the opposition ASAL organisation and attempting to kill the leading members of that organisation. In two 13 week operations in the Fort Brooke area they killed ASAL leader Ah Ming and his deputy and in the mountainous Negri Sembilan area they killed resistance leader Li Hak Chi.

The NZSAS was disbanded when it returned from Malaya, but was re-established in 1959, according to a Defence Force history,

to operate under South East Asian conditions with the following tasks:
a) long range small-party offensive operations behind enemy lines against troops, material and communications; b) in nuclear warfare, to operate against the enemy's nuclear capability and assist with target acquisition; and c) routine medium reconnaissance.

The NZSAS was sent to Borneo in 1965 and worked with the British SAS and Special Boat Section of the Royal Marines.

Next was Vietnam. In late 1968 the first 26 NZSAS soldiers, from the "1st Ranger Squadron" arrived in Vietnam. They were based south-east of Saigon with other Australian and New Zealand Army units at Nui Dat. For the next two and a half years the NZSAS operated with the Australian SAS doing what they called "recce-ambush patrols".

During 26 months in Vietnam the NZSAS did 155 of these patrols, usually lasting for 10 days after being dropped into an area by helicopter. Their primary task was intelligence collecting: searching for Vietnamese military positions and watching military movements from hidden observation points.

At the end of a patrol they might, if the opportunity arose, shoot or blow up a few Vietnamese soldiers before being extracted by helicopter. The NZSAS also conducted operations with United States Special Forces in other parts of Vietnam, but there is no information about what they did.

Other NZSAS members are known to have fought with the British SAS in Northern Ireland, been part of the May 1980 British SAS storming of the Iranian embassy in London, fought beside Marcos' troops against Filipinos in the Philippines and helped to train forces and operated throughout South East Asia.

Former British SAS officer, D.M., is on the record saying that 'troops' of four NZSAS soldiers were regularly sent to Britain on secondment and that he had personally fought with two of them, who were on "extended secondment to the British SAS", in Oman in 1974-76.

The NZSAS is still providing support to the Sultan of Oman. For example, one NZSAS officer attached to the parachute Training School, Captain T., travelled to Oman in 1990/91 to give parachute training to the local forces. New Zealand Defence Force documents about its overseas military assistance programme never mention Oman.

NZSAS have fought in combat roles with the British in "Northern

Ireland and everywhere that Britain goes". There is a rumor about NZSAS snipers being sent to Bosnia starting in November 1994. During the Gulf War there were numerous stories of NZSAS members who had been sent.

No New Zealand SAS died during the Gulf War but three were killed in an incident in another, unnamed, country shortly after. Army stories tell of two others killed fighting "communist terrorists" in South East Asia (probably Malaysia) in the early 1980s.

It takes intensive training over a long period to build up all the skills expected of SAS members. They are trained in unarmed combat (karate), small weapons, heavy weapons, underwater operations (with and without tanks for beach landings), jungle operations, snow operations, lots of parachuting and helicopter insertions. NZSAS members are highly effective and deadly.

Less is known about SAS operations within New Zealand. The SAS counter terrorist squadron occasionally receives publicity after residents have complained of loud explosions at night inside empty buildings; buildings which it has turned out were being used for an exercise, sometimes in conjunction with the New Zealand Police Special Tactics Group (formerly Anti-Terrorist Squad).

One of these exercises was held in Dunedin in preparation for the November 1995 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Auckland. An SAS Counter Terrorist Team arrived in an Iroquois helicopter and stormed the Philip Laing Building to "practice individual and collective counter-terrorist skills, with an emphasis on co-ordinated live-firing assaults and demolitions in a multi-storeyed stronghold".

During the 1990 Auckland Commonwealth Games it is alleged that members of the counter-terrorist squadron wandered around the crowd in mufti armed with hand guns. Others have had duties driving limousines as part of protecting foreign VIPs.

Where the British SAS goes, the NZSAS too often follows.

Official NZSAS Recruiting Information

To be able to do this job, you must have served between 18 months to four years in the Army, depending on your position. You can then apply to be assessed for entry into the Special Air Service. The Special Air Service carries out specialist functions operating under high security conditions. To join you must undergo rigorous mental and physical testing. If you're selected for SAS training you will be part of a rotating

programme where you will build your skills in areas such as long range reconnaissance behind enemy lines and counter terrorist work. If you are a citizen of New Zealand and would like more information on applying for selection, please contact the recruiting center nearest you.