

Spain



Special Operations and Counterterrorist Forces

Anti-Terrorist Liberation Group (GAL)

Rafael Vera, former Spanish secretary of State for Security, was arrested in February 1995 on the suspicion that he was involved with a previously unknown group known as the Anti-Terrorist Liberation Group (GAL). It was uncovered that the GAL had been conducting an illegal “dirty war” against Basque separatists, in particular the ETA, for some time. And while the Spanish government denied it knew about the group, an investigation revealed that the moneys for its operation came from the manipulation of existing government accounts. This money reportedly paid for mercenaries who made up the majority of GAL's manpower.

Ertzaintza

This was a paramilitary police force.

Grupo Especial Para Los Operaciones (GEO)

GEO is the Spanish government's official counterterrorist unit. They are manned primarily by 65 to 70 hand-picked members of the police force and, unlike the recently uncovered GAL, are officially sanctioned, trained, and supplied by the government. GEO trains with the British SAS, U.S. Delta Force, and Italy's NOCS. GEO entry standards are very stringent; out of 400 applicants for the initial team only 70 were accepted. The unit's original commander, Commandante Quijada, wanted competent operators who were psychologically strong enough that they could apprehend terrorists no

matter what crime they had committed. This mandate has been followed well; out of hundreds of operations, lethal force has only been used three times. As a police force, GEO covers most of the CT/HRT missions within Spain. GEO was present at the 1992 Olympic games in Barcelona. It is interesting to note that a videotaped display of GEO prowess and ability was displayed on TV to intimidate any would-be terrorist.

Almost all of GEO's training is carried out with live ammunition; all the sensations and dangers are present in everyday training. Operators train regularly at assaulting potential terrorist targets, such as trains, airplanes, and buses. GEO has been involved in a number of CT operations and hostage rescue mission; at least two terrorist held banks have been freed, three prison riots have been put down, and many hostages have been rescued.

Grupos Antiterroristas Rurales (GAR)

The Grupos Antiterroristas Rurales (GAR) is part of the Civil Guard and operates primarily in the countryside of Northern Spain against Basque separatists.



Unidad Especial de Intervencion (UEI)

The Unidad Especial de Intervención (UEI) is the Spanish Civil Guard's elite counterterrorist and hostage rescue unit. The Civil Guard is a 70,000 strong military organization with some peacetime police roles, to include the fight against terrorism. The military's UEI, which is not as well-known as its Policía Nacional counterparts (GEO), which is civilian in nature, and is closer to a traditional SWAT unit. When the UEI has taken part in scores of urban operations, primarily directed against the Basque separatist group ETA.