

# Heritage of special operations forces



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## Heritage of Special Operations Forces

Imagine the United States engaged in a conflict without Special Operations. An elite command created by Congress to conduct counter-terrorism, sabotage and other clandestine missions. As senior enlisted members, it's important to understand how the elite warriors of Special Operations contribute to the protection of the United States freedoms. This essay discusses the history, evolution, and significance of Special Operations.

### History

During World War II, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) was formed under the Medal of Honor recipient William J. Donovan. On February 16, 1942, Admiral Chester Nimitz wanted “ raiders” in the Pacific war to secure beaches and conduct other special operations activities. To answer this demand, the U. S. Marine Corps activated a battalion of dedicated Marines known as the “ Marine Raiders”, and was amongst the first of Special Operations Forces.

The first Special Forces command was formed in 1952, under the U. S. Army Psychological Warfare Division. The 10th Special Forces Group, led by Col. Aaron Bank, was involved in sensitive operations during World War II, including an operation to capture or assassinate Adolf Hitler. Col Bank is often referred to as the father of Special Forces. Understanding the history of Special Operations Forces provides insight on how it evolved overtime to improve services within the military.

### Evolution

Although the OSS led to the development of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and was responsible for both intelligence and Special Forces missions, it was led by military troops. The Special Forces soon adopted a lot of the OSS standard operating procedures. One of the most significant OSS units was Detachment 101. Detachment 101 conducted guerilla operations and identified targets for air strikes, search and rescue for downed pilots, and was critical in disrupting enemy supply lines. Many Special Operations units evolved following the formation of the OSS, such as the U. S. Army Rangers, 1st Special Force, Air Commandos, Alamo Scouts, and the “ Green Beret” (Special Forces).

In mid-1942, U. S. Army Major-General Lucian Truscott, a liaison Officer with the British General Staff, emphasized the need to establish an American special forces unit “ along the lines of the British Commandos”, later forming, the U. S. Army Rangers.

In World War II, the United States and Canada formed an elite American-Canadian commando unit under command of the United States Fifth Army. The unit, known as the 1st Special Service Force, was organized in 1942 and was later known as the “ Devil’s Brigade”. The “ Devil’s Brigade” was a special “ ski brigade” specializing in sabotage operations in Norway. German soldiers referred to this special “ ski brigade” as “ The Black Devils”. They were deployed to the occupied Aleutian Islands, France and Italy, before being disbanded in December 1944. In 2013, Congress decided to recognize the unit and passed a bill that awarded the 1st Special Service Force with the Congressional Gold Medal(JCS, 2014).

In August 1943, General Henry “ Hap” Arnold met with British Admiral Mountbatten and discussed ways that the U. S. could provide air support to the British commandos. Air support ultimately proved beneficial as it allowed the British commandos to conduct expeditions into the China-Burma-India area of operations. In an effort to honor Lord Mountbatten, the term “ Air Commando” was coined. The Air Commandos flew over many hazards in an effort to find and resupply the mobile British ground forces operating in hostile territory. As a result of these missions, the 1st ACG earned its motto of “ any place, any time, anywhere”. The 1st ACG’s success eventually led to the creation of two more Air Commando groups, the 2nd and 3rd ACGs. The 1st Special Operations Wing (SOW) gets its lineage from the 1st ACG, while the 352nd Special Operations Group (SOG) gets its lineage from the 2nd ACG, and the 353rd SOG lineage comes from the 3rd ACG.

The Sixth Army Special Reconnaissance Unit, known as the Alamo Scouts in the Pacific theater, was tasked with infiltrating deep behind Japanese lines and providing critical intelligence to the U. S. Sixth Army.

In 1954, Special Forces introduced the popular Green Beret in an effort to set themselves aside from the conventional U. S. Army soldiers. However, it wasn’t until 1962 that the Army’s Green Beret became officially recognized. John F. Kennedy ordered that it be made as a “ symbol of excellence, a badge of courage, and a mark of distinction in the fight for freedom.”

Kennedy is noted as founding Special Forces as a modern operational Army unit. The John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center is named in Kennedy’s honor.

In 1983, the U. S. Army introduced the Special Forces Tab. Personnel with at least 120 days' wartime service prior to 1955, including the Devil's Brigade, and the OSS Operational Groups, also received Special Forces Tabs for their contributions in World War II. This decision placed them in the lineage of today's U. S. and Canadian Special Forces. The evolution of Special Operations Forces provides notable parts of the U. S. military history and emphasizes the significance of how the military performs today.

### Significance

A notable part of history was those elite warfighters that risked their lives for others during combat and were recognized with the highest honor, the Medal of Honor. The first U. S. Navy Special Operations member to receive the Medal of Honor was LTJG (SEAL) Joseph R. Kerry. LTJG Kerry demonstrated the traits and characteristics incumbent of a modern era hero. LTJG Kerry served in the Vietnam War as a U. S. Navy SEAL assigned to SEAL Team 1, and during the war, he was severely wounded and later awarded the Medal of Honor for heroism in combat. He is currently an American politician and lobbyist, and served as the 35th Governor of Nebraska.

The last Medal of Honor recipients and one of the most junior U. S. Navy service members to receive the Medal of Honor, was MA2 (SEAL) Michael A. Monsoor. Petty Officer Monsoor was killed during Operation Iraqi Freedom and was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor. For his valiant actions in Iraq, a United States ship was named in his namesake.

Since the time Special Operations was born, it has been an all-male force. This exclusive brotherhood stood true until 2016, until the U. S. Army opened <https://assignbuster.com/heritage-of-special-operations-forces/>

its special operations jobs up to women. This enabled leaders and motivated several women to attempt the 24-day Special Forces Qualification Course over the course of the next two years. In November of 2018, a female soldier passed the Special Forces Assessment and the challenging preliminary “ Selection” to becoming a Green Beret and later, the first Special Forces female. Due to the discretion of Special Forces soldiers, this particular female name was purposely withheld.

This essay covered the history, evolution, and significance of Special Operations Forces. As senior enlisted members, it’s important to understand how the elite warriors of Special Operations contribute to the protection of U. S. freedoms. “ People – not equipment – make the critical difference. The right people highly trained and working as a team, will accomplish the mission with the equipment available. On the other hand, the best equipment in the world cannot compensate for a lack of the right people.” (SOF Truths, 2017)

## References

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