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Special Forces/Special Operations Glossary

This glossary of US and UK special operations/forces terminology appears at the end of my book *Killer Elite: The Inside Story of America's Most Secret Special Operations Team*. The book covers US special operations missions from Operation Eagle Claw, the failed operation in April 1980 to rescue US hostages held in Iran to (in the Kindle version) the most recent operations against Islamic State in Syria, Iraq and Libya. While no glossary is likely to be totally comprehensive, this covers the most important terminology surrounding US and British special operations units.



7 Sqn RAF

UKSF helicopter unit equipped with modified CH47 Chinook helicopters. Based at Odiham, Hampshire.

14 Int

British special forces human intelligence unit formed initially for Northern Ireland but expanded to operations in the Balkans and Middle East. It has largely been subsumed into the Special Reconnaissance Regiment. The name is an abbreviation of the original covername 14 Intelligence Company. The codename for its activities was Ajax. Its covername was eventually changed to Joint Communications Unit Northern Ireland. During the Northern Ireland days it was divided into a number of detachments, known as Dets, and as a result became known universally within the UK special forces community as “the Det.” (See also JCUNI and SRR)

16th Special Operations Wing

US Air Force special operations unit based at Hulbert Field, Florida, flies the AC130 Spectre and Spooky aerial gunships and MC130 Combat Talon aircraft that support special operations missions. It also includes squadrons equipped with the UH1 Iroquois, MH53 Pave Low and MH60 Pave Hawk helicopters.

18 Signal (UKSF) Regiment

UK equivalent of the Activity signals intelligence operation, formed in April 2005, and part of the Special Forces Support Group based at St Athan in South Wales.

21 SAS

The first of two UK Special Air Service reservist units, it is based in southern England and known as “the Artists’ Rifles” after the unit from which the Special Air Service evolved. The SAS was disbanded at the end of the Second World War but former members of the regiment fought a furious rearguard action leading to the formation in 1947 of a reservist unit, 21 SAS Regiment (Artists).

22 SAS

The most famous of the British “Tier 1” special forces units, 22 SAS Regiment was formed during the Malayan Emergency from a merger of one squadron of the reservist 21 SAS Regiment and a locally raised covert reconnaissance unit known as the Malay Scouts. It is known within the UK Special Forces community simply as “The Regiment” and is based at Credenhill, near Hereford.

23 SAS

Second SAS reservist regiment, based in northern England. Direct descendant of the Reserve Reconnaissance Unit that came out of Intelligence School 9, the World War II and Korean War escape and evasion unit also known as "Nine Eyes."

47 Sqn RAF

UKSF transport unit equipped with modified C130 Hercules aircraft. Based at Lyneham, Wiltshire.

75th Ranger Regiment

The US Rangers, based at Fort Benning, Georgia, are the leading US airborne light infantry unit. One of their primary roles is to provide close support for JSOC direct action operations.

108th Special Operations Corps

Dutch Army equivalent of SAS/Delta.

160 SOAR

160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment. Army special operations helicopter unit originally set up as Task Force 160 to provide helicopters and aviators capable of flying at night, for Snow Bird, the second attempt to rescue the Tehran hostages. Their night-flying capability earned them the nickname of "Night Stalkers." It was officially established as a special operations unit in October 1981 as 160th Aviation Battalion, became 160th Special Operations Aviation Group in 1986 and 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment in 1990. It is based at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. Motto: "Night Stalkers Don't Quit."

264 (SAS) Signal Squadron

UK Royal Signals unit that provides communications and cryptographic support to the SAS. Based at Credenhill, near Hereford.

A6E Intruder

US Navy twin-seater, carrier-based medium attack bomber used extensively in Vietnam and operational into the early 1990s.

A7E Corsair

US Navy single-seater, light attack, carrier-based bomber used extensively in Vietnam and operational into the early 1990s.

A10 Thunderbolt

Versatile attack aircraft, also known as the Warthog or Tankbuster. It is designed to provide maximum close air support for ground troops. Its most famous weapon is the 30mm machine-cannon mounted in the nose of the aircraft, which can disable an armored vehicle at a distance of around four miles, but the A10 is also capable of carrying a full range of other bombs and missiles.

A&S

The Activity's Assessment and Selection process.

ABH

Armija Republike Bosne i Hercegovine. The Bosnian Muslim Army.

AC130H/U Spectre/Spooky

Aerial gunship based on the C130 Hercules and specifically designed to provide close air support to special operations troops. The latest variant, codenamed Spooky, possesses an astonishing array of computerized surveillance and weapons systems including a 25mm Gatling gun; a 40mm Bofors cannon and a 105mm howitzer. There are eight Spectres and thirteen Spookies available to US Special Operations Command and alongside close air support they also carry out interdiction, armed reconnaissance, surveillance and combat search and rescue.

AFO Advance Force Operations

A team of around forty-five special operators attached to the Task Force Bowie intelligence fusion cell at Bagram in Afghanistan to provide operational preparation of the battlefield for Task Force 11. The AFO included half a dozen recce teams, each custom-made for the mission it was to perform, using a combination of Delta or DevGru shooters, Activity intelligence experts and Air Force Special Tactics combat controllers.

AFSOC

Air Force Special Operations Command based at Halbert Fields, Walton Beach, Florida.

AGM-114

Hellfire Air-to-ground laser-guided anti-armor missile originally designed for use from attack helicopters but more recently fired from Predator UAVs to take out al-Qa'eda terrorists.

AH6 Little Bird

Light attack helicopter gunship based on the OH6 Cayuse reconnaissance helicopter.

AH64 Apache

Helicopter gunship designed to operate as an aerial cavalry, destroying enemy armor. Its main armament is the Hellfire air-to-ground missile.

AK47

Kalashnikov assault rifle. The most common military rifle in the world is also among the easiest to use and most reliable. Designed for use by Soviet motorized infantry, the 7.62 "AK" was first produced in 1949.

Amal

Shi'ite Muslim militia group in Lebanon, which represented the majority of Muslims during the 1980s civil war. Led by Nabih Berri, lawyer and politician.

Amber Star

Joint allied operation launched in the summer of 1997 to capture war criminals in the former Yugoslavia and deliver them to the international criminal tribunal at the Hague.

Anaconda

Battle during the 2001-2 war in Afghanistan which involved allied special operations forces, two US infantry battalions and local Afghan forces and was designed to end large-scale Taliban and al-Qa'eda resistance for good.

AQM

al-Qa'eda in Mesopotamia (also known as al-Qa'eda in Iraq), organization led by Abu Musa al-Zarqawi eventually replaced by Islamic State.

AQT

al-Qa'eda terrorist(s).

Aquacade

Codename given to the US geostationary signals intelligence satellites after the previous codename Rhyolite was compromised.

Army of South Lebanon

Lebanese Christian militia based on the border with Israel and allied to it.

ASD SO/LIC

Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low- Intensity Conflict, the senior Pentagon official responsible for the Activity and other US special operations forces.

A-Team

Shorthand term for smallest operational team of US Special Forces, more correctly termed Operational Detachment Alpha.

ATV

All-Terrain Vehicle. Special operations vehicle which is a cross between a motorbike and a four-wheel-drive golf buggy and as the name suggests is capable of operating in all terrains.

Aviation Technology Evaluation Group

Covername for Activity's secret air force. See "Flights concepts Division."

Black List One

US military code for Saddam Hussein.

BMMAT

Briefcase Multi-Mission Advanced Tactical Terminal. Special operations man-portable three-channel communications terminal and laptop computer, contained in a briefcase and weighing only 40 lbs, which allows access to near real-time operational intelligence from both national agencies (i.e., CIA/NSA/DIA) and tactical sources.

BMP

Standard tracked Soviet armored infantry combat vehicle introduced in the mid-1960s and capable of carrying eleven personnel including the three-man crew.

Brand X

One of the earliest codenames given to the US Air Force special tactics teams.

Brigade Patrol Troop

The elite pathfinding element of the UK's 3 Commando Brigade.

BTR60

Standard Soviet Army wheeled armored personnel carrier from the 1950s up until the late 1980s, when it was gradually replaced by the BTR80.

Buckeye

Large-scale US-led intelligence operation involving the Activity, the CIA, the NSA, Delta and Britain's secretive 14 Int, collecting covert intelligence for snatch operations against indicted war criminals in Bosnia during the late 1990s.

C5 Galaxy

Extraordinarily large cargo aircraft, 247 feet long and capable of carrying 430,000 lb of cargo, the Galaxy was first introduced into service with the US Air Force in 1969. Its cargo hold opens up at both the rear and front of the aircraft providing an easy drive-on, drive-off facility.

C17 Globemaster

Most modern cargo aircraft in service with the US Air Force and the RAF, first introduced in 1995. There are fourteen of these aircraft dedicated to US Special Operations Command. At 174 feet long, it is not as big as the Galaxy but is still capable of carrying 170,900 lbs of cargo and 102 troops.

C130 Hercules

The workhorse of both the US Air Force and RAF transport fleets, the Hercules, first introduced in 1956, is nearly 98 feet long and capable of carrying 36,000 lb of cargo plus 92 troops. It also forms the basis for a number of special operations aircraft, most notably the MC130E/H Combat Talon, the AC130H Spectre and the AC130U Spooky.

C141 Starlifter

Long-range US Air Force troop and cargo transport aircraft, 168 feet long and capable of carrying more than 90,000 lbs of cargo.

CAG

Combat Applications Group. New name for Delta.

Canvas Shield

Operational security assessment of Grazing Lawn, a 1985 Activity signals intelligence mission in Honduras.

Capacity Gear

Special access program codename for the Activity, initiated in March 1989 and subsequently replaced by Titrant Ranger.

CBRN

Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear. Military term replacing the Cold War NBC (Nuclear, Biological and Chemical) and taking into account the potential of radiological "dirty bombs," i.e., radioactive material wrapped around high explosive.

CBT

Combating terrorism.

CCT

US Air Force Special Tactics Combat Control Team, which provides specialist ground-to-air liaison to bring down close air support for special operations teams.

CD

Counter-drugs operations.

CENTCOM

US Armed Forces Central Command covers an area extending from eastern Africa in the west to Pakistan in the east and Kazakhstan in the north. Strangely it covers Egypt and Jordan but not Israel, Syria or Lebanon, and Pakistan but not India.

Centra Spike

Codename used by the Activity during counter-drugs operations in Colombia which led to the 1993 assassination of drug baron Pablo Escobar.

CH47

Chinook Highly distinctive twin-rotored transport helicopter first used in Vietnam in 1966 and since used extensively for infiltration, exfiltration and resupply of US and UK special operations forces.

CIA

US Central Intelligence Agency.

C/JSOTF

Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force. The combined indicates that the force is made up of multinational forces, usually but not exclusively US, UK and Australian.

CNN

Cable News Network. US-owned international satellite television 24-hour news network.

COIN

Counter-insurgency.

COMINT

Communications Intelligence, information derived from intercepting the communications of the enemy.

CSAR

Combat Search and Rescue. Recovery of friendly personnel trapped behind enemy lines.

CSO

Center for Special Operations. The nerve center for hunting terrorists and other "high-value targets" worldwide. It continually draws up contingency plans and monitors the whereabouts and readiness of special mission units for special operations.

CT

Counter-terrorist/Counter-terrorism.

CTC

CIA's Counter-Terrorism Center.

CTJTF

Counter-Terrorist Joint Task Force. An organization directly subordinate to the Joint Chiefs of Staff which plans counter-terrorist operations to prevent attacks on US interests, citizens and/or property outside the United States.

DA

Direct Action. Any offensive action designed to attack or damage enemy positions or to snatch or kill enemy personnel.

Dayton Accord

Peace deal signed in December 1995 to end four years of internecine fighting in the former Yugoslavia. The governments of Bosnia, Croatia and Yugoslavia agreed to respect each other's territory. It split Bosnia into areas controlled by the Bosnian government and the Bosnian Serbs. The end to the fighting was to be overseen by the NATO Implementation Force I-For.

DCI

Director Central Intelligence. Title given to the director of the CIA signifying that he was, in theory if not in practice, in charge of all the US intelligence agencies. This role ended in February 2005 when President George W Bush named John Negroponte as the first director of National Intelligence, a direct response to the intelligence failures that preceded the 11 September attacks.

DCSINT

Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence.

DEA

US Drugs Enforcement Administration.

Delenda

Codename for National Security Council plan that would combine diplomatic and financial persuasion with covert action and special operations missions aimed at preventing countries from giving al-Qa'eda sanctuary.

Delta

The US Army's "Tier 1" counter-terrorist special operations unit. Set up in 1988 by Colonel Chargin' Charlie A Beckwith on the model of the UK SAS, with which he had served on attachment. The name Delta, often extended to Delta Force, derives from the unit's original title, 1st Special Forces Operational Detachment— Delta. It was renamed Combat Applications Group, but Delta stuck. The unit is based in a compound that straggles Fort Bragg and the Pope air force base at Fayetteville, North Carolina.

Desert One

Forward operations base for the Eagle Claw mission and scene of the mission's disastrous demise. It was in the Dasht-e-Kavir desert, about 250 miles southeast of the Iranian capital Tehran.

Det

Common term for 14 Int within the UK special forces community. (See 14 Int)

DevGru

Abbreviated form of Naval Special Warfare Development Group, the correct title for the US Navy's "Tier 1" counter-terrorist and special operations unit commonly known as SEAL Team Six. (See SEAL Team Six)

DGSE

Direction Generale de la Securite Exterieur. French foreign intelligence service, subordinate to the Ministry of Defense.

DHS

Defense Humint Service. Pentagon's own human intelligence service.

DIA

US Defense Intelligence Agency.

Diana

US Army one-time pad code system.

DNI

Director of National Intelligence. US cabinet level official in charge of all US intelligence organizations, a post created in 2005 as a direct response to the intelligence failures that preceded the 9/11 attacks.

DOD

US Department of Defense, more commonly known as the Pentagon.

Druze

Islamic sect with around a million members, centered on Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Israel and Turkey. The Lebanese Druze militia of the Progressive Socialist Party, led by Walid Jumblatt, were major players in the fighting in Lebanon during the 1980s.

Eagle Claw

The failed 1980 operation to rescue the US hostages held in Tehran.

ELINT

Electronic intelligence derived from the monitoring and assessment of electronic signals, e.g., radar pulses.

Enduring Freedom

Allied invasion of Afghanistan in the wake of the 11 September attacks.

EUCOM

US Armed Forces European Command, covering Europe, the whole of Russia, Israel, Syria and Lebanon.

Exile Pirate

Joint Activity/SEAL Team Six exercise in October and November 1986.

F117A Nighthawk

The world's first stealth strike aircraft, introduced into the US Air Force in 1982.

Falcon Aviation

Covername for Activity aerial signals intelligence operation in Colombia.

FARC

Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarios de Colombia—Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. Colombian Marxist rebel group set up in 1964 by the Colombian Communist Party as its military wing. Its initial role was to defend Communist-controlled areas but it swiftly moved to mounting terrorist acts designed to bring about a Communist regime. It is one of the most effective rebel groups in the world, controlling a third of Colombia, mostly in the southeast, and running active cells in Bogota and other main cities.

Farm

The Farm is the CIA Operations Directorate training base at Camp Perry, near Williamsburg, Virginia.

FBI

Federal Bureau of Investigation. Its roles include domestic counterespionage and counter-terrorist operations.

Felix Network

Christian Lebanese Forces militia spy network in Lebanon run by the Activity in the mid-1980s.

FID

Foreign Internal Defense is the official title for US counterinsurgency operations in support of allied governments.

Field Operations Group

The original special operations intelligence unit put together by Jerry King for the second Iran rescue mission and forerunner of the Activity.

First Rotary Wing Test Activity

The official name for a top secret army aviation unit codenamed Sea Spray, originally due to provide air support for the ISA, using aircraft with civilian markings, but which was taken over by the US Army Special Operations Division. (See Flight Concepts Division)

Flight Concepts Division

Top secret special operations army aviation unit. Initially formed in the early 1980s as First Rotary Wing Test Activity and codenamed Sea Spray, it was originally due to provide air support for the ISA and the CIA, using aircraft with civilian markings, but was taken over by the US Army Special Operations Division. Subsequently renamed Flight Concepts Division and returned to the control of the Activity under the codename Quasar Talent. Now the least publicized of JSOC units, it is based at Fort Eustis, Virginia, to provide covert air transport for Activity, Delta, DevGru, and CIA Special Activities personnel. Pilots are capable of operating any type of aircraft and generally fly under civilian cover.

FMLN

The left-wing Faribundo Marti Liberation Front fought a long guerrilla campaign against the Salvadoran government during the 1980s, but by 1989 was involved in peace talks that led to the FMLN abandoning the military struggle and becoming a political party.

FUBAR

(US military slang) F***ed up beyond all recognition.

GCHQ

Government Communications Headquarters, the British signals intelligence and cryptology agency, the equivalent of the US National Security Agency.

GE/Seniors

Codename given to former mujahideen employed by the CIA to carry out covert action against the Taliban and/or al-Qa'eda in Afghanistan.

Glass Man

Activity signals intelligence operation initiated in December 1986.

Gothic Serpent

The Task Force Ranger operation to take down Somali warlord Mohammed Farah Aideed.

Grand Eagle

False Activity operation to rescue MIAs from southeast Asia created in order to find out what Colonel James "Bo" Gritz was doing in his one-man search for US POWs.

Grantor Shadow

ISA special access program terminated in March 1989 and replaced by Capacity Gear.

Graphic Book

Activity signals intelligence operation in Latin America in 1982.

Gray Fox

Codename used by the Activity during the war in Afghanistan.

Grazing Lawn

Codename for 1985 Activity signals intelligence operation gathering intelligence on the Sandinista government in Nicaragua ahead of a possible invasion.

Great Falcon

Activity operation in 1981 to try to obtain a T72 tank and a Soviet-made Hind D helicopter gunship from Iraq in exchange for US artillery in a deal negotiated with Uday Hussein, Saddam Hussein's eldest son.

Green Light

Anglo-US operation to snatch Radovan Karadzic, the former Bosnian Serb leader, and his military commander, General Ratko Mladic, set up after Amber Light was deemed to have been deliberately compromised by the French.

GSA

Groupement Special Autonome. French special operations command of which the main unit is 1er RPIMa, the 1st Parachute Regiment, Marine Infantry, which despite its name is not simply an airborne infantry regiment but a direct descendant of the French wartime Special Air Service and the French Army "Tier 1" counter-terrorist special operations unit.

H1, H2, H3

Airfields in western Iraq alongside pumping stations on the old oil pipeline from Iraq to Jordan, which were designated H1, H2 and H3. The airfields were taken by allied special operations forces in early 2003 as forward operating bases in the Iraq War.

HAHO

High altitude, high opening. Parachute method designed to allow covert infiltration from distance, enabling the parachutist to jump from an aircraft some distance from the landing zone over friendly or neutral territory and then glide into the target area.

HALO

High altitude, low opening. Covert parachuting method requiring aircraft to pass directly over the drop zone in which special operators freefall before opening their chutes at low altitude.

Hezbollah

Quite literally "Party of God." Prominent Iranian-backed Shi'ite militant organization that originated in Lebanon and spread to the Occupied Territories.

Honey Badger

Air planning side of Snow Bird, the second mission to rescue the hostages held in Tehran.

Humint

Human intelligence, the gathering of information using human sources.

HVO

Hrvatsko Vijece Obrane. Literally "Croatian Defense Council," actually the Croatian Army during the war in the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s.

HVT

High Value Target. Senior member of enemy government/forces or terrorist organization.

ICTFY

International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in the Hague.

IDA

Institute for Defense Analyses. Pentagon-funded research organization set up in 1954 to carry out research on defense issues. Based in Alexandria, Virginia.

IDF

Israel Defense Force. Israeli armed forces.

I-For

NATO Implementation Force in Bosnia. (See Joint Endeavor)

Infiltration

Act of covertly entering hostile territory or introducing agents or operators from one's own side into hostile territory.

INSCOM

US Intelligence and Security Command based at Fort Belvoir, Virginia. Iraqi Freedom Allied codename for 2003 invasion of Iraq. ISA Intelligence Support Activity.

ISI

Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence service which backed the Taliban regime heavily and was therefore seriously compromised in the wake of the 11 September attacks.

Islamic Amal

Extremist breakaway group once part of Lebanon's Shi'ite Amal militia and backed by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps. It was led by Hussein Musawi under whose command it evolved into the Hezbollah terrorist group.

Islamic Jihad

Terrorist group based in Damascus. Name used by several groups to claim responsibility for terrorist attacks mainly in Israel and Lebanon.

ISIL

Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (see Islamic State).

ISIS

Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (see Islamic State).

Islamic State

Sunni terrorist group which evolved from Al-Qa'eda in Mesopotamia, the organization led by Abu Musa al-Zarqawi, initially as Islamic State in Iraq, then Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant or Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, before extending its reach into other areas such as Libya and Afghanistan.

J2

NATO term for intelligence staff, also refers to military commander's intelligence adviser. J1 is Personnel; J3 Operations; J4 Logistics; J5 Planning; and J6 Communications.

Jamiat-i-Islami

Afghan mujahideen group led by Ahmed Shah Masood until his assassination by al-Qa'eda in September 2001. The most powerful of the various factions in the north and the main force within the Northern Alliance.

Jawbreaker

The CIA team sent into Afghanistan to coordinate opposition forces as part of the war against the Taliban and al-Qa'eda.

JCS

US Armed Forces Joint Chiefs of Staff.

JCUNI

Joint Communications Unit Northern Ireland. Covername for British Army's secret surveillance unit in Northern Ireland previously known as 14 Int and colloquially known as the Det. Still current mid-2005 but subsequently changed. (See 14 Int)

Jedburgh teams

Small joint French/British/US teams of special operators who parachuted into northern France during the 1944 D-Day landings to gather intelligence and organize attacks behind enemy lines.

JIACG

Joint Inter-Agency Coordination Group. Organization set up by US Central Command in October 2001 to coordinate counter-terrorist actions of all national agencies in the CENTCOM area of operations.

JIATF-CT

Joint Inter-Agency Task Force—Counter-Terrorism, codenamed Task Force Bowie. JIACG team deployed to Bagram air base in November 2001 to provide an intelligence fusion cell, included UK and US special operations personnel, plus representatives of the NSA, CIA, DIA, FBI and State Department.

Joint Endeavor

NATO operation by Implementation Force (I-For) sent into Bosnia to monitor compliance with the 1995 Dayton Accord.

Joint Guard

NATO follow-up operation to Joint Endeavor under which a Stabilization Force, S-For, sought to create a situation in which allied troops could eventually withdraw from Bosnia.

JSOC

Joint Special Operations Command. Set up in 1980 to try to solve some of the interservice coordination problems experienced during the failed Eagle Claw mission, JSOC's public role is "to study the special operations requirements of all US military services to ensure standardization." But its real mission is to command and coordinate operations by all US "Tier" 1 special operations units, the so-called special mission units which include Delta, DevGru, 160 SOAR, and the Activity. It is based at Fort Bragg, Fayetteville, North Carolina.

JSOFOR-

Somalia Joint Special Operations Forces—Somalia. Headquarters element of Task Force Ranger commanded by former ISA officer General Bill Garrison.

JTF

Joint Task Force. Any group of forces from different military units brought together for a particular operation.

Just Cause

1989 operation to remove General Manuel Noriega from power in Panama.

Katyusha

Literally "Little Katie." Soviet medium-range rocket system, normally multi-barreled but can be fired individually, first introduced during the Second World War when it acquired the nickname "Stalin's Organ."

KH11

Crystal satellite US "Keyhole" imagery intelligence satellite.

KIA

Killed in action.

KISS

Keep it simple, stupid! Standard special operations dictum.

Lebanese Forces

Lebanese *Phalangist* (Christian) militia set up by Bashir Gemayel in 1976. Worked with the Activity during the 1980s to track the US hostages, most notably via the Felix Network.

Lebanese Front

Umbrella grouping of the various *Phalangist* militia and other political groupings keen to keep the Christian domination of Lebanon as institutionalized in the 1943 constitution.

LIC

Low-Intensity Conflict. Military conflict short of war, normally involving the use of a combination of terrorist violence and political pressure to achieve political aims, and attempts by governments to counter such methods.

MACV

Military Assistance Command, Vietnam. US command structure in Vietnam, originally providing military aid and advice to the South Vietnam government, but eventually under the same name becoming fully involved in combat operations.

MARSOC

Marine Special Operations Command. Small US Marine Corps special operations formation set up in February 2006 at Camp Lejeune, Jacksonville, North Carolina. It comprises around 2,000 personnel formed into two Marine Special Operations Battalions—one based at Fort Lejeune and one at Camp Pendleton, near San Clemente, California—a special operations support group and a specialist foreign military training unit.

MC130E/H Combat Talon

Based on the C130 Hercules aircraft, the Combat Talon's primary role is infiltration, exfiltration and resupply of special operations forces.

Meaconing

Process whereby control of a mobile telephone is taken over by a fake base station in order to allow interception of all conversations made on it.

MH53 Pave Low

Modification of the HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giant helicopter which was used for special operations in Vietnam. The Pave Low's technology allows it to fly in virtually any conditions day or night. Its primary role is covert infiltration, ex-filtration and resupply of special operations forces.

MH60 Pave Hawk

Special operations helicopter based on the UH60 Black Hawk. Its role is infiltration, exfiltration and resupply of special operations troops in all conditions.

MI6

British foreign intelligence service more correctly designated the Secret Intelligence Service, SIS.

Mi17 Hip

Russian multipurpose helicopter capable of carrying troops or cargo or acting as a gunship.

Mi24 Hind D

Russian helicopter gunship used to great effect during the Soviet war in Afghanistan.

MIA

Missing in action, most often used in reference to US soldiers whose bodies were never recovered during the Vietnam War.

MiG25 Foxbat

Soviet fighter aircraft designed to intercept enemy strike aircraft armed with four Acrid air-to-air missiles and capable of speeds up to Mach 3. First entered service in 1972.

Mossad

Israeli foreign intelligence service.

MQ1/MQ9 Predator

USAF and CIA operated Hunter/Killer UAV used to assassinate al-Qa'eda terrorists and on operations in the Balkans. The MQ9 can carry fourteen Hellfire missiles and has also successfully dropped a 500-lb Paveway II laser-guided bomb. It has an operational ceiling of 50,000 feet.

MSOB

Marine Special Operations Battalion (See MARSOC).

MTSO

Mobile telephone switching office. The station that controls the network of base stations that make up a mobile telephone network.

NA

Northern Alliance, the main opposition grouping in northern Afghanistan during Taliban rule was used as a proxy force by the allies to defeat the Taliban in the north with coordination from the CIA, MI6 and coalition special operations forces.

NALT

Northern Afghanistan Liaison Team. The CIA team, codenamed Jawbreaker, which coordinated Northern Alliance operations with those of the allies during the 2001-2 war in Afghanistan.

National Reconnaissance Office

The US intelligence agency that runs the country's spy satellites.

Naval Special Warfare Development Group

The US Navy officially describes this unit as responsible for "overseeing development of Naval Special Warfare tactics, equipment and techniques." In fact it is the correct title for the Navy's "Tier 1" counter-terrorist and special operations unit commonly known as SEAL Team Six and was adopted in 1987 after a series of scandals affecting the unit. The name has, however, never really stuck and SEAL Team Six remains in common use. The unit is also known as DevGru and has four line squadrons: Blue, Gold, Silver and Red. The commandos who killed Osama bin Laden came from Red Squadron. DevGru has an additional strategic reconnaissance element known as Black Squadron.

NAVSOF

Naval Special Operations Forces (See SEALs and Special Boat Units).

NAVSPECWARCOM

Navy Special Warfare Command based at San Diego and subordinate to SOCOM, this command is in charge of the US Navy SEALs and Special Boat Units.

NBC

Nuclear, Biological, Chemical. Outmoded military term for weapons of mass destruction (See CBRN).

NGA

National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) analyses and interprets imagery and "geospatial" information from US spy satellites and aircraft.

Night Stalkers

Nickname for members of the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment deriving from their ability to operate as well by night as by day.

NISTs

National Intelligence Support Teams. Run by the CIA Office of Military Affairs to work alongside commanders on the ground, providing them with CIA, DIA and NSA intelligence. They were created following widespread criticism from military commanders during the 1991 Gulf War that they never saw intelligence collected by the CIA and NSA in time to make use of it.

NOCS

Nucleo Operativo Centrale di Sicurezza. Crack Italian police counter-terrorist unit set up in the wake of the Red Brigades' 1978 kidnapping and murder of former prime minister Aldo Moro. It was the NOCS that rescued General James Lee Dozier from the Red Brigades in January 1982. Members of the unit are nicknamed the Leatherheads after the all-leather balaclava-style helmets they wear.

NSA

National Security Agency, the US signals intelligence organization, equivalent of the British GCHQ.

NSC

National Security Council. The body that advises the US president on all defense, security and foreign policy issues.

ODA

Operational Detachment Alpha. The smallest US Special Forces team, made up of twelve men and more popularly known as an A-team.

OH6 Cayuse

Light observation helicopter first introduced in 1968. It formed the basis for the AH6 Little Bird.

OH58 Kiowa

Reconnaissance and intelligence-gathering helicopter with two-man crew, capable of feeding real-time video back to commanders.

OPAT

Operations, Plans, and Training Advisers. US Special Forces officers placed inside the Salvadoran Army command structure during the early 1980s to advise on counterinsurgency tactics. (See FMLN)

OPB

Operational Preparation of the Battlefield. The role of the Activity.

OPS-35

The Studies and Observations Group (SOG) cross-border surveillance element which carried out interdiction operations along the Ho Chi Minh Trail across the border in Laos.

Optimize Talent

Program to legalize ISA existence putting in place safeguards against illegality and ensuring oversight.

OSS

Office of Strategic Services. US Second World War intelligence and special operations organization.

P2OG

Proactive Pre-emptive Operations Group. Activity-style unit proposed by Defense Science Board in August 2002 in response to Rumsfeld insistence on special operations forces' dominance of War on Terror.

P3 Orion

US Navy Cold War anti-submarine warfare aircraft first introduced into service in 1962 but more recently extended in use to general surveillance. Capable of feeding real-time video of what is happening on the ground back to military commanders.

Pasdaran

Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Iranian paramilitary force entrusted with guarding the revolution both at home and abroad. The IRGC operates abroad in support of groups like Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad that are backed by Iran.

Pathfinding

Reconnaissance operation designed to prepare the battlefield for troops that will follow.

Phalangist

General term for Lebanon's Maronite Christian militia from the *Phalanges Libanaises* founded in 1936 by Pierre Gemayel, based on the Nazi party, and designed to protect the Maronites' dominant position in Lebanon.

Phoenix

Controversial program in Vietnam in which teams were tasked to collect intelligence and "neutralize" Viet Cong suspects.

PIFWC

Person indicted for war crimes. Term used in Bosnia with regard to the hunt for those indicted for war crimes by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in the Hague.

PLO

Palestine Liberation Organization. Set up in 1964 by a number of Arab states with the intention of returning Israel to a Palestinian state. In the wake of the Israeli victory in the 1967 Six Day War, it turned to terrorism, acting as an umbrella group for a number of *fedayeen* groups carrying out a series of "spectacular" hijackings and bombings designed to attract attention to its cause. It was dominated by the Fatah organization of Yasser Arafat, whose 1990 renunciation of violence led eventually to the takeover of the so-called occupied territories by the PLO. Arafat died in 2004 and was replaced as PLO chairman and Palestinian president by Mahmoud Abbas.

Popular Forest Special Operations

Counter-terrorist exercise held in Savannah, Georgia, in September 1986 in which the Activity trained for a hostage rescue in a semi-permissive environment, infiltrating and exfiltrating the hostage rescue team and collecting both human and signals intelligence.

POW

Prisoner of war.

Powerful Gaze

Counter-terrorist operation held in the Jacksonville/New Bern area of North Carolina in March 1986 to which the Activity provided human and signals intelligence support.

Presidential Finding

Declaration by the president required in order to allow special operations teams like the Activity to operate in countries where America is not at war as with Iran during the 1987 operation Prime Chance 1.

Project Otto

Operation to smuggle Bashir Gemayel back into Lebanon after secret talks in Washington.

PSP

Lebanon's Druze-dominated Progressive Socialist Party. (see Druze)

Quasar Talent

Codename given to the Sea Spray air operations after they were transferred to the Activity. (See Flight Concepts Division)

Queen's Hunter

Activity signals intelligence operation in El Salvador in 1983.

Quiet Falcon

Codename given to the "take" from the Activity's Grazing Lawn signals intelligence operation in Honduras.

Quincy Acid

Joint counter-terrorist exercise with Delta in March 1986.

Quiz Icing

Special operations counter-terrorist exercise in June 1986 in which the Activity trained for a hostage rescue in a non-permissive environment, infiltrating and ex-filtrating the hostage rescue team and collecting both human and signals intelligence.

RAF

UK Royal Air Force.

Rangers

Primary US airborne light infantry unit whose role includes providing close support for JSOC direct action operations.

RC135 Rivet Joint

US Air Force reconnaissance aircraft capable of gathering all types of signals intelligence.

Red Brigades

Left-wing Italian terrorist group formed in 1969 with the aim of turning Italy into a Marxist-Leninist state and pulling it out of both NATO and the then European Community, now known as the European Union. Its two major successes were the 1978 kidnapping and murder of former prime minister Aldo Moro and the 1981 kidnapping of US General James Lee Dozier. Virtually destroyed by a series of arrests in 1989 and now largely dormant.

RG1 Predator

US Air Force medium-altitude unmanned aircraft vehicle providing real-time video of the battlefield to frontline commanders. It has a range of 400 nautical miles and operates at a height of 25,000 ft. Capable of staying in the air for more than forty hours.

RG4A Global Hawk

US Air Force high-altitude UAV provides near real-time high-resolution imagery intelligence to military commanders. Has a range of 12,000 nautical miles and flies at altitudes up to 65,000 feet at speeds of more than 400 mph. When Revolutionary Guard armored units stationed around Baghdad tried to use the cover of a major sandstorm to redeploy during the 2003 Iraq War, one Global Hawk circling above the Iraqi capital was able to see through the sandstorm, providing imagery intelligence that led to the destruction of the bulk of the Revolutionary Guards units.

RH53 Sea Stallion

US Navy helicopter normally used for mine-clearing and reconnaissance but deemed most suitable for the Eagle Claw operation because of its size, range and the fact that the helicopters had to be carrier-based.

Rooster Court

Unidentified 1987 Activity operation in Latin America.

Root Pain

Unidentified 1987 Activity operation in Latin America.

Round Bottle

Activity operation in 1986 to rescue US citizens held hostage by pro- Iranian terror groups in Lebanon, canceled to allow Colonel Oliver North to seek the hostages' release in return for providing Iran with missiles.

Royal Cape

Codename for first official Activity special access program, continued in use as a reference to the Activity into the 1990s.

RPG

Soviet rocket-propelled grenade launcher developed in the early 1950s and based on the German Second World War Panzerfaust. Normally RPG7, but there are a number of variants. Shoulder-held, it fires a fin-stabilized, rocket-assisted HEAT (High-Explosive Anti-Tank) grenade. Very cheap and easy to obtain in the Middle East, East Africa and Central Asia and a very effective weapon against both vehicles and helicopters.

SAS

Special Air Service. The British Army's main "Tier 1" special forces unit. Originally set up during the Second World War, it was disbanded at the end of the war and then reformed initially in 1947 as a reservist unit 21 SAS Regiment (Artists). It returned as a regular army unit in 1951 during the Malayan Emergency with 22 SAS Regiment created from a merger of one squadron of 21 SAS and a locally raised unit known as the Malay Scouts. Based at Credenhill near Hereford, close to the Welsh border.

SBS

Special Boat Service. The Royal Navy's "Tier 1" special forces unit. Evolved from a number of wartime units including the Special Boat Sections, which merged to become the Special Boat Squadron, and the Small Operations Group (SOG), which was formed in southeast Asia. The units merged at the end of the war as the Small Raids Wing and reclaimed the name Special Boat Squadron in the early 1950s. It was renamed the Special Boat Service after the 1982 Falklands conflict. Trained in counter-terrorist operations both at sea and on land and specializes in maritime insertion but is increasingly interchangeable with the SAS. Based at Poole in southern England.

Sea Spray

Codename for a top secret army aviation unit called First Rotary Wing Test Activity, which was originally due to provide air support for the ISA, using aircraft with civilian markings, but which was taken over by the US Army Special Operations Division. (See Flight Concepts Division)

SEALs

Sea-Air-Land teams. US Navy special operations force set up in the early 1960s on the orders of President John F Kennedy. There are six SEAL teams organized into two Naval Special Warfare Groups (NSWG). NSWG One is based at Coronado, California, and includes SEAL Team One, which covers southeast Asia, SEAL Team Three, responsible for southwest Asia, and SEAL Team Five, covering the north Pacific. NSWG Two is based at Little Creek, Virginia, and includes SEAL Team Two, which covers Europe; SEAL Team Four, responsible for Central and South America, and SEAL Team Eight, covering the Caribbean, Africa and the Mediterranean.

SEAL Team Six

Set up in the wake of Eagle Claw as the US Navy's "Tier 1" counter-terrorist and special operations unit, it was renamed the Naval Special Warfare Development Group in 1987 in the wake of a series of financial scandals that saw its legendary founder Richard Marcinko jailed; but the old title still sticks and is widely used. Like Delta and the Activity, SEAL Team Six is subordinate to JSOC. It is based at Dam Neck, Virginia.

Secret Army of Northern Virginia

Nickname given to the Activity by other US special operations troops, largely because of its location close to Washington and the extraordinary levels of secrecy that surround it.

Security Coordination Detachment

Covername used by the Activity from 1997 until at least 2006

S-For

Allied Stabilization Force in Bosnia. (See Joint Guard)

SFSG

Special Forces Support Group. UK special forces formation which groups together a number of different special forces support units. These include specialist infantry units to provide close support for both SAS and SBS operations and a signals intelligence regiment. The units involved are: 1 Battalion, the Parachute Regiment; a company of Royal Marines from 40 Commando; RAF Regiment specialist forward air base protection troops; 18 (UKSF) Signal Regiment, which carries out signals intelligence operations, and specialist bomb disposal experts. The group is around 1,200 strong and is based at the St. Athan in south Wales.

Shi'ite

One of the two main branches of Islam. The Shi'ites split from the Sunni over the succession to the Prophet. Shi'ite Muslims believe that Ali ibn Abu Talib, Mohammed's cousin and father of the Prophet's only descendants should have succeeded him. The Sunni believe the actual succession, by Abu Bakr, was correct.

Shooters

Special operations teams designed to carry out "direct action." In the case of the Activity, members of the Operations Squadron who provide support to the intelligence teams.

Sigint

Signals Intelligence. Collection of intelligence from any electronic signal.

SIS

UK Secret Intelligence Service better known as MI6.

SMU

Special Mission Unit. US "Tier 1" special operations unit, e.g., Delta or DevGru.

SNAFU

(UK military slang) Situation normal, all f***ed up!

Snow Bird

Codename for second operation to free the US hostages in Tehran.

SOCOM

Special Operations Command, based at Tampa, Florida.

SOF

Special Operations Forces.

SOFLAM

Special Operations Forces Laser Marker. Laser target designator used by special operations troops to mark targets for aircraft providing close air support.

SOG

Studies and Observations Group. Despite the academic sounding name this was a special operations command formed in Vietnam in 1965. It specialized in reconnaissance and surveillance missions aimed at collecting tactical intelligence about Viet Cong bases and supply dumps; infiltrating secret agents across the border into North Vietnam, carrying out psychological warfare, including so-called "dirty tricks"; mounting hit-and-run raids on the North Vietnamese coast from the sea; and interdicting enemy traffic on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. It mounted several thousand highly successful cross-border reconnaissance missions into Laos, Cambodia and North Vietnam.

Somali National Alliance

Somali military and political grouping led in the early 1990s by General Mohammed Farah Aideed.

Southern Sudan Liberation Front

Libyan-backed rebels in southern Sudan who kidnapped a number of Western hostages, including seven US citizens, in 1983. The organization was destroyed by Sudanese forces who rescued the hostages with the assistance of a combined Activity and Delta team.

Special Activities

Deniable operations by special operations forces, usually special reconnaissance operations but occasionally direct action missions conducted in places where the existence of US troops would be embarrassing or unwelcome.

Special Activities Division

CIA special operations team, largely recruited from former members of US special operations forces.

Special Boat Units

US Navy maritime special operations teams. They are organized into two Special Boat Squadrons. Special Boat Squadron One is based at Coronado, California, and Special Boat Squadron Two at Little Creek, Virginia.

Special Forces

This term has a different meaning in America than in other English-speaking countries, where it is a general term equivalent to the US special operations forces. In the US, it refers to one specific force—the US Army's Special Forces, sometimes referred to as the Green Berets. The US Special Forces are divided into five active service Special Forces Groups, each comprising three separate battalions. They normally operate in twelve-man teams known as Operational Detachments Alpha, or simply A-Teams. There are eighteen A-Teams per battalion.

Special Forces Mobile Training Teams

US Special Forces teams set up to advise the armed forces of friendly countries, as with Lebanon in the mid-1980s.

Special Operations Division

Small US Army planning staff special operations cell created in the wake of the Eagle Claw operation under the command of Lt Col James Longhofer.

Special Operations Review Group

The inquiry panel that investigated the failure of the Eagle Claw mission. Chaired by former chief of Naval Operations Admiral James L Holloway III and as a result more commonly known as the Holloway Commission.

Special Reconnaissance

Covert reconnaissance behind enemy lines, one of the main specialties of special operations forces.

Special Tactics Combat Controllers

Provide specialist control of air support for special operations, including laser guidance for bomb attacks; control of air assets within the assault zone; and operation of forward air bases. Organized into Special Tactics Squadrons, which also include para-rescue and combat weather personnel. There are six Special Tactics Squadrons, of which two, the 21st and the 24th, are based alongside JSOC and Delta at Pope Air Force Base, Fayetteville, North Carolina, to provide direct support to JSOC special mission units. The 720th Special Tactics Group and 23rd Special Tactics Squadron are based at Hulbert Field, Florida. The other squadrons are based in the western continental US, 22nd STS at McChord Air Force Base, Washington; in the UK, 321st STS at RAF Mildenhall; and Japan, 320th STS at Kadena Air Force Base.

Sqn

Squadron.

SR71 Blackbird

Long-range strategic reconnaissance aircraft capable of collecting both signals and imagery intelligence. It can fly at speeds of well over Mach 3 and at heights of up to 85,000 feet.

SRR

Special Reconnaissance Regiment. British equivalent of the Activity based on two human intelligence units formed for operations in Northern Ireland—the Joint Support Group, a team of specialist agent-runners formerly known as the Force Reconnaissance Unit (FRU), and Joint Communications Unit Northern Ireland, a military surveillance unit formerly known as 14 Intelligence Company. The SRR was set up in 2005. (See 14 Int and JCUNI)

SSB

Strategic Support Branch. Pentagon human intelligence unit which puts together small teams of interrogators, intelligence analysts and agent-runners to provide Activity-style support for non-special operations units.

SSMS

Special Operations Forces Signals Intelligence Manpack System. Lightweight signals intelligence broadband scanner, intercept and direction-finding system capable of being carried on the operator's back.

Sunni

One of the two main branches of Islam. (See Shi'ite)

Sussex teams

MI6/OSS teams parachuted into northern France during the 1944 D-Day landings to gather intelligence and organize local resistance groups.

T55

Soviet main battle tank introduced in 1958 and exported to all Warsaw Pact states and a number of Soviet client states such as Iraq. It has a 100mm rifled gun and is probably the most widely used tank since the Second World War.

T72

Soviet main battle tank introduced in the early 1970s. It has a 125mm smooth bore gun and was capable of disabling a US M1 Abrams tank at a distance of 1,000 meters. Not as impressive as it sounds since the Abrams could pick off a T72 at 2,000 meters.

Tactical Concept Detachment

Original covername for the Activity.

Tactical Coordination Detachment

New covername given to the Activity after it was supposedly terminated in March 1989. Replaced by 1997 by Security Coordination Detachment.

Targeting and Analysis Center

The Activity's newly created analysis and assessment organization based in Rosslyn, Virginia. It builds up pictures of enemy and terrorist orders of battle and then dictates which targets JSOC units on the ground should go after in operations like those that killed or captured Pablo Escobar, Saddam Hussein, Abu Musab Zarqawi and Osama bin Laden.

Task Force 5

Designation of "Tier 1" Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force in Afghanistan during early summer 2003.

Task Force 11

Designation given to "Tier 1" Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force in southern Afghanistan (Task Force Sword) at the end of 2001.

Task Force 20

Designation of "Tier 1" Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force set up in Iraq at the end of the 2003 Iraq War to capture the leading members of Saddam's regime who were designated as "High Value Targets."

Task Force 88

Designation of "Tier 1" Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force in Iraq as at late 2006, replacing Task Force 145. As with TF145 it contains Delta, DevGru, Activity and SAS operators backed up by US Rangers and British SFSG.

Task Force 121

Designation of "Tier 1" Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force, an amalgamation of Task Force 5 and Task Force 20, set up in July 2003 to track down Saddam Hussein, Osama bin Laden and their leading cohorts.

Task Force 145

Designation of "Tier 1" Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force which replaced Task Force 626 with continuing mission to hunt down insurgents in Iraq and in particular the leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. It contained Delta, DevGru, Activity, and SAS operators backed up by US Rangers and the British SFSG.

Task Force 160

Helicopter unit set up as part of Honey Badger, the air planning side of the second attempt to rescue the US hostages in Tehran. It eventually became 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment.

Task Force 626

Designation of "Tier 1" Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force which replaced Task Force 121 in Iraq in the wake of the December 2003 capture of Saddam Hussein. Tasked to hunt down insurgents in Iraq, it contained Delta, DevGru, Activity, and SAS operators backed up by US Rangers and the British SFSG.

Task Force Bayonet

Generic title for the US special operations forces, largely Army Special Forces but also Delta, SEAL and ISA operators, deployed as "military advisers" across Central America in the 1980s.

Task Force Black

Code used to refer to UK SAS in any operations alongside US special operations forces.

Task Force Blue

Code used to refer to any DevGru/SEAL Team Six personnel during joint operations.

Task Force Bowie

Intelligence “fusion cell” set up at Bagram air base in November 2001 to coordinate all special operations intelligence. (See JIATF-CT)

Task Force Dagger

(1) Codename for Joint Special Operations Task Force —West during the 2003 Iraq War. It was based at the Shaheed Muwaffaq airfield near Azraq in eastern Jordan and made up of US Rangers, US Army Special Forces, and British and Australian SAS. (2) Codename for Joint Special Operations Task Force—North during the 2001 war in Afghanistan, which was largely built around Central Command’s 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne).

Task Force Gecko

Delta team which attacked a compound just outside Kandahar known to be used by Mullah Omar in an operation that was given maximum publicity by the Pentagon. The mission turned into what one participant called “a total goat-fuck” when it met more resistance than expected but it did lead to the capture of useful intelligence.

Task Force Green

Code used to refer to any Delta personnel during joint operations.

Task Force K-Bar

Codename for Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force— South, a Tier 2 special operations “Direct Action” team operating in southern Afghanistan in late 2001. It was led by US Navy SEALs but also included special forces from Denmark, Germany, Australia, Norway, Canada and New Zealand. Its role was to attack locations while Task Force Sword targeted “high value targets” like Osama bin Laden and Mullah Omar.

Task Force Maroon

Code used to refer to UK Special Forces Support Group in any operations alongside US special operations forces.

Task Force Orange

Code used to refer to any Activity personnel during joint operations. Often just referred to as ‘TFO’ or ‘Orange’.

Task Force Ranger

Covername for the Joint Special Operations Task Force sent into Somalia to capture Mohammed Farah Aideed and withdrawn as a result of the losses incurred in the “Black Hawk Down” incident.

Task Force Sword

“Tier 1” Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force in southern Afghanistan tasked to carry out the more difficult operations. It was made up of Delta, DevGru (the old SEAL Team Six), and the Activity, augmented by A and G squadrons of Britain’s 22 SAS Regiment and C Squadron of the SBS. It operated from bases in Pakistan, the Omani island of Masirah, and from the US aircraft carrier Kitty Hawk in the Persian Gulf. The main role of Task Force Sword was to pursue “high value targets” and to cut off the Taliban and al-Qa’eda troops as they attempted to flee into Pakistan’s Tribal Areas.

Task Force Viking

Codename for Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force— North during the 2003 Iraq War. This task force, made up of members of allied special operations forces, including Delta, Special Forces, the SAS and the SBS, organized the Peshmerga forces to seize the key cities of Kirkuk and Mosul and directed air support for their attacks in an operation designed to mirror the successful use of the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan.

Titrant Ranger

Codename for the Activity special access program during the 2003 Iraq War.

Torn Victor

Codename used by the Activity during operations to snatch indicted war criminals in the former Yugoslavia.

TOW

Tube-launched, optically tracked, wire-guided anti-tank missile introduced into service with the US armed forces in 1970 and given to Iran in exchange for proffered assistance in releasing the US hostages held in Lebanon in the mid-1980s.

U2 Dragon Lady

US Air Force single-seater surveillance aircraft capable of carrying both signals and imagery intelligence payloads and flying at heights of up to 90,000 feet. The first U2 was introduced into service in 1956. The aircraft achieved notoriety in May 1960 when a U2 piloted by Gary Powers was shot down over the Soviet Union.

UAS

Unmanned Aerial System. Increasingly used instead of UAV (see below) to emphasize that the aerial vehicle is only the front end of a complete surveillance system.

UAV

Unmanned Aerial Vehicle.

UH1 Iroquois

Multipurpose helicopter known as the "Huey" introduced into service with the US Army in 1958. It was made famous by the Vietnam War.

UH60 Black Hawk

Multipurpose US Army helicopter capable of carrying eleven infantrymen or acting as an aerial gunship.

UKSF

UK Special Forces units.

UNOSOM

United Nations Operation in Somalia. UN peacekeeping force sent into Somalia in 1992 to monitor ceasefire between warring factions.

USAF

United States Air Force.

USAISA

United States Army Intelligence Support Activity.

US Army Office of Military Support

Most recently known covername for the Activity.

US Office of Military Cooperation

Beirut-based organization that ran US military operations on the ground in Lebanon in the 1980s.

USSOCOM

United States Special Operations Command. (See SOCOM)

UW

Unconventional Warfare. Any guerrilla operations or special operations, including covert sabotage, reconnaissance or intelligence operations.

Velvet Hammer

Operation planned by former US Marine Colonel James "Bo" Gritz to rescue MIAs allegedly held captive in Laos.

West Wing

Codename given to Shaheed Muwaffaq airfield near Azraq in eastern Jordan used as a base by allied special operations forces for the 2003 Iraq War.

Winter Harvest

Activity operation in 1981-2 to rescue General James Lee Dozier from the Italian Red Brigades terrorist group.

WMD

Weapons of Mass Destruction. Generally taken to mean any chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear weapon regardless of likely level of destruction.

Wolverine 1 and 2

Codenames given to farm buildings in the Iraqi village of al-Dawr, ten miles south of Tikrit where Saddam was captured.

Yellow Fruit

"Black" counter-espionage and security team set up in June 1982 to provide "operational security and counter-intelligence support to classified, sensitive special operations and intelligence elements," including the Activity.

ZSU-23

*Zenitnaya Samokhodnaya Ustanovka*23, literally "anti-aircraft self-propelled system, type23." Highly effective Soviet anti-aircraft gun introduced in the early 1960s. The 23mm guns are normally mounted in fours on an armored vehicle known as the ZSU-23-4.



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