

Special Forces - Argentina

Part One of a series that takes a look at Special Forces units around the world. This month we begin with Argentina.

Mention the word 'Special Forces' and most people immediately think of the British SAS, the American Navy SEALs, or the Russian Spetsnaz.

Yet most countries around the world will have a special force unit or component. In this series we will be looking at special forces units around the world. This month we look at Argentina.

Brigada Especial Operativa Halcón

Argentina's principal anti-terrorist unit is *Brigada Especial Operativa Halcón* (Special Operations Brigade - Falcon).

Argentina did not possess a viable counter-terrorist capability until 1978, when it hosted the football World Cup. At that time, the military dictatorship ruling Argentina accepted the possibility that such a widely televised event was a likely forum for a terrorist incident.

The result was the formation of a special counter-terrorist team, the *Brigada Halcón*.

Today, the unit is made up of seventy-five commandos, subdivided into fifteen-man tactical teams.

Each team has two snipers, one medic, one negotiator, an explosive ordnance disposal expert, a communications spe-

cialist, an intelligence specialist, and eight tactical assaulters.

Initial training is divided into three two-month stages. Skills such as combat shooting, heli-borne insertion, HALO/HAHO parachuting, explosives, sniping, intelligence gathering, martial arts, and offensive driving are covered in this period.

The unit also handles VIP protection and is also responsible for hijacked aircraft throughout the nation.

While many current members are veterans of the Argentine Army, the *Brigada Halcón* is under the operational control of the federal police, under the direct command of the Buenos Aires Police Department.

Brigada Halcón members use foreign weapons and gear, as well as locally man-



ufactured protective gear and uniforms. Weapons include: Bersa Thunder 9, Glock 17, Heckler & Koch MP5, Steyr AUG, Heckler & Koch HK33, and the Mossberg 500 shotgun. For sniping purposes the Heckler & Koch PSG1 is commonly used.

This special operations group was involved in the "Ramallo massacre", when operatives from the *Brigada Halcón* shot dead one alleged bank robber and his two hostages.

Grupo Especial de Operaciones Federales

The *Grupo Especial de Operaciones Federales* (Federal Operations Special Group, GEOF) is a police tactical unit of the *Policía Federal Argentina* trained to strategically perform counterterrorist and counternarcotics missions. It is also used for VIP protection and hostage rescue situations.

The GEOF is a specialized police unit of the General Directorate of International Terrorism and Complex Crimes.

Although the existence of special forces in Argentina begins in 1930, the unit was officially created after the 1994 AMIA bombing. In 1994 its first section was established in

Tucumán and in 1997 a second division was constituted in Rosario. In the next year the Buenos Aires group was formed.

The unit's main training course lasts for 20 weeks and is divided in two periods, with only 15% common approvals. Topics include sniping, HALO/HAHO parachuting, martial arts, offensive driving, and explosives.

The GEOF constantly trains with special units of other countries like the FBI Hostage Rescue Team, the US Army Green Berets, the Israeli *Yamam* and numerous SWAT groups. The GEOF, nicknamed 4T (*todo tiempo-todo terreno*, all weather-all terrain), has full powers in all jurisdictions of the country.

Grupo de Operaciones Especiales (GOE)

The *Grupo de Operaciones Especiales* (GOE - Special Operations Group) is a compa-

ny-sized counter-terrorist unit of the Argentine Air Force.

The majority of the volunteers come from the Air Force Police and the unit's primary mission is to deal with aircraft hijackings.

GOE's origins lie in the air force parachute school which was formed in 1947. This led to a unit designated 13th Parachute Regiment, which was manned by the air force but controlled by the army.

Later the army formed, first its own parachute unit, and subsequently, its own special forces, as a result of which the 13th Parachute Regiment gradually contracted until today, where it is some 100 strong.

All unit members are qualified HALO parachutists and specialise in anti-hijacking operations and LRRP (Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol) missions.



Mossberg 500



Heckler & Koch
MP5



Steyr
AUG

Agrupación de Fuerzas de Operaciones Especiales

The *Agrupación de Fuerzas de Operaciones Especiales* (Special Operations Forces Group) is a special operations unit of the Argentine Army.

It was created on 6 December 2005 as the first operational element of the Proyecto Ejército Argentino 2025.

The service is mainly composite of air assault, airborne, light infantry, reconnaissance and commando troops, and light helicopters; also artillery, engineers, air transport, and communications companies are constantly ready to assist and support the group.

The Special Operations Forces Group consists of:

- *Compañía de Comandos 601* (601 Commando Company).
- *Compañía de Comandos 602* (602 Commando Company).
- *Regimiento de Asalto Aéreo 601* (601 Air Assault Regi-

ment).

601 Commando Company

The unit was created on 5 January 1982. It was based on the original "*Equipo Especial Halcón 8*" created by Lt. Colonel Mohamed Alí Seineldín in 1978.

The unit took part in the Falklands War or, as it was known to the Argentinians, *Guerra de las Malvinas* (Malvinas War) in 1982. They were under the command of 34 year old Major Mario Castagneto.

The company is based on Campo de Mayo, Buenos Aires Province and is under the command of the Rapid Deployment Force as part of the Special Operations Forces Group.

The members of the unit wear green berets with unit badges.

602 Commando Company

The unit was created on 21

May 1982 and had their baptism of fire during the Falklands War.

The commander at the time was 39 year-old Major Aldo Rico.

The company is based in Córdoba Province and is under the command of the Rapid Deployment Force as part of the Special Operations Forces Group.

The members of the unit wear green berets with unit badges.

601 Air Assault Regiment

The unit was created in January 2003. The regiment is divided up into three assault companies: A, B, and C.

They are based at Campo de Mayo and work closely with *Batallón de Helicópteros de Asalto 601* (601 Assault Helicopter Battalion).

The motto of the unit is *Sapientia et Labore* (Wisdom and Labour).

