

Special Forces - Brazil

Part Three of a series that takes a look at Special Forces units around the world. This month we look at Brazil.

Officially known as the *República Federativa do Brasil*, Brazil is the largest country in both South America and Latin America.

At 8.5 million square kilometres and with over 208 million people, Brazil is the world's fifth-largest country by area and the fifth most populous.

The federation is composed of the union of the 26 states, the Federal District, and the 5,570 municipalities. It is the largest country to have Portuguese as an official language and the only one in the Americas; it is also one of the most multicultural and ethnically diverse nations, due to over a century of mass immigration from around the world.

The *Forças Armadas Brasileiras* (Brazilian Armed Forces) is the unified military organization. It comprises of the Brazilian Army (including the Army Aviation), the Brazilian Navy (including the Marine Corps and Brazilian Naval Aviation) and the Brazilian Air Force.

Brazil's armed forces are the third largest in the Americas, after the United States and Colombia, and the largest in Latin America by the level of military equipment, with 318,480 active-duty troops and officers.

As with most large military organisations, the Brazilian Armed Forces have a number of special forces components. These include:

Special Operations Command

The Brazilian *Comando de Operações Especiais* (Special Operations Command) is often shortened to C Op Esp.

It is a part of the Brazilian Army Commands, specifically the Land Army Command. Head quartered in Central Brazil, in Goiania, C OP ESP is positioned under the larger Planalto Military Command.

It's motto is; "any mission, in any place, at any time, by every way".



Special Operations Command

C Op Esp is a highly specialized and dynamic fighting force that operates all over Brazil. C Op Esp is trained in non conventional warfare. Some of C Op Esp's top level capabilities include; covert reconnaissance on the battlefield, the ability to perform search, destruction, neutralization and interdiction of targets of significant value, perform guided air strikes, rescue allies and high value targets, kidnap enemy personnel, and

conduct operations classified as non conventional warfare.

Another valuable capability that C Op Esp excels in is counterinsurgency and counter-terrorism. Operations of this type include; rescuing hostages of any type, neutralization of explosives and other weapons used by terrorists, monitoring and spying on terrorist groups.

C Op Esp is structured by the following subordinate units:

- 1st Special Forces Battalion (1° BF Esp)
- 1st Commando Action Battalion (1° BAC)
- 1st Battalion of Information Support Operations (1st BOAI)
- 3rd Special Forces Company (3ª Cia F Esp)
- Special Operations Support Battalion (B Ap Op Esp)
- Administrative Base of the Special Operations Command (B Adm C Op Esp)
- Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Defense Battalion (BDQBRN)
- 6th Army Police Platoon (6th Pel PE)

GRUMEC

The *Grupamento de Mergulhadores de Combate* (Combat Divers Group), abbreviated to GRUMEC, is the special forces unit of the Brazilian Navy.

The GRUMEC was created in 1974 and is subordinate to the Submarine Force, which provides the primary means of transport for combat diver



GRUMEC Emblem

missions. GRUMEC teams can be transported to the target by a submarine, from which can reach the target by swimming, in kayaks, or in inflatable boats that can be launched from the submarine while it is still under water. The GRUMEC can also reach the target by parachute or helicopter.

The function of the GRUMEC is to infiltrate undetected in coastal and riverine environments in order to perform tasks such as reconnaissance, sabotage and the elimination of targets of strategic value. In this sense it is similar to the U.S. Navy SEALs and British Special Boat Service.

A member of the force is known as a "MEC", which is an abbreviation of "*mergulhador de combate*", meaning "combat diver".

1° Batalhão de Forças Especiais

1° Batalhão de Forças Especiais (1st Special Forces Battalion) or 1° B F Esp is a counter-terrorism unit of the Brazilian Army.

The Battalion was initially formed in 1957 as a jungle rescue unit. However in 1968 it was reorganized as a special forces unit. In 1983 the unit was expanded and placed under the parachute infantry brigade structure.

The Battalion's mission is similar to that of the Green Beret units; however, because they have the CT mission, they have modified their organization to more closely follow Britain's Special Air Service and American's Delta Force. The SF Battalion falls within the Army's Special Operations Brigade and is located in Guadelupe, near Rio de Janeiro.



1° Batalhão de Forças Especiais

The battalion is capable of conducting its missions independently from or in conjunction with conventional forces. Battalion troops are trained in jungle warfare at the Army's CIGS jungle warfare school and in amphibious, mountain warfare, airborne, airmobile and HAHO/HALO operations. They are also prepared for long-range reconnaissance in addition to their CT operations.

COMANF

The Marine Corps Special Operations Battalion, known as *Tonelero* Battalion located in the city of Rio de Janeiro is the military HQ of *Comandos Anfíbios* (COMANF) and is a special force unit of the Brazil-

ian Marine Corps. They are the Marines specifically prepared for the planning and execution of special operations.



COMANF

For officers, sergeants and corporals who have passed the test for the course of qualification for promotion to Sergeant, the nine month Amphibious Comandos Special Course (acronym in Portuguese C-ESP-COMANF) is taught, covering the disciplines of infiltration; exfiltration; commando actions; utility swimming; patrol; explosive devices; advanced first aid; combat in urban areas; fighting hand-to-hand; advanced mountaineering; rappelling; survival techniques at sea and on land; intelligence and counter-intelligence; advanced reconnaissance; handling UAV and rotorcraft of Brazilian Navy, among others, in addition to training to operate in coastal regions and in the wetland and mountains, cold weather, in semi-arid regions, jungle and urban areas.

The battalion is currently organized as follows:

- 1st Reconnaissance Company.
- 2nd Commandos Actions Company.

- 3rd Special Group for Recapture and Rescue Company.
- 4th Command and Services Company.
- Special Operations Instruction Section.

Some members are assigned abroad for training, specializing in courses such as the (IDF/Israel) Sayeret Matkal, (Marina/Spain) Special Operations Command, (USDOD) USSO-COM and the (National Gendarmerie/France) GIGN.

There is a phrase in the Brazilian Navy to define the "COMANF" soldiers: "*Um Comanf é imbatível, dois são inseparáveis e três fazem guerra*" (Portuguese for "One Comanf is unbeatable, two are inseparable and three wage war").

Para-SAR

The *Esquadrão Aeroterrestre de Salvamento* (Airborne Rescue Squadron), known by its nickname Para-SAR, is a Brazilian Air Force special operations search and rescue squadron, based in the city of Campo Grande.

The unit has no aircraft of its own and its airborne personnel conduct operations by being dropped from other units' aircraft. The unit has seven SAR teams located in seven states.

Each Para-SAR detachment is made up of SAR qualified military parachutists. Members of this unit can be distinguished by their maroon berets and orange baseball caps.

The Brazilian Air Force has a long history of parachute training. In 1943, at the former Alfonsos Field School of Aeronautics and with the support

of the Air Force, cadet gymnastics instructor Achile Garcia Charles Astor first introduced civil parachute training in Brazil.

Seeing the usefulness of having a parachuting unit, the Electronics and Flight Protection Administration conducted studies to see how such a unit could be created under the auspices of the air force. The results of that study gave rise to the Para-SAR.



Para-SAR

In 1946, the Brazilian Army formed its parachute school, the now-named General Penha Brazil Parachutist's Instruction Centre. It graduated its first class of Brazilian Air Force students in 1959.

The group initially consisted of a division of three officers and five sergeants whose mandate was to provide instruction to the cadets of the School of Aeronautics and to provide search and rescue, by means of the DEPV. The unit also consisted of a group of volunteers who trained at the old military aviation school and went on to provide help in accidents and under special circumstances.

Eventually, on 2 September 1963, the Airborne Rescue unit

was formed. Para-SAR is the traditional name given to the search and rescue arm of the air force and is housed in the old School of Aeronautics.

By November 20, 1973, the flotilla no longer existed, becoming the Airborne Rescue Squadron, or EAS. Its mandate was to continue training of the BAF parachutists, the instruction and the administration of the rescue teams and helicopter squadrons among other tasks.

The Para-SAR mandate includes specialized instruction for crewmembers and rescue teams of the Brazilian Air Force, SAR and special operations.

New members of the squadron start with the Brazilian Army parachute course and then complete courses such as parachute packing and maintenance, aerial resupply, demolition, sniper and jungle warfare. They then move onto advanced training. The following training programs are offered by the squadron:

Search and rescue

This course includes: aircraft access; fire fighting; machines, engines and radio equipment; free diving; helilift operations; orientation and ground searches; sea and jungle survival; SAR combat tactics; mountaineering; search and rescue theory and first aid.

Scuba diving

Graduates become qualified in scuba diving which is typically used to recover charges and pieces of submerged aircraft.

Airborne techniques

Graduates are qualified to parachute out of a military aircraft

as well as air drop supplies, precision landing, calculate the effects of wind and carry out the pathfinder role. They also learn packing, inspecting and repairing parachutes. Also taught are techniques for aircraft operations using the Lockheed C-130 Hercules and C-95.

Skydiving

The course teaches parachutists operational skydiving, the use of instruments and equipment; skydiving from both low and high altitudes and jumping with weapons and equipment for military operations.

Master skydiver

Graduates of this course become qualified in all aspects of skydiving, from organizing the jump team to coordinating the aircraft to be used. Students are also given a knowledge of meteorology and reading weather reports as well as precision targeting, advanced navigation skills and techniques of free fall Basic Body Fly.

Commando

The Brazilian Air Force commando course teaches combat search and rescue, including locating downed crews in a hostile environment, survival, evasion, resistance and escape.

The course also covers counter-terrorism, reconnaissance and sabotage subjects.

CORE

The *Coordenadoria de Recursos Especiais* (Coordination of Special Assets), best known by its acronym CORE, is the police tactical unit of the Civil Police of Rio de Janeiro State. It was formed on 4 July 1969.



CORE

The duties of the unit include operations against organized crime, high-risk arrests, and high-risk VIP escort.

GOE

Grupo de Operações Especiais (Special Operations Group), mostly known by its acronym GOE, is the police tactical unit of the Civil Police of the state of São Paulo.



GOE

Founded in 1991, GOE serves to assist conventional police units in high-risk operations involving hostages and uprisings in the prison system. It is subordinate to the *Departamento de Polícia Judiciária da Capital* ("Judicial Capital Police Department") - DECAP.

Over the years GOE has carried out innumerable successful tactical actions, and has established itself as one of the largest and best police special forces units in Brazil.

