

Special Forces - Canada

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

Canadian Special Forces can trace their roots back to World War II.

There were two Canadian Army airborne units, the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion, raised at Camp Shiloh in the USA in 1942, and the 2nd Parachute Battalion, formed later in Canada.

Following the war the Canadian parachuting capability was reduced to cadre level until 1968, when it was expanded and the Canadian Airborne Regiment (CAR) was formed.

It was intended to be a light, independent, all-arms unit for deployment in low-intensity operations in jungle, desert or Arctic warfare conditions.

The capability was expanded yet again with the formation of the Special Service Force, whose 'teeth' elements comprised an armoured battalion, an infantry battalion, the CAR, plus artillery and engineer battalions, and communications and logistics support.

It also included the Canadian SAS, which had been formed in 1946 as a company-sized unit, closely modelled on the British SAS.

The CAR was disbanded in the mid 1990s as a result of an enquiry into activities of some elements during its participation in the UN operation in Somalia, and its three component companies were dispersed to form airborne companies in the conventional infantry battalions.

CANSOFCOM

Canada's current Special Operations Forces are generated and commanded by the Canadian Special Operations Forces Command (CANSOFCOM).

In French, Canada's second language, it is called *Commandement des Forces d'opérations spéciales du Canada - COMFOSCAN*.

CANSOFCOM is a high-readiness organization, ready to deploy Special Operations Forces on very short notice to protect Canada and Canadians from threats to the national interest at home and abroad.

CANSOFCOM is capable of contributing to Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) operations across the full spectrum of conflict, from peace through to war; therefore, CANSOFCOM provides special operations support to CAF operations abroad when required.

CANSOFCOM's primary mission is counter-terrorism, which involves conducting rigorous and specialized training and working with local law enforcement agencies, as required, to protect Canadians from the threat of terrorism.

The commander of CANSOFCOM reports directly to the Chief of the Defence Staff, it is important to note that the Leadership of the Canadian Forces and the Department of National Defence maintains full oversight on all CANSOFCOM operations



CANSOFCOM

CANSOFCOM is organized into a headquarters element and five units:

- Joint Task Force 2 (JTF 2);
- Special Operations Regiment (CSOR);
- 427 Special Operations Aviation Squadron (SOAS);
- Joint Incident Response Unit – Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CJIRU-CBRN);
- Special Operations Training Centre (CSOTC).

Joint Task Force 2

Joint Task Force 2 (JTF2) (French: *Force opérationnelle interarmées 2, FOI 2*) is a special operations force of the Canadian Armed Forces.

JTF2 serves alongside the Canadian Special Operations Regiment, the Canadian Joint Incident Response Unit and 427 Special Operations Aviation Squadron as part of the Canadian Special Operations Forces Command. The unit is currently



UNIFORM: With operational uniforms, all members of CANSOFCOM wear the tan beret, regardless of their environment (Navy, Army or Air Force), with the badge of their personnel branch or, in the case of the Royal Canadian Armoured Corps and Royal Canadian Infantry Corps members, the badge of their former regiment. The beret colour is the same as the British SAS.

based at Dwyer Hill, near Ottawa, Ontario.

Serving as the centrepiece of Canada's special operations, JTF2 is primarily tasked with counter-terrorism operations but also specializes in direct action, hostage rescue, personnel recovery, and foreign internal defence.

Much of the information regarding Joint Task Force 2 is classified, and is not commented on by the Government of Canada.

In 1992, Deputy Minister of Defence Robert Fowler announced he was recommending to Governor General Ray Hnatyshyn that he disband the Royal Canadian Mounted Police's Special Emergency Response Team (SERT) and create a new military counter-terrorism group.

The decision was made largely because the Canadian Forces offered a greater pool of recruits for the program than civilian

police forces, and it stemmed the public uproar about police being taught to use primarily lethal means.

In early 1993, the unit was activated with just over 100 members, primarily drawn from the Canadian Airborne Regiment and Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry.

They were given the SERT facility on Dwyer Hill Road near Ottawa as their own base of operations, and permanently parked a Greyhound bus and a DC-9 aircraft on the grounds for use in training.

Since inception, JTF2 has taken part in the following operations:

- Operation Assurance – Rwanda
- NATO intervention in Bosnia
- Kosovo War
- War in Afghanistan
- Christian Peacemaker hostage crisis
- Operation Impact - military

- intervention against ISIL
- 2004 Haitian coup d'état
- Libyan Civil War

JTF2 has also acted as bodyguards to Canadians travelling abroad, notably accompanying Lieutenant-General Maurice Baril and Raymond Chrétien to Zaire in November 1996.

When photographs provided to the media were revealed to show the faces of JTF2 forces, they were redacted and reissued with the faces removed.

In 1998, they accompanied General Roméo Dallaire to Tanzania where he was due to testify against a Rwandan Hutu official accused of complicity in the 1994 genocide.

They similarly accompanied war crimes prosecutor Louise Arbour into Kosovo.

In early November 2000, Conservative Defence Critic David Price stated that JTF2 had been deployed to Kosovo, however, this was denied by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien and Defence Minister Art Eggleton.

The unit was believed to be operating with the Special Air Service and Special Boat Service in Operation Mobile, the Canadian operation in the 2011 Libyan civil war.

The unit has also been awarded a United States Presidential Unit Citation.



Other units

Other units that make up CANSOFCOM are:

- The **Canadian Special Operations Regiment** (French: *Régiment d'opérations spéciales du Canada, ROSC*) is an elite unit of the Canadian Armed Forces. It forms part of the Canadian Special Operations Forces Command. As a special forces unit, the regiment's roles include conducting complex or difficult raids, capturing strategic facilities and undertaking reconnaissance. It is also capable of working with the armed forces of other countries.
- **427 Special Operations Aviation Squadron** (French: *427e Escadron d'opérations spéciales d'aviation, 427 EOSA*) is a tactical helicopter unit that provides aviation support to Canadian Special Operations Forces Command. The squadron is based at CFB Petawawa, Ontario with a fleet of Bell CH-146 Griffon helicopters. It was founded as No. 427 Squadron Royal Canadian Air Force.
- The **Canadian Joint Incident Response Unit** (French: *Unité interarmées d'intervention du Canada*) of the Canadian Armed Forces was created "to provide timely and agile broad-based CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear) support to the Government of Canada in order to prevent, control and mitigate CBRN threats to Canada, Canadians, and Canadian interests". It is a sub-unit

of the Canadian Special Operations Forces Command.

Operational tasks

CANSOFCOM has five strategic tasks:

- Provide advice on special operations to the Chief of the Defence Staff and other CAF operational commanders.
- Generate deployable, high readiness Special Operations Forces (SOF) capable of deploying as part of a broader CAF operation, or independently.
- Conduct and command SOF operations on behalf of the CDS.
- Continuously develop SOF capabilities and tactics.
- Maintain and promote relationships with Canadian security partners and allied special operations forces.

In support of these strategic tasks, CANSOFCOM personnel are organized, trained, equipped and always ready to conduct a wide variety of operational tasks. These tasks include:

- Hostage rescue
- Direct action
- Chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) crisis response
- Sensitive site exploitation
- Combating weapons of mass destruction
- Maritime special operations
- Support to non-combatant evacuation operations
- Special protection operations
- Defence, diplomacy and military assistance

The small size and unique capabilities of CANSOFCOM



Canadian Special Operations Regiment



427 Special Operations Aviation Squadron



Canadian Joint Incident Response Unit

provide Canada with an agile, adaptive, and rapidly deployable military response.

CANSOFCOM employs an integrated operating concept that combines the capabilities of all units in a Special Operations Task Force (SOTF) capable of completing assigned missions and tasks.

Therefore, depending on the tasks at hand, various combinations of personnel from JTF 2, CSOR, 427 SOAS and CJIRU are assembled into a Special Operations Task Force, as appropriate, to accomplish assigned missions.

Selection

Volunteer standards are not normally specified, but the Canadian Forces have made their requirements for JTF 2 public.

Volunteers must be in the ranks of officer - captain only, warrant officer, sergeant, master corporal, corporal, or private.

The general qualifications are at least three years service and members maybe re-engaged for a second three year en-

gagement. They must have no known phobias (heights, water, enclosed spaces, etc), a valid civilian drivers licence, and a demonstrated wish and ability to learn a second language.

A high standard of medical and physical fitness is required and the volunteer must demonstrate capability of running 2,5 km inside 11 minutes, 40 consecutive push-ups, five consecutive overhand grip, straight arm pull-ups, 40 sit-ups in 60 seconds, 66 kg bench press.

With all these completed, the next hurdle is a preliminary screening by a qualified JTF recruiting team, followed by a three week course in which levels of physical fitness, weapons handling, and confidence are improved.

The volunteers then undergo a one week assessment of suitability for special forces, but officer applicants must also undergo an additional four day assessment of their planning and leadership skills. If the volunteers pass all that they then start the five month training course.

