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Special operations have played a key role throughout the history of conflict from the Trojan War to the great arms struggles of the 20th century. This volume introduces the reader to the broad sweep of the history of special operations.

Over 2,400 total pages ... Russian outrage following the September 2004 hostage disaster at North Ossetia's Beslan Middle School No.1 was reflected in many ways throughout the country. The 52-hour debacle resulted in the death of some 344 civilians, including more than 170 children, in addition to unprecedented losses of elite Russian security forces and the dispatch of most Chechen/allied hostage-takers themselves. It quickly became clear, as well, that Russian authorities had been less than candid about the number of hostages held and the extent to which they were prepared to deal with the situation. Amid grief, calls for retaliation, and demands for reform, one of the more telling reactions in terms of hardening public perspectives appeared in a national poll taken several days after the event. Some 54% of citizens polled specifically judged the Russian security forces and the police to be corrupt and thus complicit in the failure to deal adequately with terrorism, while 44% thought that no lessons for the future would be learned from the tragedy. This pessimism was the consequence not just of the Beslan terrorism, but the accumulation of years of often spectacular failures by Russian special operations forces (SOF, in the apt US military acronym). A series of Russian SOF counterterrorism mishaps, misjudgments, and failures in the 1990s and continuing to the present have made the Kremlin's special operations establishment in 2005 appear much like Russia's old Mir space station—wired together, unpredictable, and subject to sudden, startling failures. But Russia continued to maintain and expand a large, variegated special operations establishment which had borne the brunt of combat actions in Afghanistan, Chechnya, and other trouble spots, and was expected to serve as the nation's principal shield against terrorism in all its forms. Known since Soviet days for tough personnel, personal bravery, demanding training, and a certain rough or brutal competence that not infrequently violated international human rights norms, it was supposed that Russian special operations forces—steeped in their world of "threats to the state" and associated with once-dreaded military and national intelligence services—could make valuable contributions to countering terrorism. The now widely perceived link between "corrupt" special forces on the one hand, and counterterrorism failures on the other, reflected the further erosion of Russia's national security infrastructure in the eyes of both Russian citizens and international observers. There have been other, more ambiguous, but equally unsettling dimensions of Russian SOF activity as well, that have strong internal and external political aspects. These constitute the continuing assertions from Russian media, the judicial system, and other Federal agencies and officials that past and current members of the SOF establishment have organized to pursue interests other than those publicly declared by the state or allowed under law. This includes especially the alleged intent to punish by assassination those individuals and groups that they believe have betrayed Russia. The murky nature of these alleged activities has formed a backdrop to other problems in the special units.

"Over the past dozen years special operations forces (SOF) have been one of the few areas of growth and expansion in a number of militaries. This growth and expansion, however, has not been mirrored by a comparable one in academic inquiries into the subject. Special Operations from a Small State Perspective - Future Security Challenges, which contains a wide range of perspectives from both practitioners and academics, makes a unique contribution to the literature and offers fascinating insights into the opportunities provided by and challenges confronting small states such as Sweden in their evolutionary development and use of SOF." Dr James Kiras, Associate Professor, School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, The Air University, Alabama, USA.

British and American commanders first used modern special forces in support of conventional military operations during World War II. Since then, although special ops have featured prominently in popular culture and media coverage of wars, the academic study of irregular warfare has remained as elusive as the practitioners of special operations themselves. This book is the first comprehensive study of the development, application, and value of Anglo-American commando and special forces units during the Second World War. Special forces are intensively trained, specially selected military units performing unconventional and often high-risk missions. In this book, Andrew L. Hargreaves not only describes tactics and operations but also outlines the distinctions between commandos and special forces, traces their evolution during the war, explains how the Anglo-American alliance functioned in the creation and use of these units, looks at their command and control arrangements, evaluates their impact, and assesses their cost-effectiveness. The first real impetus for the creation of British specialist formations came in the desperate summer of 1940 when, having been pushed out of Europe following defeat in France and the Low Countries, Britain began to turn to irregular forces in an effort to wrest back the strategic initiative from the enemy. The development of special forces by the United States was also a direct consequence of defeat. After Pearl Harbor, Hargreaves shows, the Americans found themselves in much the same position as Britain had been in 1940: shocked, outnumbered, and conventionally defeated, they were unable to come to grips with the enemy on a large scale. By the end of the war, a variety of these units had overcome a multitude of evolutionary hurdles and made valuable contributions to practically every theater of operation. In describing how Britain and the United States worked independently and cooperatively to invent and put into practice a fundamentally new way of waging war, this book demonstrates the two nations' flexibility, adaptability, and ability to innovate during World War II.

During World War II, the British formed a secret division, the 'SOE' or Special Operations Executive, in order to support resistance organisations in occupied Europe. It also engaged in 'targeted killing' - the assassination of enemy political and military leaders. The unit is famous for equipping its agents with tools for use behind enemy lines, such as folding motorbikes, miniature submarines and suicide pills disguised as coat buttons. But its activities are now also gaining attention as a forerunner to today's 'extra-legal' killings of wartime enemies in foreign territory, for example through the use of unmanned drones. Adam Leong's work evaluates the effectiveness of political assassination in wartime using four examples: Heydrich's assassination in Prague (Operation Anthropoid); the daring kidnap of Major General Kreipe in Crete by Patrick Leigh Fermor; the failed attempt to assassinate Rommel, known as Operation Flipper; and the American assassination of General Yamamoto.

James D. Kiras shows how a number of different special operations, in conjunction with more conventional military actions, achieve and sustain strategic effect(s) over time. In particular, he argues that the root of effective special operations lies in understanding the relationship existing between moral and material attrition at the strategic level. He also presents a theoretical framework for understanding how special operations achieve strategic effects using a unique synthesis of strategic theory and case studies. This study shows how the key to understanding how special operations reside in the concept of strategic attrition and in the moral and material nature of strategy. It also highlights major figures such as Carl von Clausewitz, Hans Delbrück, and Mao Zedong, who understood these complexities and were experts in eroding an enemy's will to fight. These and other examples provide a superb explanation of the complexities of modern strategy and the place of special operations in a war of attrition. This book will be of great interest to all students and scholars with an interest in special forces and of strategic and military studies in general.

An analysis of U.S. Special Operations, at the center of America's twenty-first-century wars This original and accessible book is a comprehensive, authoritative analysis of U.S. Special Operations. U.S. Special Operations Command trains and equips units to undertake select military activities, frequently high-risk missions, often for the purposes of counterterrorism and counterinsurgency. Since 9/11, impelled by an attack on U.S. soil, these forces have been a central instrument of America's military campaign--operating in about one hundred countries on any given day. This fight--neither hot war nor cold peace--was launched and executed as a new type of global war in 2001 and has since splintered into a spectrum of regional conflicts. The result is our nation's grey wars: hazy and lethal. This contemporary history, incorporating extensive interviews and archival research by security studies expert N. W. Collins, delves deeply into the transformation of these forces since 9/11.

The twenty-first century has brought the perfect storm of conditions to create substantive global instability. This contemporary operating environment (COE) is characterized by complexity, ambiguity, volatility, and constant danger. It is a human invention that requires a human solution. Special operations forces (SOF), a group comprised of highly trained personnel with the ability to deploy rapidly and apply special skills in a variety of environments and circumstances, is the logical force of choice to achieve success in the COE. Increasing their effectiveness is cultural intelligence (CQ)—the ability to recognize the shared beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviours of a group of people and then apply that knowledge toward a specific goal. Empowered by CQ, SOF are positioned to dominate in the COE. Solving the People Puzzle makes a convincing argument for the powerful union of the "force of choice" with the "tool of choice." This book will inspire and inform.

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