

British Army Regimental Succession of Titles: Special Forces



'Special Forces' are trained and equipped to undertake specialist and often unconventional tasks. As such, their role and make-up alters over time to meet the challenges of the day. While some regiments and units are easily recognisable as fitting within this title and definition, others may be added to and removed from the auspices of the Directorate of UK Special Forces (UKSF). Additionally, since their inception during the Second World War, UK special forces include elements of the British Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force. As special forces operations were rather experimental during the Second World War, unlike most of our other guides, some units smaller than regiments are shown here.

In summary, this guide presents regiments in the Directorate of UK Special Forces (UKSF) as of 2026, and their antecedents. It also includes special operations support forces such as the Parachute Regiment and special operations-capable forces like the Ranger Regiment. Therefore, some of the regiments included here may also appear in other guides. As units of the Special Air Service (Reserve), 21 SAS(R) and 23 SAS(R) are not included in this document.

Second World War and late-1940s	1950s/60s	1970s/80s	1990s/2000s	2003	2026
"L" Detachment, Special Air Service Brigade (1941)					
1st Special Air Service (1942)			22 Special Air Service (1952-present) SAS		
Special Raiding Squadron (1943)					
1st Special Air Service (1944/45)					
2nd Special Air Service (1943)					
		Special Reconnaissance Unit <i>also known as 14 Field Security and Intelligence Company</i> (1973-2005) SRU / 14 INT		Special Reconnaissance Regiment (2005-present) SRR	
GHQ Far East Land Forces (FARELF) Signal Squadron (1947-59)	18 Signal Regiment (1959-71) 18 SIG REGT			18 (UKSF) Signal Regiment (2005-present) 18 (UKSF) SR	

Special Forces Support Group and Special Operations–Capable Forces

Second World War and late-1940s	1950s/60s	1970s/80s	1990s/2000s	2003	2026
		The Parachute Regiment (1940-present) PARA			
		<i>1st Bn, The Parachute Regiment (1PARA) is permanently attached to the Special Forces Support Group (SFSG).</i>			
					The Ranger Regiment (2021-present) RANGER
					<i>1st Bn formed from disbanded 1st Bn, Royal Regiment of Scotland 2nd Bn formed from disbanded 2nd Bn, Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment 3rd Bn formed from disbanded 2nd Bn, Duke of Lancaster's Regiment 4th Bn formed from disbanded 4th Bn, The Rifles</i>

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Royal Navy, Royal Air Force & Tri-Service units

Second World War	Late-1940s	1950s/60s	1970s/80s	1990s/2000s	2010s	Present
<p>Royal Marines Commando (1940)</p> <p>RM Boom Patrol Detachment (1942-45) RMBPD</p>	<p>School of Combined Operations, Beach and Boat Section (1946) SCOBBS</p> <p>Combined Operations, Beach and Boat Section (1947) COBBS</p> <p>Small Raid Wing, Royal Marines Amphibious School (1948-50) SRW</p>	<p>Special Boat Wing (1950/51)</p> <p>Special Boat Company (1951-73)</p>	<p>Special Boat Squadron (1973-87) SBS</p>		<p>Special Boat Service (1987-present) SBS</p>	
<p>Army Commando (1940)</p> <p>No.1 Special Boat Section (1940/41) 1 SBS</p> <p>SAS Folboat Section (1941-43)</p> <p>Special Boat Squadron (1943-46)</p>						
<p>No.2 Special Boat Section (1942-46) 2 SBS</p>						
						<p>Joint Special Forces Aviation Wing (2001-present) JSAFW</p>