

Britain's Special Forces and Their Secret Battle Against the IRA

The British government's decision to deploy its elite Special Forces to Northern Ireland in the 1970s was a watershed moment in the conflict between the British state and the Irish Republican Army (IRA). These covert units, including the Special Air Service (SAS), the Special Boat Service (SBS), and 14 Intelligence Company, played a crucial role in combating the threat posed by the IRA, which was waging a violent campaign for a united Ireland.

The History of British Special Forces in Northern Ireland

The British government first deployed Special Forces to Northern Ireland in 1971, in response to the escalating violence of the Troubles. The SAS and SBS were initially tasked with gathering intelligence and carrying out covert operations against IRA targets. However, as the conflict intensified, their role expanded to include direct action, such as raids and ambushes.



Undercover War: Britain's Special Forces and their secret battle against the IRA by Harry McCallion

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The Special Forces operated in Northern Ireland under a strict policy of secrecy. Their identities were kept hidden, and their operations were not officially acknowledged by the British government. This secrecy was essential for the effectiveness of their work, as it allowed them to move freely and gather intelligence without being detected.

The Tactics of British Special Forces

The Special Forces employed a variety of tactics in their fight against the IRA. These tactics included:

- **Intelligence gathering:** The Special Forces were responsible for gathering intelligence on IRA activities, including their plans, personnel, and weapons. This intelligence was vital for the planning and execution of their operations.
- **Covert operations:** The Special Forces carried out a range of covert operations, such as surveillance, infiltration, and sabotage. These operations were designed to disrupt IRA activities and gather intelligence.
- **Direct action:** The Special Forces also conducted direct action missions, such as raids and ambushes. These missions were designed to neutralize IRA targets and prevent them from carrying out attacks.

The Special Forces' tactics were highly effective in combating the IRA. They were able to gather intelligence, disrupt IRA activities, and neutralize IRA targets with a high degree of success.

The Successes of British Special Forces

The British Special Forces played a crucial role in the British government's efforts to defeat the IRA. They were responsible for a number of high-profile successes, including:

- **The killing of IRA leader Seamus Twomey:** In 1977, the SAS killed IRA leader Seamus Twomey in a raid on a safe house in Belfast. Twomey was one of the IRA's most senior figures, and his death was a major blow to the organization.
- **The rescue of hostages from the Iranian embassy:** In 1980, the SAS rescued hostages from the Iranian embassy in London. The hostages had been taken by Iranian students, and the SAS successfully stormed the embassy and rescued them without any casualties.
- **The arrest of IRA leader Gerry Adams:** In 1984, the RUC arrested IRA leader Gerry Adams. Adams was charged with conspiracy to murder, and he was eventually sentenced to life imprisonment. Adams' arrest was a major blow to the IRA, and it helped to bring the conflict in Northern Ireland to an end.

The Special Forces' successes in Northern Ireland were due to their professionalism, training, and dedication. They were able to operate effectively in a highly dangerous and hostile environment, and they played a crucial role in the British government's efforts to defeat the IRA.

The British Special Forces played a vital role in the British government's efforts to defeat the IRA. They carried out a range of covert and direct action missions, and they were responsible for a number of high-profile successes. The Special Forces' professionalism, training, and dedication

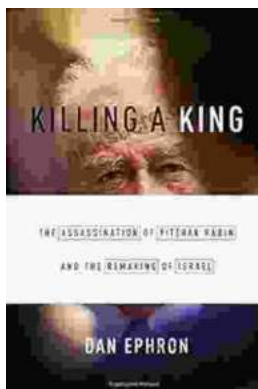
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