

FACT SHEET

New Zealand Special Air Service (NZSAS)

Background

- 1 New Zealand Special Air Service Group (NZSAS) is the premier combat unit of the New Zealand Defence Force. The NZSAS is based in Auckland and is made up of highly trained and motivated professional soldiers and officers. The motto of the NZSAS is “who dares wins”.
- The NZSAS was established in June 1955 as an elite unit capable of undertaking unconventional warfare. Originally modeled on the British SAS Regiment, the unit has seen operational service in many locations including Malaya, Borneo, Indonesia, Vietnam and Afghanistan.
- The key roles of the NZSAS are to undertake overseas operational missions and to respond to domestic terrorist situations in support of the New Zealand Police at the request of the Government.
- The New Zealand SAS is held in high regard internationally - as demonstrated by the United States Presidential Citation awarded to the NZSAS on 7 December 2004.

Selection

- Military personnel who apply for the NZSAS go through a rigorous selection process to identify self-disciplined individuals who are capable of working effectively as part of a small group under stressful conditions for long periods of time.
- Individuals who make it through the selection process then undertake a long and intensive training cycle. The cycle involves building core skills such as navigation, weapon handling, medical and demolition work. Candidates who complete the cycle are accepted into the unit at a ceremony where they receive the coveted sand coloured beret and blue belt.

Operations in Afghanistan

- The NZSAS conducted operations in Afghanistan over the period December 2001 to November 2005. The first deployment was for 12 months, with two subsequent deployments each for six months. The size of each contingent varied between approximately 40 and 65 personnel, with all deployments working alongside other special forces as part of the United States-led Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force.

- Missions have been conducted in all seasons on ground ranging from open desert-like expanse through to the high altitude, mountainous landscape of the Hindu Kush. Tasks for deployments included special reconnaissance, direct action, close personnel protection and specialist search. In addition, personnel have been involved in the planning and conduct of Special Operations Force missions. Many of these missions resulted in the development of intelligence.
- The NZSAS's unique skill at long range and duration patrols has been a highly valued and significant enhancement to other special forces' efforts during the Afghanistan campaign. Typically patrols lasted for upwards of 20 days and were re-supplied by helicopter.
- During the first deployment (December 2001–December 2002), the NZSAS conducted operations involving both helicopter inserted foot patrols and long range vehicle-mounted special reconnaissance patrols. During the second and third deployments (May–September 2004 and June–November 2005) operations were focused on long range vehicle-mounted special reconnaissance patrols and direct action tasks.
- Throughout the deployments, the New Zealand Chief of Defence Force retained full command of all NZDF personnel and assets through a Senior National Officer appointed by the Commander Joint Forces New Zealand. This is the same for all NZDF overseas deployments.
- On several occasions NZSAS personnel have been involved in direct action. Casualties were suffered on both sides. No New Zealanders have been killed but some have been injured and that has been made known by the Government at the time.

For further information on the NZSAS see:

<http://www.army.mil.nz/our-army/nzsas/default.htm>

For further information on New Zealand Defence Force operations in Afghanistan see:

<http://www.nzdf.mil.nz/operations/deployments/afghanistan/default.htm>