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Elite Forces: An Encyclopedia of the World's Most Formidable Secret Armies

Richard M. Bennett

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The invincible reputation of specialist military units such as the USA's Delta Force, Israel's IDF and, of course, Britain's SAS, has grown steadily over the years. Thanks to a number of campaigns and successful anti-terror operations - from the SAS's Iranian Embassy siege in London, 1980, to their crucial role in Afghanistan following 11th of September 2001 - it is now assumed that special forces are ideal for our world of small, localised conflicts - and especially George W. Bush's war on terror. With a capacity for fast, covert response, elite forces represent the future of conflict for governments everywhere. But their operations often raise issues of democratic accountability, by making it possible for a government to conduct a successful military campaign to completion without reference to a legislature and without a declaration of war. As well as presenting stories of individual heroism, this book examines how deserved the reputation of each elite forces unit is, and takes an objective look at what happens when things go wrong, as they did most famously during the Gulf War of 1991, and in America's disastrous intervention in Somalia in 1993. It also examines all aspects of the overlap between elite forces and the hidden worlds of intelligence and counter-terrorism, and takes a look at the secret, controversial role of special forces and "freelancers" in covert, deadly operations around the world. Up-to-date, it examines their relevance to the global fallout from 11 September 2001.

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