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THE ORGANISATIONAL STATUS OF SPECIAL FORCES IN THE ARMED FORCES OF NATO STATES

The process of separation of special forces (military special operations units) in the structure of the armed forces of NATO countries began in the 1980s. By the end of the Cold War, two states had done this: the United States and the United Kingdom (1987). By the end of the 20th century, they had been followed by France (1992) and Turkey (1994). This article describes the chronology of changes in this area up to January 2020, by which time 18 out of 29 NATO states had upgraded their special forces to the status of separate branches of their armed forces or troops. Two models of management had been adopted within the framework of the autonomization of the said units, which at the beginning of the 2020s comprised up to 5% of all armed forces.

Keywords: NATO, special forces, armed forces, structure, command

1. INTRODUCTION

Military Special Forces (MSF) – defined by NATO as: „Designated active or reserve component forces of national military services that are specifically organised, trained and equipped to conduct special operations”² – have become the subject of much scrutiny over the past three decades.

The dynamic development of these troops, also referred to as military special operations forces (MSOF) (See: *Allied Joint Doctrine for Special Operations...*, p. Lex-15), led to a significant increase in their importance in the structure of the armed forces of NATO

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² Allied Joint Doctrine for Special Operations, AJP-5, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, June 2013, p. Lex-15. A similar definition is provided in the US Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Related Terms, stating that they are: „armed forces [...] organised, trained and equipped to conduct special operations with an emphasis on unconventional warfare capabilities”. In turn, according to the definition in the Polish Dictionary of National Security Terms, they are: „independent divisions and subdivisions, composed of selected, specially trained and equipped soldiers, prepared to operate in small groups of varying composition, in a high-risk environment” and to carry out tasks „of strategic or operational importance during peace, crisis and war”. In turn, Lt-Gen Dr Mieczysław Bieniek described them as: „military units adapted to perform unconventional and extraordinarily difficult tasks, both in times of peace, crisis and war” (See: *DoD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, Department of Defense*, November, 21st 2021; *Słownik terminów z zakresu bezpieczeństwa narodowego*, 2008; Bieniek, 2016).

countries. This process, involving their separation into a separate type of army or armed forces, began as early as the 1980s and has not, to date, been the subject of deeper comparative analyses³.

Therefore, the aim of this article is to present an outline of the structural transformations related to the aforementioned process, to present the two models of the functioning of the MSF formed during this period and to define their organisational status in the armed forces of the individual NATO countries, together with an indication of their personnel levels against the background of the entire armed forces.

As regards the methodology of inference, various methods used in the social sciences, particularly in the discipline of security sciences, were employed, with the most useful being empirical, quantitative and comparative methods, especially: the method of system analysis (with regard to determining the status of special forces in the armed forces of individual NATO countries), the method of decision-making and institutional analysis (with regard to presenting two models of functioning of the MSF) and the method of statistical analysis (with regard to determining their personnel levels against the background of the entire armed forces) (Buczyński, 2011).

The organisational status of special forces in the armed forces of NATO countries, together with the date of their possible organisational separation and an indication of their personnel levels against the background of the total armed forces of the Pact (according to data as of January 2020) is presented in the supplement attached to the article (See Appendix). It provided the basis for an in-depth analysis in the above-mentioned scope and for the presentation of the conclusions in para. 5.

2. PIONEERS OF CHANGE WITH THE OPTION OF DUAL SUBORDINATION

The first countries to opt for MSF (then still MSOF) autonomy within the existing force structure were (in chronological order): the United States and the United Kingdom. On 15 December 1980 – eight months after the failed attempt to free American hostages held in Iran (Williamson, 2020; Leebaert, 2010) – the *Joint Special Operations Command* (JSOC) was established, but its remit was extremely limited (ensuring interoperability, joint special operations tactics, standardising equipment, and planning and conducting joint exercises) and the structure had no command authority (Bushman, 2010). This changed only a few years later – on 16 April 1987 – with the creation of the independent *U.S. Special Operations Command* (USSOCOM). Subordinate units were already operationally subordinate to the new command (in practice for the duration of a given operation, but in terms of developing combat doctrine, tactical use, training standards, readiness control and promotion path, budget planning and acquisition of special equipment – oversight USSOCOM was constant), while administratively they continued to be part of all four branches of the *U.S. Armed Forces* (within which they had previously operated): *United States Army* (U.S. Army), *United States Air Force* (USAF), *United States Navy* (U.S. Navy) and *United States Marine Corps* (USMC) (Fredriksen, 2012; *United States Special*

³ More than a dozen monographs published around the world (in the last four decades) discuss the status of contemporary special forces in individual states, including those of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, but do not put them in a comparative context (See [in chronological order] Walmer, 1984; Quarrie, 1990; Katz, 1995; Sullivan, 1995; Miller, 1999; Forty, 2002; Bennett, 2003; Ryan, Mann, Stilwell, 2003; McManners, 2003; Miller, 2004; Ryan, 2008; Naumov, 2011; Chant, 2012; Balenko, 2014; Sünkler, 2019; Gut, 2019; Neville, 2020).

Operations Command History (1987–2007), 2007; Clancy, Stiner, Koltz, 2002; Bieniek, 2016).

The system, within which USSOCOM performed both the role of an operational command and a broadly defined training and supply entity, allowed not only for the unification of standards for the use and equipment of individual MSF formations (taking into account the specifics of the operations of specific units), but – above all – allowed for their smooth functional-organisational and rapid temporal takeover by the integrated command for the duration of the required operation. At the same time, it should be emphasised that the commander of each of the mentioned types of armed forces had the possibility to use subordinate special forces formations – for operations in support of his own forces in the event of the outbreak of classical warfare – directly (without subordinating them to USSOCOM), but for the purposes of operations in which formations subordinate to at least two types of armed forces were to participate – the command was taken over by USSOCOM (Bieniek, 2016).

Three weeks earlier, an analogous MSOF management model had been adopted in the UK. At the end of March 1987, the *United Kingdom Special Forces Directorate* was established, headed by the *Director Special Forces*, who was also the commander of the *Special Air Service* (SAS). In addition to this unit – which was administratively subordinate to the *British Army*, an analogous unit – but subordinate to the *Royal Navy* – was also placed under its operational control (Rogers, 2016).

The third country to replicate this dual subordination scheme was France, but it was introduced formally after the end of the Cold War, under the influence of lessons learned from the so-called first Gulf War. A separate Special Operations Command (*le Commandement des opérations spéciales* – COS) was established there on 24 June 1992, and its operationally subordinate units were still administratively part of all three types of French armed forces: The Land Forces (*Armée de terre*), the Air Force (*Armée de l'Air*) and the Navy (*Marine nationale*) (Le Pautremat, 2009).

The above-described model of dual subordination developed in these three countries also became a model adopted by the vast majority of other NATO countries (including, among others, Italy, Turkey and the Netherlands) over the following three decades.

3. THE WAR ON TERROR AS AN IMPETUS FOR TRANSFORMATION

It should be noted that at the time of the initiation of the process of separating the special forces in 1987, the Cold War was still in progress and – although WOOS formations had already been used previously for counter-terrorist operations (e.g. in May 1980. – As part of 'Operation Nimrod', for example, the British SAS freed all the hostages imprisoned in the Iranian embassy in London, and at the same time liquidated 5 out of 6 terrorists) (See further: Fremont-Barnes, 2009), their basic function was to carry out – in peacetime, crisis and wartime – the classically understood so-called direct actions (Direct Actions) and special reconnaissance against the structures of (potentially) hostile states (especially the Warsaw Pact), and in particular their armed forces (usually inland or at the back of the front line) (Smith, 2006; Neville, 2020; MacKenzie, 2011; Aldrich, 2012). A typical example of this was the participation of US and British MSOF formations in operations: „Just Cause” (the invasion of Panama in December 1989, in which *U.S. Delta Force* and *Navy SEALs*, among others, were to play a crucial role, but their plan to stop Gen. Manuel Noriega failed) (Neville, 2020; Yates, 2014) and „Desert Storm” (the liberation of Kuwait and the invasion of southern Iraq in January and February 1991, where, notably, both *Delta*

Force and *SAS* participated in the operation to detect, guide and dismantle Iraqi surface-to-surface missile launchers launched against targets in Saudi Arabia and Israel, while *Navy SEALs* in sub-operation „Ave Maria” disinfomed the enemy by simulating preparations for a naval landing on the Kuwaiti coast) (Denécé, 2007; A. Landau, F. Landau, Griswold, Giongreco, Holberstadt, 1999; Crawford, 1998).

From 1992 onwards – after the dismantling of the Warsaw Pact and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union, in a wave of mythical belief in a Fukuyama-esque, final 'end of history' – Western MSOF formations began to be used to secure peacekeeping operations carried out under the aegis of the United Nations (in the former Yugoslavia, Somalia and Haiti) (Leebaert, 2010; Denécé, 2007; Neville, 2020; Burnett, 2003; MacKenzie, 2011), as well as for quasi-police tasks, such as apprehending Serbian and Croatian war criminals (in the framework of Operation Green Light, carried out at the request of the International Tribunal for Crimes in the former Yugoslavia) (Denécé, 2007; Neville, 2020; B. Burnett, 2003; A. MacKenzie, 2011), or finding 'drug barons' (e.g. Medellin cartel boss Pablo Escobar) (Burnett, 2003; Neville, 2020).

The attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001 and the subsequent war on terror were a catalyst for dynamising changes in the structures of the armed forces of NATO states. Indeed, the counter-terrorism paradigm adopted at the time was based on close interaction between three components: special services (civilian and military), police formations, as well as civilian (usually operating within the police) and special forces (military and non-military) (See, for example: *The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism...*, 2018; Omand, 2005). As a result – with military expenditure declining across the board – personnel were strengthened and the process of organisational separation of the MSF continued at the expense of reducing the potential of armoured and mechanised units. While in 14 years – from 1987 to 2001 – only four countries in the alliance (the United States, the United Kingdom, France and Turkey) led to their separation into an independent type of military, another four (Italy, Canada, Poland and Lithuania) adopted an identical or similar model in just seven years (2001-2008).

4. THE POLISH OPTION OF FULL (UNIFIED) SUBORDINATION FOR THE EASTERN FLANK STATES

On 24 May 2007, Special Forces Command (*Dowództwo Wojsk Specjalnych – DWS*) (Frącik, 2020; Wiśniewski, 2014) was established in Poland, and thus our country became the seventh North Atlantic Treaty Organisation country to have separate Special Forces within the general structure of the armed forces. However, in the Polish Army it was decided to make more radical changes with regard to the increasing importance of the units in question, and instead of the option of dual subordination, the option of full (unified) operational and administrative subordination within a newly created separate branch of armed forces, rather than – as in the case of the United States, the United Kingdom or France – only a separate type of troops (Patalong, 2016; Kręcikij, 2016; Wiśniewski, 2014). The main motivation for this decision appears to have been the location on NATO's eastern flank (on the interface with potentially antagonistic OUBZ states) and, as a consequence, the need to limit as much as possible the time to decide which units were to be subordinated to a separate special forces operational command at any given time. A similar model has been adopted in other countries on NATO's eastern flank, including the armed forces of Lithuania, Slovakia and Hungary.

The situation changed on 1 January 2014 when, following the winding up of DWS, two bodies were created in its place:

- 1) Inspectorate of Special Forces (*Inspektorat Wojsk Specjalnych – IWS*), subordinated to the General Command of the Armed Forces (*Dowództwo Generalne Rodzajów Sił Zbrojnych – DGRSZ*);
- 2) Special Forces Command (*Dowództwo Sił Specjalnych – DSS*), also subordinated to DGRSZ, and then – from 10 January, after its renaming to Special Operations Centre- Special Forces Component Command (*Centrum Operacji Specjalnych – Dowództwo Komponentu Wojsk Specjalnych – COS-DKWS*) – subordinate to Operational Command of the Armed Forces (*Dowództwo Operacyjne Rodzajów Sił Zbrojnych – DORSZ*) (Jakubowski, 2014; Kręcikij, 2016; Frącik, 2020; Otwinowski, 2017).

In addition, on 17 July 2015, the Special Operations Centre–Special Forces Component Command was again subordinated to the DGRSZ and then – on 3 August 2015 – was also split into two bodies:

- Special Forces Component Command (*Dowództwo Komponentu Wojsk Specjalnych – DKSW*), subordinate to the DGRSZ;
- Special Operations Centre (*Centrum Operacji Specjalnych – COS*), subordinate to DORSZ (Frącik, 2020; Kręcikij, 2016; Otwinowski, 2017; K. Styburski, 2020).

As a result, there was a return to the model that functioned in the years 2007–2013 (albeit now within the framework of the DGRSZ and DORSZ), as the sole disposer of the special forces remains the DKSW, while the COS and the IWS did not have any causal powers in this respect (Kręcikij, 2016).

Thus, although from January 2014 to August 2015 the military special forces – despite their subordination to several duplicating command bodies – retained their status as a separate branch of armed forces (Frącik, 2020; *Dowództwo Komponentu Wojsk...*), the series of as many as four aforementioned changes made in the space of a year and a half – and implemented in mutually contradictory directions – should be assessed extremely critically, as this indicates that in all likelihood – at least their first phase – was not, prior to its implementation, thoroughly analysed⁴. In contrast, a rational reorganisation was undoubtedly served by the merger (or rather absorption by DKSW) on 1 January 2018 of IWS with DKSW (Kowalska-Sendek, 2018; Frącik, 2020).

5. CONCLUSIONS

The only NATO countries that started the process of structurally separating military special forces back in the final period of the Cold War were the United States and the United Kingdom (1987), and by the end of the twentieth century the process had only included: France (1992) and Turkey (1994). In the first decade of the 21st century they were joined by: Italy (2004), Canada (2006), Poland (2007) and Lithuania (2008), and in the next decade: Norway, Estonia, Denmark (all in 2014), the Czech Republic, Croatia (both in 2015), Latvia (2017), the Netherlands (2018), Hungary, Slovakia and Bulgaria (all three in 2019). By January 2020, MSF commands in the rank of separate branch of armed forces or troops had thus become operational in 18 of the then 29 North Atlantic Treaty

⁴ Fully sharing Janusz Kręcikij's and Filip Jakubowski's critical opinions on the aforementioned reforms, it seems that one should reflect on the sense of functioning of the COS, especially after the loss of any causal powers.

Organisation states (not counting North Macedonia, which only became a NATO member on 27 March 2020). They accounted for up to almost 5% of the manpower of their total armed forces, with the smallest share being just 0.4% in the case of Belgium and the largest share as high as 4.6% in the case of the United States). In Poland, the share was quite significant at around 3.3%, while in other large NATO countries it was smaller (e.g. in the UK it was 2.0%, in France 1.5% and in Canada 2.2%).

In the remaining seven countries of the alliance, special forces did not constitute a separate branch of armed forces or troops, but functioned within the structures of the land army or navy (Belgium, Greece, Spain, Germany, Portugal, Romania and Slovenia), and four did not have this type of formation at all (Albania, Montenegro, Luxembourg and – with no armed forces of its own at all – Iceland).

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ATTACHMENT

Table 1. Organizational status and manpower of Special Forces of the armed forces of NATO countries in January 2020

NATO countries	MSF as separate branch of armed forces or troops	Date of establishment Separatek operational command of MSF	Total manpower of the armed forces (officers and soldiers in active duty)	Total manpower of the MSF (officers and soldiers in active duty)	Share of MFS in the manpower of of the armed forces (%)
Albania	not	→ not created	8 000	0	0
Belgium ¹	not	→ not created	26 300	~ 115	0,4
Bulgaria	yes	October 2019	33 450	~1 500 ²	4,5
Canada	yes	13th August 2006	67 400	1 500 ³	2,2
Croatia	yes	February 2015	15 200	300 ⁴	2,0
Czech Republic	yes	1st January 2015	21 750	b.d. ⁵	b.d.
Denmark	yes	1st September 2014	14 500	250 ⁶	1,7
Estonia	yes	1st August 2014	6 700	b.d. ⁷	b.d.
France	yes	24th June 1992	203 750	3 150 ⁸	1,5
Germany ⁹	not	→ not created	181 400	~1 500	0,8
Greece ¹⁰	not	→ not created	143 850	b.d.	b.d.
Hungary	yes	1st January 2019	27 800	b.d. ¹¹	b.d.
Iceland	lack of armed forces				
Italy	yes	1st December 2004	165 500	b.d. ¹²	b.d.
Latvia	yes	7th August 2017	6 400	b.d. ¹³	b.d.
Lithuania	yes	3rd April 2008	20 650	b.d. ¹⁴	b.d.
Luxembourg	not	→ not created	900	0	0
Montenegro	not	→ not created	2 350	0	0
Netherlands	yes	5th December 2018	35 400	b.d. ¹⁵	b.d.
Norway	yes	1st January 2014	23 250	b.d. ¹⁶	b.d.
Poland	yes	24th May 2007	104 900 ¹⁷	3 500 ¹⁸	3,3
Portugal ¹⁹	not	→ not created	27 250	b.d.	b.d.
Romania ²⁰	not	→ not created	69 600	b.d.	b.d.
Slovakia	yes	1st June 2019	15 850	b.d. ²¹	b.d.
Slovenia ²²	not	→ not created	7 250	b.d.	b.d.
Spain ²³	not	→ not created	120 350	b.d.	b.d.
Turkey	yes	1994	355 200	b.d. ²⁴	b.d.
United States	yes	16th April 1987	1 379 800	63 150 ²⁵	4,6
United Kingdom	yes	March 1987	148 450	~3 000 ²⁶	2,0

¹ Despite the lack of the creation of a separate command covering MFS, there is a Special Forces Group (SF Gp) within the structure of the Belgian so-called Land Forces Component, which has been part of the Special Operations Regiment since 2018. According to the 2008 recruitment plans, the target size of the unit was to reach 115 personnel.

² Included here are subordinate units under the – operational since October 2019 – Combined Special Operations Command (*Съвместно командване на специалните операции*), established on the basis of the 68th Special Forces Brigade (*68-а бригада "Специални сили"*), with a strength of approximately 1,500 soldiers in 2014.

³ Included here – in operation since 13 August 2006 – *Canadian Special Operations Forces Command* (CSOFC).

- ⁴ Included here, established at the beginning of February 2015, is the Special Forces Command (*Zapovjedništvo specijalnih snaga – ZSS*) with two special forces groups.
- ⁵ Included here – established on 1 January 2015. – Special Forces Board (*Ředitelství speciálních sil*), with the 601st Special Forces Group (*601. skupina speciálních sil*) subordinate to it.
- ⁶ Included here – operational on 1 September 2014 – Special Operations Command (*Specialoperationskommandoen – SOKOM*) with three subordinate special units: *Jægerkorpset* (comprising approximately 150 officers and soldiers), the marine task force *Frømandskorpset* (approximately 30-50 officers and soldiers) and the Arctic sub-unit *Siriuspatruljen* operating mainly in Greenland (approximately 12-20 officers and soldiers).
- ⁷ Included here – established on 1 August 2014 – Special Operations Command (*Erioperatsioonide väejuhatuse – ESTSOF*) with its subordinate Special Operations Group (*Erioperatsioonide grupp – EOG*).
- ⁸ Included here are the MFS operationally subordinate to – created on 24 June 1992 – Special Operations Command (*le Commandement des opérations spéciales – COS*), but administratively part of: Land Forces (with a personnel strength of about 2,200 officers and soldiers), Air Force (about 400 officers and soldiers) and Navy (about 550 officers and soldiers), making a total of about 3,150 officers and soldiers.
- ⁹ German MFS operate only in the ground forces within the so-called Rapid Reaction Division (*Division Schnelle Kräfte – DSK*) as the Special Forces Command (*Kommando Spezialkräfte – DSK*) with a subordinate of 1,400 officers and soldiers, as well as in the navy as the Naval Special Forces Command (*Kommando Spezialkräfte der Marine – KSM*) with less than 100 officers and soldiers.
- ¹⁰ The Greek MFS only operates within the structure of the land forces there, as part of the so-called 1st Infantry Division "Smyrni" (*1 Μεραρχία Πεζικού "ΣΜΥΡΝΗ"*) and within the navy as the Submarine Strike Command (*Διοίκηση Υποβρυχίων Καταστροφών – ΔΥΚ*).
- ¹¹ Included here – established on 1 January 2019 – Reconnaissance Inspectorate [Special Operations Command] (*Haderőnemi Szemlélőség [különleges műveleti]*) with its subordinate 2nd Special Purpose Brigade (*2. Különleges Rendeltetésű Dandár*).
- ¹² Included here – established on 1 December 2004 – Combined Special Forces Operations Command (*Comando Interforze per le Operazioni delle Forze Speciali – COFS*).
- ¹³ Included here – established on 7 August 2017 – Special Operations Command (*Speciālo operāciju pavēlniecība*).
- ¹⁴ Included here is the – established on 3 April 2008 – Special Operations Forces (*Specialiųjų operacijų pajėgos – SOP*).
- ¹⁵ Included here – established on 5 December 2018 – The so-called Dutch Special Operations Command (*Netherlands Special Operations Command – NLD SOCOM*).
- ¹⁶ Included here – in operation since 1 January 2014 – Armed Forces Special Forces (*Forsvarets spesialstyrker – FS*) with its subordinate three special forces groups (land, naval and women's) and a helicopter unit.
- ¹⁷ Together with an additional 18,500 officers and soldiers of the Territorial Defence Forces (*Wojska Obrony Terytorialnej – WOT*) serving part-time or with the possibility of their rapid mobilisation, the Polish Armed Forces in January 2020 will have a total of 123,400 officers and soldiers.
- ¹⁸ Included here – created on 24 May 2007 – Special Troops (*Wojska Specjalne – WS*), comprising – in addition to *JW 2305 'Grom'* (consisting of approximately 270 officers and soldiers) – also two other combat groups (*JW 4026 Formosa* and *JW 4101 Komandosów*), two auxiliary groups and a helicopter unit – a total of approximately 3,500 officers and soldiers.
- ¹⁹ Despite the lack of a separate MFS command, there is a so-called Special Operations Force (*Força de Operações Especiais – FOE*) within the structure of the Portuguese land forces, and a Special Tasks Branch (*Destacamento de Acções Especiais – DAE*) within the navy.
- ²⁰ Romanian MFS operate only in the ground forces there as part of the 6th Special Operations Brigade "Mihai Viteazul" (*Brigada 6 Operații Speciale 'Mihai Viteazul'*), comprising four battalions.
- ²¹ Included here is the operational – established on 1 June 2019 – Special Operations Command (*Veliteľstvo Síľ pre špeciálne operácie – VeŠŠO*) with the 5th Special Purpose Regiment (*5. pluk špeciálneho určenia*) and the 23rd Mechanised Battalion (*23. motorizovaný prápor*) subordinate to it and comprising approximately 450 soldiers.
- ²² Despite the lack of a separate MFS command, there is a Special Operations Unit (*Enota za specialno delovanje*) within the structure of the ground forces.

- ²³ Despite the lack of the creation of a separate command covering MFS, within the structure of the Spanish land forces there is a Special Operations Command (*Mando de Operaciones Especiales*) with six such units reporting to it, while within the structure of the navy infantry there is a Naval Special Forces (*Fuerza de Guerra Naval Especial* – FGNE) with two subordinate units.
- ²⁴ Included here – established in 1994 – Special Forces Command (*Özel Kuvvetler Komutanlığı*).
- ²⁵ Included here are MFS operationally subordinate to – established on 16 April 1987 – U.S. *Special Operations Command* (USSOCOM), but administratively part of: U.S. Army (*Army Special Operations Command* – USASOC) with approximately 34,100 officers and soldiers, USAF (*Air Force Special Operations Command* – AFSOC) with approximately 16,200 officers and soldiers, U.S. Navy (*Naval Special Warfare Command* – NAVSPECWARCOM) comprising approximately 9,850 officers and soldiers, and U.S. Marine Corps (*Marine Forces Special Operations Command* – MARSOC) with approximately 3,000 officers and soldiers, making a total of approximately 63,150 officers and soldiers.
- ²⁶ Included here are MFS operationally subordinate to – operational since March 1987 – *United Kingdom Special Forces Directorate* (UKSF), but administratively part of: the British Army (*Special Air Service* – SAS and *Special Reconnaissance Regiment*), the Royal Air Force (*47th Squadron*), the Royal Navy (*Special Boat Service* – SBS), and in addition also administratively subordinate to the UKSF the *Joint Subordinate Units* (*Joint Special Forces Aviation Wing*, *Special Reconnaissance Regiment*, *18th Signal Regiment* and *Special Forces Support Group*), giving (as of 2016) a total of approximately 3,000 officers and soldiers (excluding reserve forces).

Sources: own elaboration based on: *The Military Balance 2020*, International Institute for Strategic Studies-Routledge, London 2020, p. 43 ff.; *Jane's World Armies 2020*, Issue 47, (ed. D. Lee Lehrke), IHS Markit, Coudson (June) 2020, p. 8 ff.; L. Neville, *Elita. Współczesne siły specjalne od A do Z*, Bellona, Warszawa 2020, p. 18 ff.; Special Forces Group (Belgium): *Word from the Commander*, <https://www.sfg.be/word-from-the-commander/> (access: 17.09.2021); Капитал: М. Милев, *Генерали срещу командоси. Българската армия е на кръстопът как да развива своите специални части*, 9.08.2014, https://www.capital.bg/politika_i_ikonomika/bulgaria/2014/08/09/2358667_generali_sreshtu_komandosi [Access: 17.09.2021]; Government of Canada-Department National Defence: *Canadian Special Operations Forces Command*, <https://www.canada.ca/en/special-operations-forces-command.html> [Access: 21.09.2021]; JutarnjiList: K. Žabec, *Skupnik Josip Briški bio je član najelitnije postrojbe HV-a prošao je nemilosrdnu 'obuku ratnika' kakvu uspije završiti 300 najizdržljivijih*, 26.07.2019 <https://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/skupnik-josip-briski-bio-je-clan-najelitnije-postrojbe-hv-a-prosao-je-nemilosrdnu-obuku-ratnika-kakvu-usprije-završiti-300-najizdržljivijih-9169700> [Access: 19.09.2020]; Ředitelství speciálních sil, http://www.respecs.cz/kdo_jsme/kdo_jsme.html [Access: 19.09.2021]; Forsvaret: *Specialoperationskommandoen*, <https://forsvaret.dk/da/organisation/sokom/> [Access: 19.09.2021]; M. Fredslund, *Nogle få blandt de få*, „InterForce medlemsmagasin”, 2015, No. 1, p. 7, http://www.interforce.dk/app/uploads/2020/02/1501-215212_interforce_magasin_0115_N.pdf [Access: 19.09.2021]; Eesti Kaitsevägi: *Erioperatsioonide väejuhatas*, <https://mil.ee/uksused/erioperatsioonide-vaehuatus/> [Access: 19.09.2021]; P. Le Pautremat, *Les guerriers de la république: forces spéciales et services secrets français 1970–2009*, Choiseul, Paris 2009, p. 31; Bundeswehr: *KSK-Elitesoldat als Islamist enttarnt*, „Der Spiegel” 18.06.2020, <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/bundeswehr-ksk-elitesoldat-als-islamist-enttarnt-a-74a2a501-29b0-46e8-9e01-6fd619fe8377> [Access: 21.09.2021]; Marinestützpunkt in Eckernförde: *Kampfschwimmer sind weltweit meist geheim unterwegs*, „Hannoversche Allgemeine Zeitung” 15.01.2020, <https://www.haz.de/Nachrichten/Der-Norden/Marinestuetzpunkt-in-Eckernfoerde-Kampfschwimmer-sind-weltweit-meist-geheim-unterwegs> [Access: 21.09.2021]; *Παρουσίαση Σχηματισμών της Ι ΜΠ*, „Ι Μεραρχία Πεζικού”, p. 35, http://army.gr/sites/default/files/mag_20143301.pdf [Access: 21.09.2021]; Πολιμικό Ναυτικό-Αρχική, <https://www.hellenicnavy.gr/el/organosi/arxigeio-stolou/ypagomenes-dioikiseis/dioikisi-ypovryxion-katastrofon.html> [Access: 21.09.2021]; A Magyar Honvédség Parancsnoksága: *Haderőnemi Szemlélőség (különleges műveleti)*, <https://honvedelem.hu/a-magyar-honvedseg-parancsnoksaga.html> [Access: 30.09.2021]; Ministero Della Difesa: *Comando Interforze per le Operazioni delle Forze Speciali (COFS)*, https://www.difesa.it/SMD_/COFS/Pagine/default.aspx [Access: 30.09.2021]; Nacionālie bruņotie spēki-Sastāvs, <https://www.mil.lv/en/node/635> [Access: 21.09.2021]; Lietuvos kariuomenė: *Specialiuju operacijų pajėgos-Struktūra*, <https://www.kariuomene.lt/pajegos-ir-kariniai-vienetai/specialiuju-operaciju-pajegos/stuktura/23245> [Access: 21.09.2021]; Ministerie van Defensie: *Special Operations Command*, <https://www.defensie.nl/organisatie/bestuursstaf/eenheden/socom> [Access: 21.09.2021];

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