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THE WASHINGTON POST

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JACK ANDERSON and DALE VAN ATTA

Meet 'Spetsnaz,' Soviet Special Forces

They are the true mystery men of the Soviet Union, that riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma. The few Kremlin officials who know about their existence refer to them by the name, "Spetsnaz," or special purpose forces.

Needless to say, the Soviet man on the street knows exactly "nitchevo" about the Spetsnaz. He has read no tales of their derring-do in far-off lands; he knows none of their names, though some could be classified as Soviet heroes.

A secret Defense Department report explains why the Spetsnaz have been kept a deep secret: "Considering these units as clandestine assets and being an integral part of their intelligence and security organization, the Soviets have kept these units out of public scrutiny to a far greater degree than their conventional forces.

"Glorious descriptions of their achievements in training exercises are never published [and] there is no distinctive uniform or insignia identifying them. Instead, the usual uniform is that of the airborne forces, or in the case of naval [Spetsnaz] simply the standard navy uniform."

Because of this, it has taken Western intelligence services years to form even the murkiest picture of Spetsalnaya Naznacheniya. What Western analysts have determined is that the Spetsnaz are used for special missions at the behest of Soviet intelligence and security services.

Whether these special agents report to the GRU (military intelligence), the Red Army or some other Soviet agency, U.S. intelligence experts have decided that the KGB retains ultimate control and

responsibility, under direct supervision of the Soviet Central Committee.

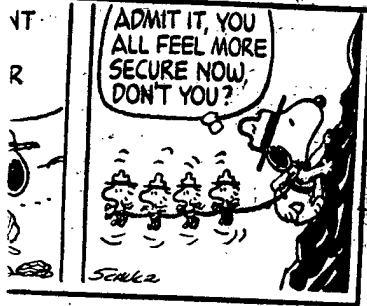
In addition, though, the KGB has its own Spetsnaz people, the most notorious of whom are the professional killers of Department Eight of the KGB's First Chief Directorate. Department Eight "has been connected with assassinations, kidnappings, sabotage and other direct action operations for decades," according to one Defense Intelligence Agency expert.

There are also the KGB troops on the Soviet Union's borders, numbering at least 250,000, who could be classified as special forces. And while the Pentagon and Central Intelligence Agency experts may haggle over the fine points, they agree that certain units under the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which maintains Communist Party control, should count as Spetsnaz.

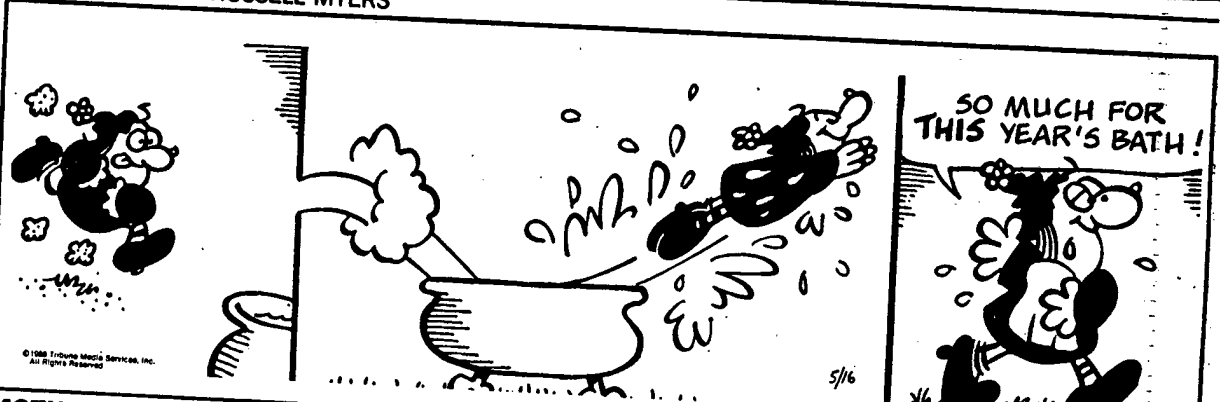
But the most dangerous Spetsnaz operatives are those who report to the Soviet military intelligence organization, which is the second-largest spy outfit in the world (second only to the KGB).

In each Spetsnaz brigade, the career officers "are the most highly trained individuals and are fluent in one or more foreign languages," the Pentagon report states, adding: "Their primary mission is reported to be the assassination of enemy leadership."

Each brigade includes three reconnaissance and destruction battalions of some 30 teams of 10 men each, plus signal, engineer and medical units. Naval Spetsnaz units, though smaller, include paratroops, frogmen and minisubmarine forces.



BROOM HILDA RUSSELL MYERS



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SPETSNAZ: The Soviets' Sinister Strike Force

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Meanwhile, frogmen emerge from the chilly waters near Keflavik, Iceland, a vital link in NATO's anti-submarine operations. Using equipment deposited on the sea bed months earlier, they immobilize reconnaissance and communications facilities.

No allied—or even neutral—country is immune. In Stockholm, Sweden, a machine-gun battle near the palace ends with the abduction of the royal family by frogmen, who had

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The best Soviet commandos, with the help of long-established covert agents, have suddenly brought the NATO alliance to an excruciating crisis. With its tactical nuclear capability, its communications and its leadership crippled in one stroke, what will the West do to prevent a Soviet invasion of Western Europe?

ALTHOUGH THESE EVENTS are hypothetical, planning for them is real. Gen. Pyotr Ivanovich Ivashutin, the balding, bull-necked commander of Glavnoye Razvedyvatelnoye Upravleniye (GRU), the intelligence arm of the Soviet military, has at his disposal a force of 30,000 men and women trained to carry out these tasks.

Western intelligence services have been slow to learn of the existence and makeup of these commando groups, which are already credited with such operations as the 1979 assassination of the president of Afghanistan and the suppression of anti-Soviet activities in Bulgaria in the mid-1960s. But now their threat is known, as is the group's real name: Spetsnaz, from *spetsalnaya naznacheniya*, meaning special-purpose forces.

"The development of Spetsnaz is a particularly menacing aspect of the growth of Soviet military power," says U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Noel Koch. "Their job is to destroy a nation's

infrastructure and kill people. They are an integral part of Soviet peacetime operations, and in wartime could pose a grave threat of strategic disruption in the NATO area—and in the United States itself."

Scouting for Sabotage. A typical Spetsnaz unit has a senior and a junior officer, a communications man, a medic, and at least two demolition and four reconnaissance specialists. Commonly used equipment includes surface-to-air missiles, "burst" communications transmitters (which send a short "squirt" of encrypted signals by satellite back to headquarters), and a list of targets, which may be attacked or merely watched. A Spetsnaz brigade, made up of 100 of these teams, includes ten career-officer units, the elite of the elite, whose primary mission is assassination of enemy leaders. Altogether, U.S. intelligence reckons that Spetsnaz's total wartime strength includes 20 brigades, each with 900 to 1200 men, plus at least four navy brigades.

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But on a typical mission, each Spetsnaz member carries the Kalashnikov light automatic rifle with 300 rounds of ammunition and a bayonet that doubles as a saw and wire cutter, a P6 pistol with silencer, six hand grenades or a hand-grenade launcher, and a James Bondish knife that, at the touch of a button, silently propels a lethal blade a full 30 feet.

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Mysterious Submarines. According to U.S. intelligence, Spetsnaz troops have been at work for years. In *Special Operations in U.S. Strategy*, Defense Intelligence Agency expert John Dziak writes: "In Czechoslovakia in 1968, the Soviet seizure of the Prague airport was carried out by Spetsnaz troops under KGB orders. These units arrested party leader Aleksandr Dubcek and dispatched him to Moscow. Similar missions were carried out

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—Cochran in *USA Today*

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