

# The Global Evolution of Maritime SOF

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Imagine for a moment a contemporary military operation. Does the following scenario resemble what you see? A helicopter emerges stealthily in the night sky. It hovers over the ground. A small team of Navy SEALs jump out quickly. Seconds later, the aircraft disappears back into the night. Armed with suppressed M4A1 assault rifles, the SEALs squat and survey their surroundings through their night vision goggles. The path seems clear.

Meanwhile, in the command and control center, hundreds of miles away, analysts review up-to-the-minute satellite imagery and compare it to the video feed from a reconnaissance unmanned aerial vehicle. They layer the information and update the 3-D map on the tablet computers that the operators on the ground carry. Action cameras mounted on the soldiers' helmets stream live video and audio back to headquarters. The operators move closer to their target - a suspected insurgents' stronghold. They stop half a mile from the small compound and observe the outpost with enhanced military binoculars. They identify a group of men carrying AK-47 assault rifles and rocket-propelled grenades. The men outnumber the team, but this is their sole advantage.

The SEALs position a lightweight laser designator on the ground and aim it at one of the buildings. A second drone launches a guided missile that follows the laser beam and demolishes the target. The operators move quickly to the rendezvous point, climbing into the helicopter that dropped them off several hours earlier.

Following the news, watching TV series, or reading about military affairs, you probably encounter similar scenarios. Nowadays, the armed forces of developed countries carry out such operations routinely. These operations enable resource-intensive and highly technological militaries to maximize their advantages while significantly minimizing the economic and political costs and potential for escalation commonly associated with military operations.

Since their modern debut in the early 1940s, such operations and the units that carried them out have captivated the imaginations of journalists, novelists, and filmmakers. Researchers, on the other hand, have shown little interest in these units. Until the last decade of the 20th century, only a handful of scholars studied them. As military historians and scholars of security studies grow increasingly interested in Special Operations Forces (aka SOF), many questions are yet to be answered. In this class, we will answer some of them:

1. What are SOF?
2. What are the differences between Land, Air, and Maritime SOF?
3. What is the role of SOF in contemporary warfare?

Additionally, we will compare and contrast case studies of maritime SOF using both temporal and spatial dimensions.

## REQUIRED MATERIALS

- We will read articles from academic journals and magazines, which you will find on Moodle.
- We will also watch documentaries and films.
- I work with the library to obtain access to all the audiovisual materials. I will let you know in advance how to reach any source.

## FORMAT AND PROCEDURES

1. At each meeting, I will lecture and lead a discussion.
2. I will refer you to readings or audio-visual content we will discuss and provide you with guiding questions.
3. You can expect to spend 2-3 hours reading or watching for every hour of class.

## HOW TO SUCCEED IN THIS COURSE

Your success in this class is important to me. If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or exclude you, please let me know as soon as possible.

I would like to reward hard work and dedication. Therefore, the course is structured so that regular attendance of lectures, thoughtful reading of the text, active participation and assimilation of the concepts are a large part of what determines your grade.

Together we will develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. I also encourage you to reach out to the student resources available through UT.

## READINGS

Biddle, Stephen. 2017. "Military Effectiveness." In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia in International Studies*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.013.35>.

Bukkvoll, Tor. 2015. "Military Innovation Under Authoritarian Government – the Case of Russian Special Operations Forces." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 38 (5): 602–25.

Hall, Brian N. 2018. "The British Army, Information Management and the First World War Revolution in Military Affairs." *Journal of Strategic Studies*, August, 1–30.

Handel, M. I. 1982. "Intelligence and Deception." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 5 (1): 122–54.

Heaslip, Matthew. 2019. "Britain's Armed Forces and Amphibious Operations in Peace and War 1919–1939: A Gallipoli Curse?" *Journal of Strategic Studies*, January, 1–23.

Herrera, Geoffrey L. 2004. "Inventing the Railroad and Rifle Revolution: Information, Military Innovation and the Rise of Germany." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 27 (2): 243–71.

Lindsay, Jon R. 2013. "Reinventing the Revolution: Technological Visions, Counterinsurgent Criticism, and the Rise of Special Operations." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 36 (3): 422–53.

Poznansky, Michael. 2020. "Revisiting Plausible Deniability." *Journal of Strategic Studies*, March, 1–23.

Whaley, Barton. 1982. "Toward a General Theory of Deception." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 5 (1): 178–92.

Tucker, David, and Christopher J. Lamb. 2019. *United States Special Operations Forces*. New York: Columbia University Press. 301-312.

## COURSE PLAN

1. CLASS 1 - INTRODUCTION
2. CLASS 2 - WHAT ARE SOF? THE EVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVE
3. CLASS 3 - THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES
4. CLASS 4 - WWII - ITALY AND THE MIDDLE EAST CAMPAIGN
5. CLASS 5 - WWII - THE UK SBS AND THE US NCDU, OSS, AND UDT
6. CLASS 6 - PALESTINE - THE PALLYAM
7. CLASS 7 - POST WWII - THE SAS, SBS, NAVY SEALS - SEA, AIR, LAND
8. CLASS 8 - ISRAEL SHAYETET 13 and UNIT 707.
9. CLASS 9 - THE US IN VIETNAM
10. CLASS 10 - ISRAEL'S WAR OF ATTRITION
11. CLASS 11 - COUNTER TERRORISM
12. CLASS 12 - ISRAEL IN A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE
13. CLASS 13 - THE FUTURE OF MARITIME SOF

## GRADING

Flexibility is built into the assignments to support your success in this course. If you miss a more minor assignment or don't do as well on your early assignments, your grade will not be impacted significantly.

Grade	Range		
A	100% to 94%	C	<77% to 74%
A-	< 94% to 90%	C-	<74% to 70%
B+	< 90% to 87%	D+	< 70% to 67%
B	< 87% to 84%	D	< 67% to 64%
B-	< 84% to 80%	D-	< 64% to 61%
C+	< 80% to 77%	F	< 61 to 0%

**ASSIGNMENTS**

This course requires active participation, which is crucial to your success in becoming a critical thinker. The more you put into it, the more you will get out of it.

Active participation includes being prepared to discuss readings, assignments, and concepts, engaging yourself in activities and discussions, and putting your best effort into both formal and informal assignments.

Best 10 (out of 11) short quizzes (10% each).

Changes to the schedule may be made if circumstances require.

**LATE WORK AND ABSENCES**

Late work will be handled on a case-by-case basis. The only absences that will be considered excused are for health-related issues, religious holidays, and extenuating circumstances due to an emergency.

**OTHER ISSUES**

If there are particular circumstances relating to your performance in this class that I should be made aware of, please come and talk to me as close to the beginning of the semester as possible (or as problems arise).

**CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS**

Students must not record classroom activity by any means without my written permission. Authorized recordings must be used only by the student who received my consent during the semester in which the student is enrolled in the class. Also, an authorized student-initiated recording must not be made available to anyone else in any fashion, This includes but is not limited to posting online or through other media.

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