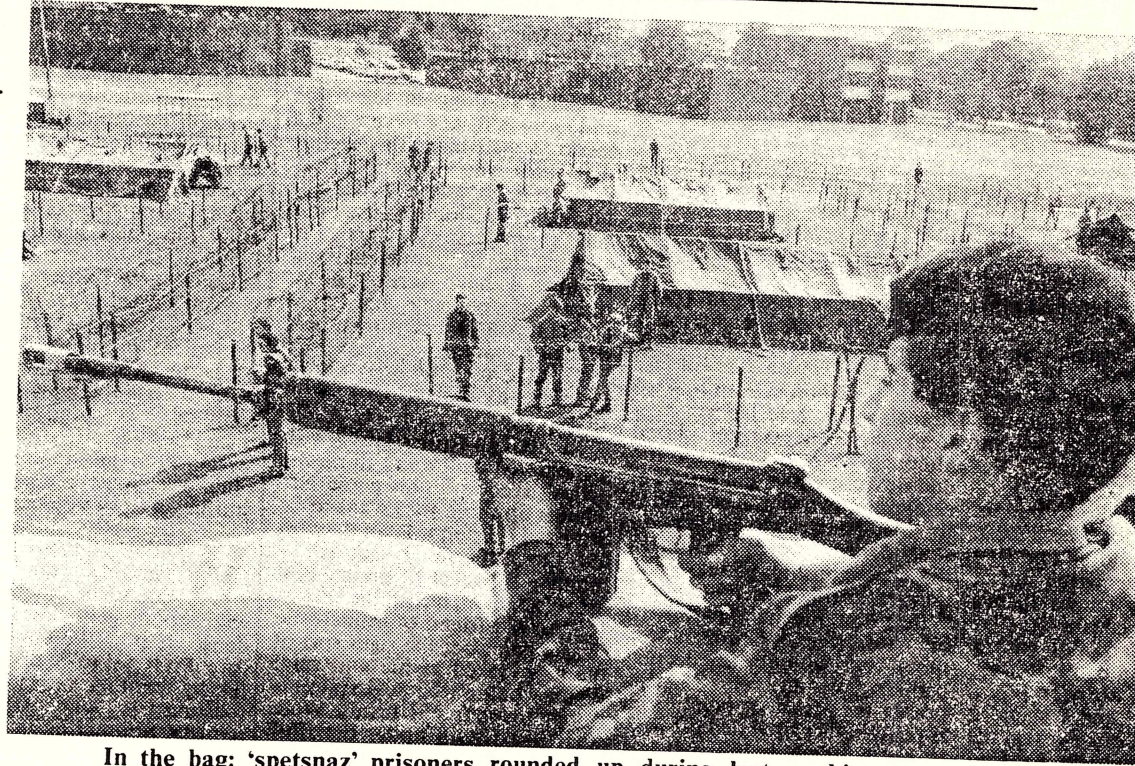


## After Brave Defender, Victor Suvorov sends a message to Nato

# Who next will see off the spetsnaz?

18/9/85



In the bag: 'spetsnaz' prisoners rounded up during last week's exercise.

The Soviet Union's special forces – spetsnaz – are a significant threat to world peace. Moscow would use them shortly before the outbreak of war in an attempt to paralyze the West and neutralize its nuclear weapons. With the spetsnaz, Moscow believes a war with the West could be won.

The spetsnaz can operate successfully only if they have complete surprise. Britain is the first western country to test its defences against the scale of the attack. Last week's Brave Defender exercises practised dealing with Soviet military terrorists and in doing so sent a strong message to Moscow: its special forces are no longer secret. Soviet military planners will have to reconsider their strategy.

Nuclear weapons have reduced the possibility of the Soviet Union launching an aggressive war, making the gain of a small scrap of foreign territory not worth causing the destruction of Moscow, Leningrad or Kiev in a sudden holocaust.

Since conventional war could escalate, it is less likely to take place at all. In the 40 years in which nuclear weapons have existed, the Soviet Union has committed acts of aggression against many countries, but only against those which do not possess their own nuclear weapons, or American ones stationed on their territory. Turkey, for example, has US military bases. The Red Army is murdering civilians in Afghanistan, but not in Turkey, although the latter has far greater strategic significance.

The Soviet high command has long been obsessed with the problem of how to tackle countries protected by a nuclear umbrella. The leadership has gone to colossal efforts to make the West relinquish its nuclear shield, but without success.

To neutralize these nuclear weapons the Soviet high command has deployed a terrorist strike force controlled by Soviet military intelligence (GRU). Some 30,000 carefully selected troops are trained to operate behind enemy lines in time of war, even shortly before the outbreak of war, and in exceptional cases, in peacetime. The doctrine is that these special forces strike simultaneously the "brain" of the enemy country, its nervous system, and lastly its "eth".

The aim in the first target area is to eliminate the heads of government and state, and other top political or military leaders. In Britain this means the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for Defence, the Home and Foreign

Secretaries, generals, police chiefs and top diplomats. Leaders of opposition parties would also be targets, since they could form a provisional government, as would the Royal Family.

Next is the communication network: government and military command posts. Nuclear weapons and delivery systems – missiles, aircraft, and submarines, and others – would be prime targets.

In addition to these every attempt would be made to paralyse the enemy country by destroying its energy system: power stations, sub units, transmission lines, oil and gas pipelines and storage tanks.

To carry out these tasks spetsnaz forces are provided with special equipment and assistance. Their manpower includes:

- Foreign secret agents recruited in peacetime to gather information on useful people and targets, and to provide spetsnaz units infiltrated into the country with shelter, secret supplies of food, water, transport, fuel, and sometimes with documents and civilian clothes. For certain purposes these agents may be ordered to carry out terrorist actions.

- Spetsnaz professionals, an elite within an elite who are selected from the best Soviet sportsmen – runners, swimmers, rowers, wrestlers, parachutists, marksmen and others. In peacetime these sportsmen defend the sporting reputation of the USSR abroad, while at the same time studying the countries on whose territory they will operate in time of war. Sportsmen recruited to the spetsnaz are given military rank and paid extremely well both for their sporting achievements and for their specialized war training.

These professionals, disguised as amateurs, form special anti-VIP units, and would operate either in civilian clothes or in enemy uniforms. They alone would make

contact with the foreign agents and operate with their help.

- Basic spetsnaz units are selected from specially tried and tested troops, and form the bulk of spetsnaz forces. In a war they would operate in groups of between three and 10 men, sometimes in larger units of 200-300 (battalion strength), and occasionally even 900-1,300 officers and men (brigade strength). The organization is highly flexible; any formation can disperse when threatened and reform later for combined operations.

The military command has to decide whether to infiltrate spetsnaz forces into the target country either before the outbreak of war or at the moment hostilities begin. The best method is thought to be the former with the bulk of the special forces following after war begins.

The invasion of an enemy country by small units before the outbreak of war could be accomplished in various ways. Staff at the Soviet embassy and trade mission could be replaced on the eve of war by spetsnaz soldiers working as watchmen, janitors, gardeners, cooks or drivers. Groups could arrive as tourists or sports delegations. Among such groups there is likely to be a high proportion of women, who tend not to arouse suspicion.

At the critical moment the units would be landed on British territory from Soviet civilian aircraft or the merchant and fishing ships which are always to be found off potential enemy shores. Once war began they would be dropped by parachute or landed from the sea using light boats or sub-aqua gear.

A particular danger is presented by the naval spetsnaz units forming part of the Soviet fleets. They are equipped with midget submarines which could be dropped close to British shores by large submarines or mother ships as seen recently in Swedish waters.

In theory, groups of spetsnaz could operate over wide areas thanks to assistance offered by agents who had earlier purchased safe houses near large forests, cities and on the coast. Agents would have obtained vehicles such as Land-Rovers and prepared dumps for them. Spetsnaz agents are very secure; in peacetime it is almost impossible to detect them as they live apparently innocent lives.

Spetsnaz groups would have been trained in torture as a standard method for extracting information on the eve of war. To protect themselves they would murder their own wounded comrades and if a group was in danger they would kill the cypher clerk and destroy the codes. Female operatives are reckoned to be the most ruthless.

Their spirit of suicidal self-sacrifice for the sake of social justice makes the Spetsnaz forces dangerous.

For a long time the West knew little about this organization. Recently, however, its existence has been officially acknowledged by the defence ministries of Sweden, the United States and Britain. Spetsnaz activities have been noted in the Scandinavian countries, Afghanistan and in Eastern Europe. Recent training centres have been identified in the USSR.

I fervently hope that other western countries would do well to follow Britain's example and take serious steps to defend their states from the terrorist troops of Soviet military intelligence.

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Victor Suvorov is the literary name of a major in Soviet military intelligence (GRU) who defected to Britain in the late 1970s. He has provided the first account of Spetsnaz from the inside; his book on these special forces is due to be published early in 1986. Translation by Iain Elliot.