



MARINE COMMANDOS: A KEY COMPONENT OF SPECIAL AND SPECIALIZED OPERATIONS

"The maritime force of marines and commandos is more than ever at the heart of our overall defense strategy. It is in the forefront in the fight against terrorism", said Jean-Yves Le Drian, French Defence Minister, on September 11, 2015, during the ceremony marking the establishment of Ponchardier commando.

SPECIAL FORCES AND ASYMMETRIC THREATS

Modern combat regularly refers to asymmetric threats, commonly called the war of weak against strong, where conventional armed forces may confront other weaker armies or non-state fighting groups or organizations.

Because of their ever changing characters, these threats occur today in the desert areas as well as in the maritime areas or even in cyberspace. Facing an unpredictable and concealed opponent, Governments have to consider the involvement of Special Forces. The French 2014-2019 military program law states that: "Special Forces (...) are particularly suited to the increased needs required for emergency response, flexibility and depth of reach against a hostile or complex organisation." These forces are indeed specifically equipped and trained units ready to carry out missions in specific action ("special") modes, independently or in coordination with conventional forces.

SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND AND OTHER OPERATING EMPLOYERS

Created on 24 June 1992, the COS (Special Operations Command) is an operational joint command directly under the orders of the Chief of Staff. It is responsible for planning, coordinating and conducting operations targeting military objectives of strategic nature by engaging Special Forces belonging to the Ground, Air and Navy forces, according to their specific and joint capabilities.

In this perspective, the Marine Commandos can be seen as a flexible and Navy specific "combat system" that can be integrated into COS for dominant air-land operations (Sahel, Afghanistan) or with other operational employers for specialized actions at sea within the responsibility of the state (fight against drug trafficking, illegal fishing). They can also work with external operations having a dominant maritime element (anti-piracy or amphibian) under operational control of the commander of the maritime area.

THE SPECIFIC NATURE OF MARINE COMMANDOS

Seven Marine commandos (Jaubert, de Montfort, de Penfentenyo, Trepel, Hubert, Kieffer and Ponchardier) constitute the special forces of the French navy, with about 650 men under the command of the Admiral in charge of Forfusco. Originally created to launch water attacks or beach reconnaissance from the marine environment, they are now

likely to be engaged in three types of operations: offshore, from the sea to the land and for special land operations.

Combat Commandos (Jaubert de Montfort, de Penfentenyo, Trepel and Hubert) have common capabilities: commando combat, intelligence, environmental action and control of all modes of land, nautical and aeronautical infiltration – as well as other specific capabilities. Thus, Jaubert and Trepel commandos have specialized groups for "CTLO" (fight against terrorism and hostage rescue), de Montfort and de Penfentenyo commandos implement special "ESNO" teams for neutralization and observation. Hubert commando regroups teams specialized in counter-terrorism, hostage rescue and underwater action with naval frogmen.

The special support commandos provide distinct functions: Kieffer Commando ensures C2 capability (command and control) and the implementation of technical support cells (canine units, UAVs, CBRN and intelligence). The newly created Ponchardier commando specialises in support for sea engagement (special boats), for land engagement (modified vehicles), 3D engagement (air insertion) and special weapons.

One of the characteristics of marine commandos is that they integrate directly and perfectly with other forces of the navy, the Naval Action Force, naval aviation and strategic oceanic forces to conduct offshore, amphibious and ultimately land operations.



Devant la FREMM Languedoc, le commando Ponchardier s'entraîne avec l'ECUME (embarcation commando à usages multiples et embarquable) Morbihan, octobre 2015 © M.Denniel / Marine nationale