

"SPECIALES FORCES". THE EXHIBITION

EAST WING 3RD FLOOR AND SALLE VAUBAN
FROM 12 OCTOBER 2022 TILL 29 JANUARY 2023

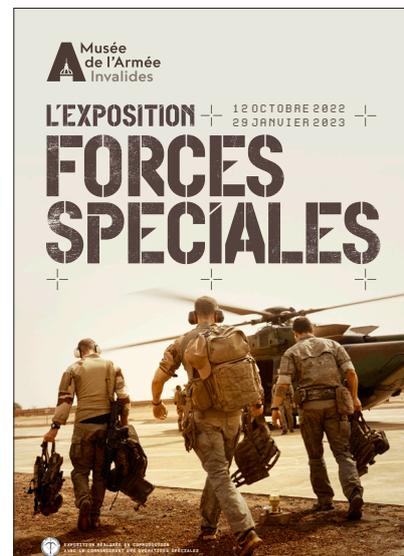
This Autumn, the Musée de l'Armée is presenting the first ever exhibition devoted to the French Special Forces, which will lift the veil on one of our armies' most secretive entities. Scheduled for the 30th anniversary of the creation of the Special Operations Command (SOC), this event offers unprecedented immersion in these outstanding units, in close proximity to exceptional men and women who, on a daily basis, in peace as in war, work for the nation in extreme conditions with humility and team spirit. From the Second World War to the present day, the exhibition looks at the history, operation, equipment and evolution of the Special Forces, as well as its increased employment today, and examines the complex relationship between our societies and war.

Creation of the Special Forces

After highlighting the legacies of the Second World War, the decolonisation wars and the Cold War, the exhibition focuses on the creation of the Special Operations Command (SOC) on 24 June 1992, at the end of the first Gulf War. Organised as a joint operational command, it was placed under the direct authority of the Chief of the Defence Staff. The SOC is responsible for anticipating, planning, coordinating and conducting operations led by Special Forces Units. Such missions, which are located outside the framework of conventional military actions, are aimed at achieving objectives of strategic interest, particularly in terms of environmental actions, the opening of theatres, intervention on high-value objectives and combating terrorism. Often executed in hostile territory or behind enemy lines, missions may take a few hours, days or weeks. To avoid the compromise or leakage of information, only a very limited number of individuals are made aware of them. Employing very short decision loops, the SOC works in synergy with the French Military Intelligence Directorate and the French and Allied Intelligence Services.

The human commitment at the heart of the units

The main military achievements of these elite units within the Army, French Navy, Air and Space Force and the Military Health Service are being unveiled in order to show visitors the importance of their role, in peace and in war. Adaptability, hardiness, determination and team spirit are essential criteria for these exceptional men and women at all stages of their careers (selection, training, specialisation, drilling). The tour is punctuated by around sixty interviews that testify to their unusual life experiences.



"Special Forces" exhibition poster. Edouard Elias, *Departure of the mechanics of the 4th HRF for a maintenance operation, Task Force Saber, Sahel, March 2022* © Edouard Elias, 2022 / Graphisme Wijnkje van Rooijen & Pierre Périnnet

State-of-the-Art technology and equipment

The exhibition also looks at specific techniques, equipment and Special Forces weaponry, comparing the Musée de l'Armée's collections with objects and documents on loan from Special Forces Units' trophy rooms, private collections, technology innovation professionals as well as French government departments and French and foreign national heritage institutions. Most of these objects are being unveiled to the public for the first time.

From reality to fiction

In an immersive and spectacular setting, where still and animated images and multimedia devices play an important role, the exhibition lifts the veil on one of our armies' most secretive entities. It also addresses the issue of the Special Forces' representation in film, which has largely contributed to their portrayal in popular culture and the shaping of their mythology.

An exhibition-event and outstanding coverage throughout the Invalides

In addition to touring the exhibition, visitors will have the chance to see vehicles and equipment used by the Special Forces in their operations from the Second World War to the present day, which will be on display in the Salle Vauban. The 16 Special Forces Units are presented on the pillars of the Invalides' Cours d'Honneur. Lastly, a unique display of photographs taken by Édouard Elias in March 2022, during the 192 hours he spent with the Special Forces in the Sahel as part of Operation *Barkhane*, completes the package. These photographs, commissioned from the artist by the Musée de l'Armée, are displayed on the museum's exterior and on the Boulevard des Invalides gates, as well as in the moat located in the Rue de Grenelle, immersing visitors in the world of the Special Forces.

In conjunction with the exhibition

To accompany the "Special Forces" exhibition, the Musée is presenting concert, film and lecture cycles, as well as special tours in the company of the exhibition's curators, and guided tours.

Catalogue

The exhibition catalogue, published by La Martinière, has been designed as a mirror and extension of this exhibition of 300 objects, with its wealth of multimedia installations, interviews, unpublished photographs of team members and photographs by Édouard Elias.

25.5 x 19 cm

320 pages

450 illustrations

€35



Édouard Elias, *Commando Hubert, preparation of equipment before departure for training, Task Force Sabier base, in the Sahel, March 2022* © Paris, Musée de l'Armée - Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Édouard Elias, 2022

Key figures

Over **250 objects loaned** by Special Forces Units

69 interviews filmed

50 loaning entities, including 16 Special Units

Occupying over 900 m², comprising the temporary exhibition rooms, the Salle Vauban, the Cour d'Honneur's pillars, the North Moat and the Boulevard des Invalides gates

Curators

Christophe Bertrand, Heritage Curator, Head of the Contemporary Department, Musée de l'Armée

Jordan Gaspin, Head of Collections, Contemporary Department, Musée de l'Armée

Carine Lachèvre, Deputy Head of the Charles de Gaulle Historial Department, Musée de l'Armée

Emmanuel Ranvoisy, Deputy Head of the Contemporary Department, Musée de l'Armée and

Colonel Alain, Special Operations Command Staff reservist

Assisted by

Laurent Charbonneau, Anne-Sixtine Clévenot, Camille Cros, Clélia Jovet, CWO Olivier Laurent, WO Rémi Lixandru, Antoine Tromski

This exhibition has been produced in collaboration with the Special Operations Command (COS).



PARTNERS

This exhibition has been organised with generous support from the CIC, the Union des Blessés de la Face et de la Tête (Union of Individuals with Face and Head Injuries), Arquus, the Special Forces' major patrons.



With generous support from the cultural programming patrons MP-Sec, Unéo, LoisirAlp, Meindl and Préligen



In partnership with the Cercle de l'Arbalète (the Federation of Special Forces and Special Units Equipment Manufacturers) and the Technical Section of the Army.



And with support from :



PRACTICAL INFORMATION

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#ForcesSpeciales



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MUSÉE DE L'ARMÉE - INVALIDES

Located at the heart of the Hôtel National des Invalides, the Musée de l'Armée offers a 15,000 m² tour of French history seen through its wars and military events. A museum combining History, Fine Arts and Science and Technology, this institution was created in 1905 and preserves one of the richest collections of military history in the world, with almost 500,000 items (uniforms, weapons, armour, drawings, paintings, photographs, etc.), from the Bronze Age to the 21st century. It also offers the public the chance to visit the famous Dôme des Invalides, which houses the tomb of Napoléon Ist. With 1.2 million visitors per year, the Musée de l'Armée is one of Paris' most popular museums.

Human and incarnate, sometimes exalted, often painful, today military history is seen through its political, social, cultural, geographical or economic realities, and new questions are being raised. Driven by this conviction, the Musée de l'Armée has embarked on a major programme of extension and transformation. By 2030, the MINERVE project will thus see the opening of 4 new permanent displays: "The Hôtel des Invalides, between History and Memories"; "French Armed Forces and Military Engagements"; "Colonisation, decolonisation: a Shared History"; "Before 1945: from the Cold War to the Present Day". Through this project, the Musée aims to become France's Museum of World History seen through its wars and military events, using a comprehensive and resilient approach that is attentive to the interactions between our country and the world, and that allows otherness a place and a voice. True to its civic vocation, the Musée de l'Armée is thus affirming its desire to offer all audiences keys to understanding the state of the world and its evolution, providing a link between the past, the present and the future.