

Foreign Troops

The use of foreign troops in armies is nothing new and during the Twilight War all sides made regular use of foreign nationals as part of their armed forces. Initially this was usually in the form of immigrants (and their descendants), usually in intelligence or infiltration roles (perhaps the best documented being 27 SAS which is covered in a separate article). Gradually as the war drew on, this extended to the use of locals in a variety of roles, usually first filling logistics roles to free up troops, then unofficially in combat roles then usually in an official capacity as combat troops either in their own units or to supplement regular units.

The Franco-Belgian Union in Holland were surprisingly quick to hire locals after their seizure of what became the Dead Zone. These were heavily used in a paramilitary role and in rear area security work as part of the Netherlands Auxiliary Corps (De HulpKorpsen van Nederland). These were issued a Belgian or French OG uniform with a large Dutch flag sown usually on each arm but occasionally on the right only (these were about twice the size of the normal NATO national badge). These were also usually painted on the helmet sides but these were then obscured by helmet covers (usually home made). Even as supplies faltered the French senior NCOs and officers were strict in ensuring these were worn and locally manufactured variants (often differing slightly in size or colour) were common. Occasionally seen were OG brassards with a larger Dutch flag, rank badge and the wording Auxiliary Corps in French or more usually Dutch.

Troops were stationed in their home areas and the immediate families were moved into the French military camps nearby. As a result few considered desertion as they were well known and would be an instant target for anti-French resisters and their families would be left at the mercy of the French (at least one commander made it known that he would make sure that the local population would know when he would expel the family of any member who went missing). These measures were not really required as most who collaborated did so willingly for the prospect of food and shelter. Some of the resistance did however infiltrate the organisation. The biggest danger these suffered was with the number of different resistance groups, an infiltrating resistance member might well become a target for another group. If his identity was given to other groups (difficult anyway due to their cellular nature), it would not be long before the French found out. The best known example of infiltration is in Eindhoven where on 5th March 2001 a number of resisters shot their French officers (along with a number of the Auxiliary Corps who they felt would not change sides) and the pro-French



Illustration 1: Rare photo of a Dutch volunteer. Unfortunately the insignia on the right arm is not visible and the lack of a helmet means no distinguishing marks are visible (Le Monde)

mayor. These then melted away into the countryside to join the resistance. A number were recaptured and after a quick trial were shot as deserters (the French insisting that Auxiliary Corps troops did this) but French confidence in the units was jolted by these and other smaller incidents.

Interestingly the armament of these troops was usually the obsolete MAS49 rifle and occasionally the AA52 machine gun as their 7.5mm calibre was not readily available to Dutch resisters if the weapons were captured. Also seen occasionally was the FR-FR1 sniper rifle (also in 7.5mm). A common resistance practice with captured versions of all of these was to convert the weapon to 7.62mm but these were often unsatisfactory in performance. Also seen were a range of pump action shotguns mainly used in urban work. Pistols (if issued) were mainly PA15s.

The French military is also famous for the Foreign Legion. This has continued to recruit foreign troops without questions being asked. It has however become harder to apply as it requires the applicant get into France. The French government having looked at this, regard it as a good method of recruiting foreigners who have made it into France so have stopped short of recruiting outside the boundaries of France. Cynics have pointed to the facts that training casualties are high and



Illustration 2: Foreign Legionnaire on patrol in war torn Al-Khaffi in the Saudi War (Le Figaro)



Illustration 3: Foreign Legion recce patrol with AA52 in Senegal 2001

that the Legio seems to be at the forefront of any action, claiming that it is only being used as a method to get rid of foreign trouble makers (indeed this was the original reason for its formation in the nineteenth century). After five years service a legionnaire is free to leave as a French citizen with legal rights to live in France. As France is one of the most ordered countries remaining many see this as an excellent opportunity to survive. Few look at the survival rates first before joining. In

addition the harsh penalty for deserting (usually death) has reduced this cause of manpower loss to near nil. Recruits come from all over Europe (and beyond) but currently there are major concentrations of Germans, Spanish and Dutch plus significant numbers of British, American and Italian volunteers. French citizens are not accepted (with the exception of attached officers) and after the Franco-Belgian Union no new Belgians have been accepted (except as officers).

Gurkhas have been recruited by the British Army since the mid nineteenth century. Recruited in Nepal after fierce competition, they are formed into their own units (usually but not exclusively

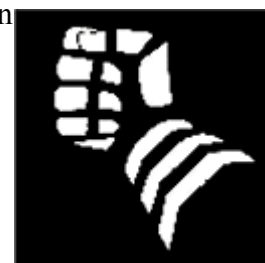


Illustration 4: 6 Div adopted the World War Two era 6th (armoured) Div badge



Illustration 5: Gurkhas of an unknown unit of 6 Division celebrate after beating off a Russian attack at the Battle of Hill 523

with British officers). The main selling point was the relatively high wages paid and the respect that serving gave (it was a major tradition in some families to have generations of sons serving). With the reversion of Hong Kong to China due it was expected that their numbers would be reduced. Instead their numbers were increased in 1993 when it was decided to use them as an area reaction force based in Brunei. In

addition a number of complete companies were used to boost numbers in other units (including 3 Para). During the war they were again expanded and formed the 6th (Infantry) Division that was sent to assist China (along with the 1st Battalion Hong Kong Regiment) and formed a component of the Middle East Field Force (MEFF).

The Commonwealth Soldier Programme was another British attempt to increase army numbers. This allowed citizens of the Commonwealth to join the British Army and after four years be granted British citizenship and the right to reside in the UK. This was hugely successful and by 1995 10% of the British Army consisted of such soldiers (from such diverse places as the Falkland Islands, South Africa, the Caribbean, the Pacific Islands – in particular Fiji,



Illustration 6: Rifleman Gorung Hitman of the 2nd King Edward VII's Own Goorkhas (the Simoor Rifles), the first Gurkha VC winner of the war



Illustration 7: Fijian members of the British Army. Many of the Fijians were the second generation to serve in the British Army after the influx of the 1970s. A high proportion of them volunteered for special forces selection although all units included them among their members. There were even four in the Welsh Guards where they were popular for their rugby and singing skills!

Australia and Canada). The outset of war greatly reduced this flow of volunteers (mainly due to practicalities of getting to the UK) but units deployed to Canada often recruited volunteers in small numbers as did the composite TA Battalion in the Falkland Islands.

One of the almost unknown stories of the Twilight War is the small number of volunteers who travelled to China to help them when the Russians invaded. Unlike the Spanish Civil war the volunteers were generally not idealists as both sides were communists, instead they were predominantly of ethnic Chinese origin. It is estimated that approximately 3,000 travelled there to assist, a number resigning commissions in militaries to do so. The most famous example of this is Captain Chai en-Lowe of the US Air Force. Captain Chai an

F15C pilot resigned, paid his own way there and barged into the Defence Ministry demanding a job. Initially given a training role on the US equipment being provided, his squadron was reassigned to the front in the panic of the spring Soviet offensive of 1996. Captain Chai was credited with the destruction of nine Soviet aircraft within the first month before he was brought down in a dogfight. Six months later he returned to his unit having been fighting as part of a guerrilla unit. He was believed killed in a nuclear strike on the outskirts of Beijing in late 1997.



Illustration 8: Captain Chai at a press conference March 1996

Norway has created an unusual foreign unit as the Royal Guard. This consists primarily of SEALs, SAS and SBS, although a number of Dutch troops are included. The king having been rescued by these, offered citizenship and membership of the Guard for the rescuers. About half of the unit accepted, the remainder returned to their original units. This is no place guard unit however, the king regularly visits the front line and the unit acts much more in the role of house carls than decoration.



Illustration 9: The traditional view of the Papal Guard

In Italy, the Pope's Swiss Guard made up of Swiss Catholics has expanded as the Pope has offered places to increasing numbers of young Swiss dissatisfied with life in the cantons of Switzerland. These young men have become party of a rapidly swelling force which is now roughly an under-strength division in size (in terms of the year 2000). Organised as light infantry these troops have been seen wearing an assortment of uniforms, sometimes Swiss, sometimes an OG coverall and sometimes surplus Italian uniform. Most of these will have a small white cross on an OG background worn on the collars. The famous uniform designed by Leonardo da Vinci is now only worn in formal audiences. Recently a divisional sized force has been created similar to the Swiss Guard but made up of other nationalities. These swear allegiance to the Pope above earthly nations. Made up predominantly of Italians there are also a number of Swiss and a few of most European nationalities. This unit has a more paramilitary role than the



Illustration 11: Originally stated to be members of the special company it is now believed to be members of the regular guard

Swiss Guard, acting as a police force in smaller company, platoon and section level bases. Some battalions are part time, with troops rotating through the duties on a rota. Field dress (which is the only official uniform) is as per the Swiss Guard although OG predominates and the cross is in black on OG. It is rumoured that there is a special company of Papal Guard who are made up of special forces veterans of all nationalities and used on clandestine missions. No proof of this has yet come to light.



Illustration 10: A most unusual nun, Sister Maria Normana is the only female member of the Papal Guard as head of the medical services in it.

In Iran, the American troops have made widespread use of local troops. Initially these were hired as guides and interpreters and unarmed. These were usually issued body armour and (usually) a helmet (usually steel but occasionally Kevlar) with “chocolate chip” covers and tags which gave the title “interpreter” (replacing the US Army/Marine Corps tag) and (optionally) a name tag (both in English and Farsi) worn over civilian clothes. Sometimes however the older M1969 or even M1952 vest in green was issued. Weapons were not issued. Gradually the practice at unit level became to try and issue a full uniform, webbing and a weapon (the webbing and weapon were frequently from captured equipment). This was officially adopted from 1st Jan 1998 by the USMC and 1st Feb 1998 by the other services.



Illustration 12: Interpreter for the 82nd Airborne translates a request for information to a village headman (Franya Wilson)

Simultaneously in an effort to increase front line troops, convoy guards and drivers were hired to replace US troops tied up on these duties. These were issued an arm band worded “Convoy Guard Force” in yellow on red in English and Farsi (as these were locally manufactured there are many variations in letter sizes, armband size, colours and occasionally spelling!). This was intended to identify them as lawful combatants (and cynics said to stop US troops shooting them by mistake!). These troops were required to provide their own weapons and ammunition and were moderately successful (although it was common for small items to go missing). Vehicles used were usually locally purchased and were frequently pick up trucks in a variety of colours. The 101st Airborne pioneered a new use for these convoy guards, they used them on aggressive patrols to clear routes, using a small convoy as bait and a large reaction force just behind (often in helicopters where these were available). These troops made use of a number of 5th Special Forces Group cadres to train and 101st NCOs to stiffen them in action. Gradually these troops found their way into other roles until they were quite frequently used to round out US units who had taken casualties (the 82nd and 101st in particular did this after the casualties during Operation Pegasus II). Policies dictating their use differ, the USMC tends to employ them as complete platoons under USMC NCOs, the 82nd tends to integrate them into American squads and the 101st uses them as complete platoons with their own NCOs and officers (with US “advisors” attached). After Operation Pegasus II, the 82nd Airborne (in a break from their usual practice) consolidated the Kurdish auxiliaries they picked up into one unit and officially (with General Cummings’ approval) enlisted them as the 5/325th (Kurdish) Infantry (Provisional).



Illustration 13: Members of the 5/325th stripping their AKs May 2000



Illustration 14: Druze troops in Lebanon firing a recoilless rifle from an M151 (both supplied by Israel) against government armour as Israeli troops pour into Lebanon in Operation Downwards

Also in the Middle East is the Israeli approach. Here instead of integrating troops into their own command structure the troops are used as proxies being fully equipped and trained before following the “requests” of the Israeli Army (sometimes it must be stated reluctantly or even occasionally ignoring them completely). This has had the benefit of allowing actions that would be politically unacceptable to be carried out, admittedly at the stated loss of direct control. These actions are usually undertaken by Mossad with help from Saryet Maktal. Druze Israelis have often been unofficially used to train troops outside of Israel – these deniable troops carried no ID in the event of capture.

Despite being deniable, the Israeli government has frequently arranged covert exchanges for any captured advisors. Some of the Christian factions in Lebanon (excluding the Syrian backed puppet government) have been a major benefactor (even to the extent of receiving armoured vehicles of US pattern that were surplus to Israeli requirements and captured Arab armour – in particular M113s and T55/62s). Also benefiting have been at least two factions in the fractured Iraq and (it is rumoured) the Iranian government (allegedly making the most of links created in the 1980s when supporting Iran against Iraq).

The Soviets too made use of foreign troops, the best known of which are the German Free Legion and the 1st Chinese Liberation Army, both of which have been covered in depth elsewhere.