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The New SBS Cap Badge



As I read through the SBS' operational history just before taking command, I came across an article from the September 1947 edition of *The Globe & Laurel* which was written by the Commanding Officer of the Combined Operations Beach and Boat Section (COBBS) – one of the Service's many forebear units. A sentence towards the end caught my eye, "What we need at the moment is a little less secrecy so the remainder of the Corps realises what we are doing and why we are doing it". Some things never change

Mindful of this unhelpful dynamic in SBS-Corps relations, I would like to take this opportunity to set out the rationale underpinning the changes to the SBS' Regimental identity. From the outset, I cannot state strongly enough that changing the SBS' Cap Badge and associated accoutrements has nothing to do with a desire to distance the Service from the Corps. We are, therefore, very grateful that CGRM has allowed the Service to retain the Green Beret as an unambiguous statement that Commando and Royal Marines ethos will remain pre-eminent within the SBS.

So why the change? The reasons are threefold. Firstly in any organisation's, or indeed individual's evolution there comes a time when establishing one's own identity becomes a vital prerequisite in sustaining ambition, sense of purpose and self esteem. You do not need me to tell you that nowhere is such a dynamic so keenly felt as in a military unit, where pride in the Regimental identity is synonymous with an enduring will to fight and win. As with the Corps, the SBS is no

different in this regard. It has a need to evolve its identity and terms and conditions of service in step with its place in the world as a unique Special Forces unit.

The second reason is to achieve the commonality of appearance that enhances unit cohesion. Practically, therefore, with a tri-Service approach to recruitment there is a need to consider what cap badge successful non-Royal Marine SBS personnel should wear – a similar conundrum that led to the adoption of the Green Beret by Commando Forces in 1942. I am sure that you will agree that having a myriad of RN, Army and RAF cap badges on the Green Beret would do little to shore up the cohesion of a unit such as the SBS.

Thirdly there is the issue of parity with other Special Forces units in terms of an individual being able to take pride in having completed one of the most arduous selection courses in the world. Whilst some may argue that seeking visible recognition for achievement in the form of a new Regimental identity does not chime well with the inherent humility expected of a SF soldier, I would suggest that humility and taking pride in the uniqueness of one's achievements should not be seen as mutually exclusive. Again, here too, there are some parallels with the logic underpinning the Corps' practices of wearing Royal Marines Commando shoulder flashes, the Commando dagger and parachute wings.

I hope this will explain the rationale behind these changes and emphasise the importance the Service attaches to its affiliation with the wider Corps. Finally I would like to thank you all for the crucial and enduring support that the Royal Marines family gives the SBS. There can be no doubt that the Corps remains the lifeblood of the Service.

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The Captain General, HRH The Duke of Edinburgh, and the Commander-in-Chief Fleet were present at Royal Marines, Poole on 18th November 2003 for the inauguration of the new Special Boat service cap badge. Serving members of the SBS were on parade watched by many former members, while the Band of the Commando Training Centre were in attendance.

The Royal Marines Special Boat Service Family Tree

Royal Marines Boom Patrol Detachment - 1942-1947

Combined Operations Beach and Boat Sections - 1947-1948

Small Raids Wing - 1948-1951

Special Boat Company - 1951-1974

Special Boat Squadron - 1974-1987

Special Boat Service - 1987