



Royal Marines on the Peaks of the Sierra Nevada: Extreme Training with US Allies

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Facing the scorching heat, thin air, and peaks over 11,000 feet of the Sierra Nevada was no small feat, but for the Royal Marines of 45 Commando, it was a necessary step to maintain their legendary mountain warfare capabilities. For six weeks, the men stationed in Arbroath, Scotland, left the mists of the Cairngorms to move to the **Mountain Warfare Training Center** in Pickel Meadows, California, where they participated in the international exercise **Green Dagger**.

Training in Extreme Conditions

The program began with an acclimatization phase: the marines had to quickly adapt to working at over 2,000 meters altitude and temperatures reaching 35 degrees. This period included theoretical study of mountaineering techniques and practical application in a harsh and hostile

environment, very different from the Scottish mountains.



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The activities ranged from **vertical climbs and abseiling** to **river and valley crossings**, up to building a Tyrolean traverse rope bridge to overcome deep canyons. The commandos also faced a challenging 100-meter descent, testing their physical and mental endurance and ability to operate in extreme situations.

Logistical support was not overlooked: the use of mules, for example, proved essential for transporting heavy weaponry on rugged trails. A demonstration that, in similar scenarios, technology goes hand in hand with traditional survival and movement methods.



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New Equipment and Tactics

The exercise was also a testing ground for new equipment: the Royal Marines tested the **KS-1** rifle, new optical systems, night and thermal vision devices, as well as long-range binoculars. The goal was to verify their reliability in extreme environmental conditions and during high-altitude combat maneuvers.

Alongside infantry skills, specialized roles were also tested:

- **59 Commando Royal Engineers** focused on fortifications and explosive techniques to obstruct enemy supply routes.
- **29 Commando Royal Artillery** worked on indirect fire control with forward observer teams.
- Other units conducted air defense activities, mountain communications, and tactical medicine.



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Joint Operations and Final Validation

The culmination of Green Dagger was joint training with allies: the 45 Commando operated side by side with the **2nd Battalion 4th Marines** of the United States and a company of the **Presidential Guard of the United Arab Emirates**, facing combat simulations against larger forces, including the **1st Battalion 5th Marines** and the **Marine Forces Special Operations Command**.

This “force-on-force” scenario was a crucial testing ground to validate the procedures, tactics, and operational capabilities of the British commandos in a mountain environment.

The exercise once again demonstrated why the Royal Marines remain the UK's foremost experts in **mountain and arctic warfare**: adaptability, physical endurance, technological innovation, and esprit de corps make them ready to operate in any condition, wherever they are called.

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