

The United Kingdom strengthens Special Forces: funds increased by 12% and new autonomous systems

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The United Kingdom is preparing a significant enhancement of its special forces. The new **Defence Investment Plan**, published by the British government on June 30, 2026, provides for a **12% increase in resources for the UK Special Forces over the next four years**.

The document does not indicate the absolute value of the investment and does not detail individual programs, as much of the information regarding the capabilities, equipment, techniques, and procedures of the British special forces remains classified.

However, the political choice is clear: London intends to keep its special units at the highest possible level, strengthening their operational capabilities, readiness, and global intervention possibilities.

The UK Special Forces as the “spearhead” of Defense

In the plan, the British special forces are defined as the **“spearhead” of the United Kingdom's Defense**.

According to the government, these units must be able to achieve strategically significant objectives in the most challenging contexts, operating in all domains and acting both openly and discreetly or clandestinely.

The reference concerns the entirety of the UK Special Forces, within which are units such as the **Special Air Service**, the **Special Boat Service**, and their respective support units. However, the document does not allocate specific investments to individual units.

The enhancement should allow the special forces to maintain high readiness, intervene quickly, protect British interests, and face technologically advanced adversaries.

The tasks mentioned include:

- deterrence and countering peer-level adversaries;
- protection of British interests;
- recovery of citizens abroad;
- support to civil authorities;
- operations conducted quickly and at great distances from the national territory.



The United Kingdom strengthens Special Forces: funds increased by 12% and new autonomous systems – Photo copyright Royal Navy

New drones and autonomous systems

The 12% increase is part of a much broader transformation program for the British Armed Forces.

The government has allocated **over 5 billion pounds in the next four years for drones, autonomy, and unmanned systems**. Within this investment, **650 million pounds** will be allocated to relatively inexpensive and rapidly deployable autonomous systems.

The funding will jointly affect the **British Army**, the **UK Commando Force**, and the **Special Forces**.

The technologies envisaged include drones, unmanned ground vehicles, and other autonomous systems aimed at increasing the offensive capability and survival of units in the field.

The plan also includes investments in the **Digital Targeting Web**, a network designed to connect sensors, decision centers, and weapon systems, reducing the time needed to identify, assign, and hit a target.

Preparing for confrontation with advanced adversaries

The British special forces have gained extensive experience in counter-terrorism operations, hostage recovery, and raids against non-state armed organizations over the past decades.

However, the Defence Investment Plan indicates a broader priority: preparing the entire British military apparatus for a possible conflict against adversaries with comparable technological capabilities.

For special units, this means having to operate in environments characterized by continuous surveillance, drones, air defenses, communication interception, electronic warfare, and advanced detection systems.

The availability of modern equipment and secure communications thus becomes essential not only to strike a target but also to prevent operators from being located during approach, action, and exfiltration.

This is not an abandonment of counter-terrorism, which will remain one of the missions of the UK Special Forces, but an adaptation to the needs of state confrontation and the so-called high-intensity warfare.

Secrecy on investments

The British government specifies that the details related to investments in special forces will remain classified.

The confidentiality concerns not only the systems purchased but also the personnel, equipment, tactics, techniques, and operational procedures.

It is therefore possible to know the overall percentage increase, but not its distribution among units, infrastructure, armaments, infiltration means, communications, or technological programs.

The plan also anticipates further investments between **2030 and 2035**, aimed at improving the special forces' ability to operate and gather information on a global scale.

A transformation that goes beyond SAS and SBS

The strengthening of the UK Special Forces is part of a comprehensive review of the British military instrument. The Defence Investment Plan provides for investments of about **298 billion pounds over the four-year period**, with an additional 15 billion compared to previous forecasts.

The United Kingdom wants to further integrate conventional forces, special units, intelligence, cyber capabilities, sensors, and autonomous systems.

For SAS and SBS, even without publicly attributed programs, the message is clear: maintaining the ability to operate in the most sensitive contexts will no longer be sufficient. The units must be able to do so even in the face of an adversary capable of controlling airspace, disrupting communications, and quickly detecting men and equipment.

The 12% increase thus represents not only a financial strengthening but the start of a new phase for the British special forces, increasingly integrated into the United Kingdom's preparation for technological warfare and confrontation with advanced military powers.

News link: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-defence-investment-plan