

SPECIAL OPERATIONS

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POLICE AND MILITARY
TACTICAL UNITS

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REDEFINING RECONNAISSANCE

JORDAN'S 61 SRR

For centuries the Arab Bedouin have roamed the sub-Saharan deserts of North Africa to the Arabian Peninsula. The ability to move at night and to limit movement during the day due to the unbearable heat is not an easy task amongst other skills required to survive in the desert. The skills they possess have been passed from generation to generation and perfected over time. Today the majority of Jordan's Armed Forces are recruited from the Bedouin tribes that live within Jordan's geographical borders. It is evident that these skills inherited from their forefathers have not been forgotten; these skills have greatly enhanced their ability to operate within Jordan's terrain as a professionally trained military.

Interestingly, in recent years, global and regional superpowers that can field stealth aircraft, advancing armor, the world's most sophisticated communications, imagery and pinpoint laser-guided ordnance can be ground to stalemate by poorly-equipped yet highly motivated insurgent forces that might very well fight with the skill, discipline and coordination of conventional armies. In this new age of warfare, rear echelons have disappeared from the battlefield altogether. Vehicles designed for speed and mobility are now weighed down by add-on armor; main battle tanks, designed to withstand the most potent of enemy ord-

nance are being popped open like tin cans by massive IEDs buried under ground, built with explosives and store bought concoctions that are triggered by throw-away cellular phones.

Insurgents who have waged successful campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq have followed a Fifth-Generation Warfare philosophy that has attempted to undermine governmental infrastructure and contaminate religious belief. The insurgent strategy is to conduct a coordinated dual-strike—fighting both a guerrilla-style popular campaign and a terrorist campaign to demoralize the public at large and to display their simplistic, yet highly effective, battlefield ferocity. The cross-pollination of global terrorism highlights the flexibility and tenacity of today's Insurgent. Their abilities to threaten governments cannot be taken lightly. Their global reach cannot be dismissed.

The Western response to this threat to redefine warfare has largely been reactionary and defensive in nature. Initiatives such as Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles in the United States have been stop-gap measures designed to keep troops operating from vehicles safely while deployed in contentious theatres of operations. Other nations have sought similar solutions in programs that cost billions of dollars and will require years of production and planning.



BY DAVID MACALEESE



PHOTO BY SAMUEL M. NATZ

61 SRR operators move slowly under a desert moon on a reconnaissance mission.



(Top and bottom) 61 SRR snipers take aim from a forward observation position, and then move forward closer toward their target.

Often referred to as an "Oasis of Peace," Jordan sits in a region where conflicts are commonplace. These are turbulent times, even for the Middle East, and King Abdullah II has paid particular attention to the modernization of Jordan's Armed Forces and the ability to interoperate cohesively with other Jordanian units and with friendly nations on overseas deployments in addition to supporting UN operations and Humanitarian Missions. Jordan responded to this military reality with a decisive response designed to tilt the tide and initiative of battle away from the perpetrators of Fifth Generation



(Top/middle): Camouflaged from the barren desert in their Ghillie suits, 61 SRR snipers become one with the terrain on a training exercise.

(Bottom) A 61 SRR sniper protects his team's position with his DPMS LR308.



tactics. The Jordanian response combines the astuteness of unit members inserted on long-range reconnaissance operations, with the all-important need for eyes-on-target intelligence that is propelled by the battlefield equalizer of cohesively deployed snipers that have the ability to inflict havoc and disarray inside the enemy's ranks who believe they are safe by blending into the indistinguishable sea of innocent civilians.

The Jordanian response was the creation of the 61 Special Reconnaissance Regiment (61 SRR).

The thinking behind the creation of 61 SRR is a unit that would operate as a reconnaissance/surveillance asset both overtly and covertly. The baseline of the unit is the ability to have a surgical strike capability, demoralizing an enemy, dominating the ground and controlling a theatre of operations, in support of larger military formations. Members of this closely-knit unit could also find themselves assisting in the security of high profile functions within Jordan. The ethos of the regiment is small numbers of highly trained men who do not fall under the normal conventional chain of command and have the ability to move with speed and respond to any task given to them, with fewer assets than a conventional military formation.

61 SRR was the vision of King Abdullah. Jordan's King had enjoyed a long and illustrious military career, including that of head of Jordan's Special Operations Command, prior to ascending to the throne in 1999.





(Top) An 61 SRR tandem displays their kit while a three-man team displays its camouflage prowess while forming a 50 caliber fire-support position.

His directive to create a new special operations reconnaissance regiment that could manipulate “Battle Space” in order to gather intelligence and deliver Joint Integral Effects (JIE) precision fire was both bold and unique.

Battlefield intelligence had long been a facet of the rapidly evolving face of modern warfare and open to debate. Commanders often relied upon technology—such as aerial reconnaissance and even real-time imagery from

UAVs—to decide on strategies and deployments. The use of long-range reconnaissance patrols sent deep into hostile areas to gather intelligence provided commanders with eyes-on-target real-time information and immediate analysis, but Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol (LRRP) assets were never designed to engage targets in direct action encounters; nor were they designed, by their training, tools and mandate, to become a force of terror disrupting the enemy’s sense of security.

Following high-level debates within Jordan’s Special Operations Command as to the importance of tactical—and even offensive—Battlefield Intelligence 61 SRR was formed at the end of 2006. In order to make this vision a military reality it was identified that Special Forces personnel assigned with this task must be versatile, quick thinking but also pragmatic. They must have the ability to maneuver with speed and without compromise, but above all else must deliver an effect that far exceeds their numbers. The mandate was to become the ultimate in force multipliers.

When conceiving of this new intelligence-gathering force, one of its main objectives was to also provide battlefield commanders with the ability to anticipate and maximize military firepower. This methodology emphasized the requirement for an improved Intelligence, Surveillance, Target, Acquisition and Reconnaissance (ISTAR) capability coupled with a fast flowing Joint Integral Effects potential. One of the most decisive elements of any military formation is its technological support. But the ability to utilize human resources in order to provide real-time accurate intelligence is vital to the success of any military operation. Soldiers that can adapt and meet this demanding role, even



(Top) The weaponry carried by a typical 61 SRR team is featured by this reconnaissance patrol team.

(Bottom) A pair of 61 SRR snipers take aim with their Barrett M82A1/M107 .50 caliber rifles.



within the framework of already established elite units, are few and far between.

Members of 61 SRR are specially-selected individuals who have a proven military career within the Jordanian Special Forces (SF) community; they are run through a rigorous selection process that supersedes the vetting process they have already endured and passed to enter the Commando, Special Forces and Counterterrorist units. Those selected to be members of 61 SRR are not chosen solely for their military prowess. There are certain traits and characteristics that the unit

seeks in each potential member before being admitted into the Regiment.

61 SRR specializes in two key areas: the skill of surveillance and reconnaissance (be

it short or long range operations in both rural and urban environments) and secondly, the delivery of precision direct or indirect fire. The unit is designed to dispatch teams to

infiltrate Areas of Operation (AOs) by land or air. They retain a capacity to navigate within their AOs at speed and without detection. This "forward thinking" military formation is



(Top) A 61 SRR squad-support gunner covers his force with his FN Minimi 5.56mm light machine gun.

(Opposite, top and bottom) Laden down with kit, a 61 SRR gunner prepares to engage a target with his FN MAG 7.62mm squad support weapon while two unit snipers peer through the sights of their SAKO precision weapons.

not only trained to conduct Stand-off Target Reconnaissance (SOTR) by employment of the Sniper OP matrix but they also have the latitude to collate detailed intelligence by Close Target Reconnaissance (CTR). Once on target, if required, 61 SRR patrols can change their employment profile from one of a passive to a reactive nature by delivery of clinical sniper fire eliminating critical targets at both strategic and operational levels. Their main priority is to diminish the command

structure of any enemy insurgent force. They also create an ambience of flexibility for higher command in that they sustain an ability to deliver Close Air Support (CAS) be it from strike jets or attack helicopters. If required, the Teams can initiate indirect fire from artillery support or alternatively Indirect Map Predicted Fire (IMPF) by use of machine gun sustained fire.

To meet this operational requirement, the Training Performance Statement (TPS) has determined that the men

of this unique regiment need to concentrate their training within two key areas—Surveillance/Reconnaissance and Sniping—while maintaining the inherent Special Forces capabilities. Most members of the global special operations community can boast both a reconnaissance and sniping capability, yet both skills have often been viewed as separate entities. The reality of Fifth Generation warfare dictated otherwise and Jordan realized that the application of both intelligence-gathering and



sniping required both disciplines to be entwined. Contrary to the popular assumption that the sniper's main role is to engage targets at long range with accurate clinical firepower, there is a serious tactical doctrine that articulates the sniper's primary function as a gathering tool of real-time intelligence. Clearly, in tactical situations ranging from VIP Protection to direct action assault to support operations with larger Special

Forces elements, it can be argued that snipers are vital if not principal links in the coordination of any and all decisive action. The fact that a reconnaissance sniper can both gather intelligence while retaining the ability to engage critical targets at extreme range personifies the definition of "Force Multiplier."

When King Abdullah authorized the creation of 61 SRR, commanders realized that they would need to field unit mem-





A 61 SRR sniper monitors his sector with his DPMS LR308.

bers who could wear two hats—reconnaissance and sniping—with equal proficiency and every member of the regiment is trained in both areas of expertise. The unit members specialize in both conventional and counterterrorist roles. A 61 SRR reconnaissance sniper could find himself operating from an urban OP in response to an ongoing counterterrorist operation one day and then he may find himself in the desert as part of a long-range patrol during which he inserts by mobility or aerial

platforms and conducts standoff reconnaissance of main supply routes leading into and out of the Jordanian theatre of operations. They have the flexibility to transfer skills from one arena to another.

This lateral approach is emphasized within the area of sniping where the Jordanian operative has to qualify in a variety of disciplines. Every soldier is trained at a conventional level, but he will also specialize in long range Interdiction, High Value Target Acquisition

and Counter-Sniping (IHVTACS). 61 SRR has established operational cohesion by making every individual attend reconnaissance courses. In basic terms the patrols move around their AO by operating an all-informed communications network and in addition have a genuine tactical awareness of one another's maneuvers.

A most interesting aspect of 61 SRR is the importance placed on personal field-craft skills. The nature of their role

dictates that they operate within their AOs in isolation and for long duration with minimal support. In order to manipulate Battlefield Intelligence to its full potential, the men of the 61 SRR have the capacity to work from rural and urban hides. Rarely, if at all, will they accept compromise. Therefore the ingenuity of camouflage and concealment with the agility to stalk and the patience to observe without being seen is crucial to the success of the operation. The men of the unit have the ability of taking full advantage of their culture, heritage and environment and they respect their forefathers and the inherent Bedouin traditions and skills of the desert and the agility to operate—and persevere—within all environments. The landscape of Jordan offers desert to the east, woodlands to the northwest and a mountain belt that runs through the “spine” of the country from north to south.

61 SRR has a unique vanguard element that deploys ahead of the main formation and primarily establishes “Entry Points” for the main reconnaissance force. This small but specialized force can insert by High Altitude Low Opening (HALO) or High Altitude High Opening (HAHO) means. In the true definition of the unit's role as force multipliers, 61 SRR personnel are ideal pathfinders who can mark up a tactical landing zone (be it for the arrival of aircraft, helicopters or airborne troops) and, upon completion of their task, they reintegrate with the main reconnaissance force complimenting the surveillance/sniper matrix.

Creating a new unit of this size and scope, let alone redefining a special operations paradigm, was no small task. The Regiment's Research and Development Cell worked in a frantic, but pragmatic pace to create the logistical infrastructure to support this new unit.

PHOTO BY SAMUEL M. KATZ



61 SRR .50 caliber teams at work:

(Top) Snipers engage targets with their Barrett M82A1/M107 .50 caliber rifles.

(Below) Unit snipers monitor a threat with their McMillan TAC-50s.

Research and Development was conducted on a global scale to find the best and most durable elements of each operator's kit—from the rifle he carried to the boots worn. King Abdullah took a personal interest in this unit and they can boast some outstanding equipment that is not only up to date with current technology but

also raises their military profile to cutting edge standards.

With the creation of a unit like 61 SRR, the initial focus has concentrated on sourcing effective kit at grass roots level. It stands to reason that soldiers who operate in isolation and in small numbers for long periods of time must be able to cope within the

full spectrum of modern day warfare, be it high intensity conflict or guerrilla-style insurgency.

The patrols have a world class array of weaponry. Each individual is issued the M4 5.56mm carbine and Glock 17 9mm pistol. Each member has two dedicated .308 rifles, the SAKO bolt-action sniper rifle

TRG 22 and a semiautomatic DPMS LR308. Both weapons can accept suppressors. The Regiment's armory also includes the .338 caliber SAKO TRG 42, .50 McMillan TAC-50, the Barrett M82A1/M107 and shoulder-fired antitank weapons. This array of precision weaponry allows the operator to engage targets throughout the small arms range trace. 61 SRR Commanders found the advantage of the SAKO shooting platform was that it filled the employment gap between the military and law enforcement sniper. The systems are designed in such a way as to maximize what is good within both these reputable industries.

Interestingly, the unit is also trained on former Soviet-bloc weaponry, in particular the Dragunov SVD 7.62x54mm sniper rifle.

61 SRR patrols are built to



(Top and bottom) Unit newcomers receive tactical classroom time with their weapons, while an already established sniper cadre embarks on a training exercise to hone their helicopter platform shooting skills.

function as either four- or six-man teams, and they are cross-trained in numerous skills, including medic training and foreign language courses that allow them to operate independ-

ently. Each Squadron (encompassing several patrols) is allocated a number of the McMillan TAC-50 .50 caliber rifles and Barrett M82A1/M107 .50 caliber semiautomatic systems. All shooting platforms are supplied with the finest optics, namely the Schmidt and Bender family of optical instruments. Schmidt and Bender has always been one of the industry leaders for military day scopes and the PMII 3-12x50 and 5-25 x 56 optics have topped some of the

best sniper rifles in all regions of the globe. The scopes were clear enough to allow the sniper to engage targets in less light than the competition and the parallax adjustment is finely tuned so as to ensure specific target acquisition. The elevation and windage adjustments are precise and crisp. The outstanding achievement for the scope is the P4L fine line illuminated reticule. The P4 has a simple, uncluttered layout that gives the operator unparalleled precision for range

estimation. Accurate ranges can be calculated at all power settings through the complete effective range of the weapon on which the scope is mounted. Throughout the development of this unit, attention to detail was an essential element of King Abdullah's vision. This was highlighted with the necessity that the weapon systems are all mounted with "Front Focal" plane optics so that the operators can accurately estimate range at any given distance and



61 SRR snipers deploy from 5 Special Operations Aviation Brigade UH-60 Blackhawks during a training exercise.

at any magnification, a requirement that has long been a necessity for military snipers. In summary, the Schmidt and Bender optical day scope is the finest in the world and gives the snipers in the field a definite edge to accomplishing the diverse missions that they will be called upon to execute.

61 SRR operators employ the Leica CRF Rangemaster 1200 Rangefinder, as well as the Vectronix PLRF Rangefinder.

This variety of weapons results in the commanders having complete tactical employment flexibility. If required, they can support counter-suicide bomber operations or, alternatively, provide "Stand-Off" Sniper Ambush attack onto MSR and conduct aerial platform shooting from Jordan's fleet of UH-60 Blackhawk, MH-6M Little Bird, AS-332 Super Puma and EC-



135 Eurocopter helicopters.

For any military contingent, its effectiveness operating during the hours of darkness has always proved to be a dilemma and dilutes operational harmony. The surveillance and reconnaissance snipers of 61 SRR are tasked with turning night into day by employing a

forward mounted Night Sight. The sight utilized is a high resolution, collimated night vision device that provides the sniper with a 24-hour operational effectiveness. It is designed specifically to provide surveillance and target engagement to the military snipers who want to retain the day sight capabil-

ity without removing and reinstalling the day scope. This allows the sniper to switch from a day time to night time option and back without re-zeroing or concern for impact shift. Now available to unit members are newly acquired forward mounted thermal-imaging sights and IR Laser/Illuminating



King Abdullah visits 61 SRR and views a sniper sitting on the skids of a Little Bird chopper.

Aiming devices. The recent acquisition of this equipment has greatly enhanced the unit's capability to operate at night.

61 SRR was designed as a force with the future in mind. The projected development of its capabilities has been tasked with achieving objectives coined as "SMART": Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and working to a Time line. In 2008 the unit will evaluate and possibly field a new arsenal of large caliber semiautomatic rifles including, according to reports, the Accuracy International AS50 Semi-Auto .50 BMG rifle. The regiment will also review its

overall mobility capabilities including the incorporation of All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) to support its operations.

61 SRR was designed as a means to redefine the Special Operations battlefield in favor of Jordan's interests. Jordan's Special Forces personnel retain a wealth of actual combat and operational experience gained by service around the world. They have had personnel deployed in support of UN Peacekeeping Operations to Bosnia, East Timor, Haiti, Kosovo, Croatia and elsewhere on humanitarian operations. They have also had personnel deployed in support of the GWOT. The wealth of that experience, plus their con-

tacts with other units in what His Majesty often refers to as Foreign Special Operations Groups, have helped forge links with some of the most forward thinking and capable members available today. They have gathered these capabilities and experiences in how 61 SRR can function better, smarter and far more effectively for the challenges that may lie ahead.

Indeed, the challenges facing Jordan are immense; threats from al-Qaeda, regional conflicts that refuse to be solved, and the increasingly fundamentalist and sectarian polarization of the Middle East away from both modernizing and moderate politics, place the entire region—with Jordan in its cen-

ter a target. When creating 61 SRR, King Abdullah realized that any tactical response to terrorism had to be more than just a reactionary stop-gap. It required revolutionary thinking and revolutionizing combat core skill sets and capabilities. With the 61 Special Reconnaissance Regiment, His Majesty has provided his commanders with the ability to predict, prevent and provide solutions to threats—both domestic and international—at the political and military level. Jordan hopes that this new capability will act as a deterrent against the ever-growing terrorist threat, but serve as an invaluable asset to all elements of Jordan's Armed Forces. ■