

A special spy base is being built up on the West Coast of Scotland, says Duncan Campbell

## Green berets' come to stay in UK

A NEW AMERICAN base for 'unconventional warfare' troops has now come into operation at Machrihanish, on the Kintyre peninsula on the west coast of Scotland, as part of expanding European activity by the United States 'Special Forces'. The Special Forces (the Green Berets of Vietnam demonology) specialise, like the SAS, in undercover infiltration, espionage and sabotage.

A regular visit of Green Berets to Britain has taken place every May for the last few years, and is code-named 'Flintlock'. The new unit at Machrihanish, Naval Special Warfare Unit 2, is a naval version of the Green Berets, and is only the second such US unit working abroad. (The other is in the Philippines.) Both the US Defence Department and the Ministry of Defence refuse to say why a new naval sabotage and 'dirty tricks' unit has been created in Europe.

The build-up at Machrihanish began last summer with the construction of a new and highly guarded hangar at the existing airfield, which now protects the exotic aircraft used by the new unit. Called 'Combat Talon', the aircraft, normally based in Germany, are equipped to lift agents off the ground in hostile territory without landing. The Combat Talon aircraft are entirely painted black and carry folding arms in front of the cockpit which can extend and catch a balloon cable attached to the agent on the ground. The agent is then lifted off the ground and winched up into the aircraft.

The aircraft's James Bond-like attributes are intended according to a description in the official *Air Force* magazine, to help 'conduct

day/night infiltration and exfiltration' . . . into hostile or enemy controlled territory'; in other words, to get spies, saboteurs and the like in and out. Such operations are conducted in peace time as well as wartime. The Special Forces normally work in close conjunction with the CIA in providing military support for clandestine intelligence activities.

BESIDES THE new Machrihanish base, the spies' planes have been regular visitors over the last few years to the American bases at Mildenhall and Sculthorpe in East Anglia, from which the Green Berets are expected to operate in wartime. The precise war roles of these highly secret troops were revealed three years ago when top-secret papers stolen from the US Army's European Command in the '60s were leaked around Europe (*NS*, 27 June 1980).

In war or crisis, all Special Forces troops including those at Sculthorpe and Machrihanish would come under a new military organisation called SOTFE — 'Support Operations Task Force Europe' — to which part of the British SAS might also be attached. The stolen documents revealed extensive plans for this organisation (which would also include many CIA staff and agents in Europe) to raise mayhem behind enemy lines. The mayhem would, however, be of a more spectacular order than that caused by Britain's SOE in World War 2, as the plans specifically discussed the undercover agents' use of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.

The Machrihanish unit will presumably specialise in infiltration by sea as well as by air. Besides its exotic aircraft, it has a 36-foot boat which is normally moored at nearby Campbeltown. Up to 40 US servicemen operate from Machrihanish for the Special Warfare Unit, together with a larger group of British and American guards who supervise the major nuclear weapons dump which is located there.

Aviation specialists noted that the extent and nature of the Special Forces activities in Britain last year had expanded considerably. An unscheduled Special Forces exercise was held from the