

I'm human



Opportunities exist for Australian Defence Force (ADF) members to join the Special Air Service Regiment (SASR), also known as the SAS or 'the Regiment'. The path to joining the SASR involves a rigorous and formal selection and training process, which includes several steps. One of these steps is the notorious SASR Selection Course, colloquially referred to as 'Selection', lasting three weeks. This grueling course pushes candidates to their physical and mental limits, often depriving them of food, sleep, and basic human comforts while undertaking arduous treks or scaling difficult terrain. During armed conflicts and wars, SASR personnel are required to operate in small teams behind enemy lines, necessitating individuals with exceptional courage, morale, self-discipline, intelligence, reliability, determination, and physical fitness. In peacetime, the SASR engages in frequent overseas deployments for training, which typically last only a short duration. This allows families to maintain stability while living in the Swabourne area. The SASR operates under the guidance of the Special Operations Command (SOCOMD), which provides forces to conduct special operations across various environments. The Australian Strategic Policy Institute suggests that SOCOMD facilitates this role through missions categorized as direct or indirect approaches, with a focus on combat-oriented and support-focused efforts respectively. SOCOMD assets undertake diverse roles, including counter-terrorism, unconventional warfare, covert reconnaissance, and precision strike operations, among others. As an elite unit, the SASR provides Australia's domestic immediate response Military Counter Terrorism (CT) and Maritime Counter Terrorism (MCT) teams, working closely with state and federal police forces. Crucially, candidates must be physically fit at the beginning of the SASR Selection course to stand any chance of success. The selection process is divided into three main stages: Preparation encompassing psychological, physical, and medical elements; Stage 2, which includes a 21-day SASR Selection Course; and Stage 3, involving an 18-month Employment Training Reinforcement Cycle. According to Dodd (2007), the Australian Special Air Service Regiment (SASR) consists of approximately 500-700 personnel. The exact figure varies across sources, with estimates ranging from 500 (Waiters, 2006, p.11) to 550 (Miller, 2003, p.12) and 700 (Micheletti, 2003, p.13). Headquartered at Campbell Barracks in Swabourne, Western Australia, the SASR is a battalion-sized unit composed of a regimental headquarters, three sabre squadrons, an operational support squadron, a base squadron, and a signals squadron. The three sabre squadrons maintain the SASR's war-fighting capability, train for operational contingencies, and support counter-terrorism or recovery operations. Additionally, two squadrons are on rotation to conduct operations in support of State or Federal police forces. A fourth sabre squadron has been reported but remains unacknowledged (Epstein & Welsh, 2012). The regiment is organized as follows: Regimental HQ, led by the CO, a Lieutenant Colonel, maintains the readiness and combat capabilities of the SASR. The three Sabre squadrons (1 SAS, 2 SAS, and 3 SAS) each comprise approximately 100 personnel, headed by a Major. Each squadron consists of a HQ Troop, three SAS Troops (Water Troop, Fire-Fall Troop, and a Signals Troop), and a Signals Team. 4 Squadron (4 SAS) also works in conjunction with the Australian Special Air Service (ASAS) based at Swan Island in Port Phillip Bay. The squadron was formally raised in 2005 under the Howard government but its intelligence-focused role was only officially recognized in early 2011. The Australian Special Air Service (ASAS) operates in a similar capacity to the SASR, but its specifics of its role are less well-known. The two units are often used interchangeably. In surveillance operations, SASR patrols are common, while counter-terrorism efforts may employ larger teams. Support personnel for the SASR include signalers, mechanics, medical staff, supply specialists, drivers, and caterers among others. A 2012 report noted that six female soldiers were undergoing training in the US to work with the 4 Squadron. By 2003, the 152 Signal Squadron consisted of at least four troops. The basic unit of the SASR is the five-man patrol, consisting of four operators and one signaler, which can be expanded up to a 20-man team. Former SASR officers have risen to high ranks within military command, with three qualified officers holding senior positions in 2015: Chief of Army Lieutenant General Angus Campbell, Deputy Chief of Army Major General Rick Burr, and Forces Commander Major General Gus Gilmore. The SASR has a unique selection process that emphasizes individual determination and endurance, often pushing candidates to their limits. The ethos of the SASR is centered around heterogeneity, valuing diverse personalities and ideas over uniformity. This approach allows for unconventional problem-solving and fosters a culture that promotes adaptability and innovation within its ranks. Candidates undergo rigorous testing, including sleep and food deprivation, to assess their mental and physical stamina under extreme conditions. The selection process is designed to identify individuals with strong communication skills, independence, and the ability to think critically in high-pressure situations. By pushing candidates beyond their limits, the SASR seeks to uncover the 'inner person,' revealing true personality traits that are essential for success within the unit. When a candidate's true nature is exposed, it inevitably seeps into their verbal and non-verbal cues during interactions. Even if a person appears physically fit at the start of the SASR Selection Course, they may quickly lose any advantages as the grueling activities push them to their limits. It's not physical stamina that sets successful candidates apart but rather qualities such as practical intelligence, emotional maturity, honesty, and leadership skills. According to Horsfield (2000), this blend of diverse characteristics is what makes SASR soldiers appear ordinary on the surface. The unspoken yet crucial aspect of a 'sense of humour' often surfaces during challenging times but remains subjective to the discretion of course assessors. A story illustrates this, where a candidate's lack of leadership was deemed a decisive factor in his rejection despite being physically fit and having good teamwork skills. For those who succeed in the SASR Selection Course, evaluation continues even after selection, as they're expected to continue improving in their role within the SF unit. Remaining within these units can be just as challenging as getting selected initially due to the high standards of personal motivation required for actual operations. Unlike many training courses in the ADF, the SASR Selection has a 'select out' policy rather than 'train in', where candidates who struggle are encouraged to leave early to avoid further strain on themselves and others. To join the SASR training program, applicants need to meet specific requirements. They must be qualified up to the 343-2 Rifleman standard and have completed Infantrymen training. This is because service in Australia's Special Forces demands a high level of physical and mental fitness, strength, and endurance. As such, candidates must undergo medical and physical assessments to ensure they can handle the challenges of Special Forces selection and reinforcement training. Those who haven't already done so will attend the Royal Australian Infantry Initial Employment Training course at Lone Pine Barracks in Singleton, New South Wales. This 72-day course covers basic infantry tactics, specialist infantry weapons, and equipment. Candidates who fail to complete this training won't be allowed to proceed with the SASR selection process. Successful candidates then participate in the Special Forces Accelerated Infantry Training Programme, a 6-week course designed to prepare them for the Special Forces Screen Test and subsequent training. This program enhances physiological and psychological conditioning, teaches navigation, communications, first aid, and field-craft skills, and introduces instinctive weapon handling. It also includes the 15-week Commando Physical Training Package. Before submitting an application, candidates must obtain their CO's approval, who will provide a positive or negative recommendation. Additionally, all applicants must undergo a SF medical assessment within six months of the course start date and a psychological examination at least five months prior to the course commencement. Given article text here The selection process for the Australian Special Air Service Regiment (SASR) involves two main assessments: the Assessment Centre (AD343) and a CO's recommendation. Following this, candidates must complete a series of questionnaires to determine their psychological suitability for service with the Special Forces. Approximately 80-85% of candidates will meet the medical and psychological standards and proceed to the Special Forces Screen Test, which takes place two months prior to the course start date. This assessment evaluates a candidate's commitment, motivation, and ability to withstand the physical and environmental stresses associated with the SASR Selection Course. The Special Forces Screen Test includes a range of physical assessments, such as the run/dodge/jump course, strength tests, and endurance exercises. Candidates must also complete a 2.4km run, swim test, and other evaluations to assess their overall fitness and suitability for the course. Candidates who pass this initial screening will proceed to the Special Forces Screening Test (SFST), which is conducted over approximately a 7-hour period. This assessment includes physical assessments such as press-ups, heaves, vertec, flexibility tests, sit-up tests, beep tests, agility tests, yo-yo intermittent recovery tests, and pack marches. The results of this test determine whether candidates have the potential for service in the Special Forces and are suitable to attend the SASR Selection Course. A Selection Advisory Committee will be convened at the conclusion of the SFST to make a determination on each candidate's suitability, based on their performance during all training up to that point. The SASR Selection Course assesses both mental and physical strength, endurance, overall fitness, ability to remain calm in combat, and teamwork skills. The course is one of the most physically challenging and psychologically demanding military selection processes globally, with only a small percentage completing it. Candidates are tested over 21 days on rugged terrain in Western Australia, losing significant body weight during this time. During the course, candidates' every move is scrutinized by directing staff (DS), who teach them almost nothing but help them learn about themselves instead. The DS are aware of some candidates trying to take advantage of the system by getting removed from the course rather than using the official Withdrawal at Own Request Form. Phase One of the course starts with candidates receiving their personal weapon, a three-digit number, and taking a head shot photograph. They then form up in a hangar-type building with their equipment, given a camp cot as a base. The first task is to write an essay about themselves, which often results in nervous grins and muffled laughs. Applicants are instructed to showcase their literary prowess and thought clarity through an erudite essay submission. Following this, they receive their course materials before being told to strip naked under the watchful eyes of female soldiers, who pose a series of probing questions designed to disorient them. As part of the training, candidates must learn to adapt quickly in uncertain situations - a crucial skill for SASR soldiers. Once the physical gear is packed away, the candidates embark on an arduous night journey from the hangar building to Bundoona Training Area north of Perth, where they are dropped off at a bush camp. The 8km trek continues under the cover of darkness, with all their gear in tow. Upon arrival, the candidates are housed in a cold shell facility known as 'The Embassy,' and it's well past midnight before they're allowed to rest. Day Two begins around 02:00 when speakers blaring from the vicinity of their sleeping quarters rouse the candidates, instructing them to assemble outside with their gear. From this point forward, they are frequently rousted from their beds for any infractions, marking the beginning of a process known as 'retraining' aimed at breaking down their individuality. After a thorough inspection of personal equipment, candidates undergo grueling physical training lasting hours, which includes both solo and group exercises with and without weights. In daylight hours, they also participate in psychological interviews conducted by serving or former SASR members who scrutinize the candidates for any mental vulnerabilities. This may involve revisiting essays written on day one or probing into their current job roles to gauge initial reactions (body language) and verbal responses. The purpose is to assess how well each candidate can cope under pressure. Day Three brings a demanding 'circuit-style' physical training session, designed to evaluate the candidates' endurance levels. This PT session aims to separate those who are capable from those who haven't prepared adequately or might not complete the course. By this stage, a considerable number of candidates have opted out due to exhaustion and discomfort. On Day Four, approximately 90 candidates remain from an initial group of 130. The day begins with a timed loaded march, covering 20km within three hours and 15 minutes while carrying 28kg of gear. This test is repeated on day ten for those who fail it the first time. The goal of this challenge is to verify that candidates can navigate challenging terrain under strategic conditions, as well as to assess their physical endurance. This individual test does not allow PTIs or DS to interfere with a candidate's progress apart from ensuring safety. Water jerrycans are provided for fluid replenishment along the route for those who require it. The selection process involves rigorous physical and mental challenges. On Day Five, over a third of candidates will have withdrawn due to fatigue and injury. The pace intensifies with obstacle courses, combat exercises, and role-playing scenarios designed to test endurance and decision-making. Solo navigation exercises on Days Six and Seven pushes candidates further, requiring them to cover 68-76km while visiting checkpoints and managing their physical and mental state. This phase often results in fractures and near-withdrawal due to fatigue. On Day Nine, the scenario demands planning under pressure, with candidates developing a plan to achieve an objective amidst fatigue-induced lapses in basic patrolling principles. The physically and emotionally demanding PT session aims to call candidates, leaving less than half of the original 130 remaining by the end of the day. Day Ten features a retest of the 20-clicker challenge, with a 10km out-and-back route marked by cones. Candidates failing this test are immediately returned to unit, while others face further challenges in maintaining their physical and mental stamina throughout the selection process. Candidates who passed the first round are now facing retesting. Having physical and mental strength doesn't guarantee selection; not all candidates pass tests. Every aspect of each candidate is monitored, with results recorded in a database (Table 1). Out of the remaining 53 candidates, 6 will be removed after being deemed unfit for SASR service. Table 1: Examples of Assessments Phase Two: Days Eleven to Twenty One. The second phase starts with 47 out of 130 original candidates. Exercise Happy Wanderer is a grueling challenge that pushes candidates' limits. Dropped into a remote mountain range in Western Australia, each candidate must navigate 150km over 5 days, carrying heavy loads and facing treacherous terrain. This exercise tests navigation skills, self-reliance, and ability to operate under extreme conditions. Candidates are required to transport heavy objects across vast distances (often 7-10 km), while being constantly assessed on their leadership and problem-solving skills. Those who fail to step up or fall back are quickly identified. As the days pass, candidates grow increasingly exhausted, with some even declining food offered on Day Three due to its unappetizing nature. By the final night, all remaining candidates are reassessed by the DS leaders, who collectively decide which ones will proceed. Among the 130 original participants, only 26 will be selected for further employment training, while the others are eliminated. Other Selection Course activities aim to push candidates to their limits. One such test involves a team marching for two days on an empty stomach before being tasked with delivering food to a 'starving patrol'. Those who complete this task are rewarded with a hot meal, but not without some unexpected complications. Assessors closely observe how candidates handle stress and pressure, including verbal and non-verbal reactions during tests like Morse code receiving. A classic activity requires teams to move a heavily laden jeep five kilometers within a set timeframe using only four rimless tires, designed to test their leadership, initiative, teamwork, and endurance. Throughout these challenges, disappointments or 'sickeners' are strategically used to reveal which candidates are driven by romantic notions of being in the SASR or have unrealistic expectations about completing the course. The SASR Selection Course is a rigorous process that continues even after candidates have withdrawn. Most dropouts occur before the instructors can intervene, but rejection can happen at any time. The course includes additional challenges such as decision-making under pressure and group acceptance based on peer ratings. A self-assessment form is used to compare with the DS assessment, highlighting the importance of a candidate's willingness to take advice from more experienced ranks. The reinforcement cycle involves 18 months of further training after selection, followed by deployment in a squadron or troop commander role. The range of courses attended during this period includes combat survival, parachuting, and specialized skills such as signaller/medic or explosive expert. All SASR members are parachute qualified, and each patrol has at least one specialist. The system is flexible, with training cycles lasting three years for each squadron. During the third year, clandestine tasks are practiced, including CQB, explosive entry, and urban warfare training. This training takes place in advanced facilities such as electronic ranges and simulated environments to prepare personnel for operational scenarios. SASR also provides training on weapons handling and explosives to intelligence agents and police units. The SASR Reinforcement Cycle: A Comprehensive Training Program Within the Special Air Service Regiment (SASR), career progression through the ranks demands completing identical promotion courses as those in the conventional Army. This achievement is a rare feat, with only around 10% of candidates who started the SASR Selection Course 18 months prior reaching this milestone. The ADF School of Special Operations oversees individual SF recruitment, selection, and training, catering to SOCOMD's force generation needs. Additionally, specialized training centers such as the ADF Parachuting School at HMAS Albatross in Nowra, NSW, provide essential skills for ADF personnel. Key training facilities include Campbell Barracks, home to the SASR since 1957, and Bundoona Training Area northeast of Perth, featuring live-fire ranges and mock-up areas. The Swan Island Training Area, acquired by ASIS in the late 1950s, is used for training ASIS agents and ADF Special Forces, particularly from the SASR. This area also houses a significant communications facility and special operations storage site. SASR personnel face distinct pay, pension, and service conditions compared to their counterparts in the rest of the ADF. Officers within the SASR typically complete basic courses for planning and administration duties but may not have access to all specialist training available to other ranks. Troop commanders serve for approximately 2-3 years before returning to parent Service duties, with some officers potentially returning as squadron commanders at a later stage in their careers. The Australian Special Air Service Regiment (SASR) is an elite special forces unit within the Australian Defence Force (ADF), comprising primarily male officers and enlisted personnel. Officers, including captains and below, may be selected for the SASR, while other ranks can serve for their entire career, typically interspersed with instructional postings. Promotion in the SASR is often slow compared to other ADF units. Upon receiving their sand-coloured beret, all other ranks revert to the rank of trooper and will transfer to the Royal Australian Infantry Corps if not already in the Infantry Corps. Most candidates are in their late-20s and older than average soldiers. SASR operators receive significant allowances, making them among the highest-paid soldiers in the ADF, with a trooper earning approximately \$100,000 per annum. The SASR is open to all male and female officers and other ranks of the ADF. The unit seeks determined, highly-motivated, intelligent, reliable, and physically fit individuals to serve with the Special Forces (SF). This article provides basic information for individuals to make an informed decision before applying for SF Selection. Jane's Amphibious and Special Forces - Australia Special Forces (Land) Retrieved from various online sources. In the realm of Australian military history, Jane's publications have played a significant role in disseminating information about the country's special forces units. One such publication is "Jane's Amphibious and Special Forces - Australia Special Forces (Land)", which provides an overview of the Australian Army's Special Air Service Regiment (SASR) and other specialized units. Several books and articles, written by experts like Ian McPhedran and Garry Smith, offer in-depth insights into the history and operations of these elite forces. For instance, "The Amazing SAS: The Inside Story of Australia's Special Forces" (2005) by Ian McPhedran provides a comprehensive account of the SAS's formation and evolution. Meanwhile, other publications like "Redcoats to Cams: A History of Australian Infantry 1788-2001" (2004) by Iain Kuring and "18 Hours: The True Story of an SAS War Hero" (2007) by S. Lee, shed light on the development of Australia's infantry forces and the experiences of individual soldiers within these units. The Australian SASR is known for its rigorous selection process and demanding training regimen, as outlined in publications such as "Working Outside the Square: Training with the SASR" (2003) by Garry Smith. These resources provide valuable information on the selection process, as well as the skills and tactics employed by these elite soldiers. In addition to these sources, various online archives like the Australian Government Department of Defence's website and the Nautilus Institute have also made available a range of articles and publications related to Australia's special forces.

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