



**South Carolina  
Special Forces Foundation**  
*A 501(c)3 Non-Profit 170(b)(1) Public Charity*



## V42 HISTORY

US Army Special Forces units today trace their lineage and honors directly to the First Special Service Force (SFFS), the joint Canadian-American organization formed in July 1942 at Fort William Henry Harrison, Montana. This regiment was an all-volunteer outfit with exceptionally high standards known for its extensive and rigorous military and physical training.

The FSSF fought under Allied command with great bravery and success in the Aleutians, Italy, and Southern France. The unit got its nickname "The Devils Brigade" during the Italian Campaign from a passage in the captured diary of a dead German officer who had written: "The black devils are all around us every time we come into line and we never hear them."

The knife envisioned by its commander, LTC (later MG) Robert T. Frederick, was actually a group effort among his staff for the perfect fighting knife. FSSF close combat instructor, Demont Michael "Pat" O'Neill, a former sergeant in the Shanghai Municipal Police Force, suggested the blade profile. O'Neill gave great thought to the needs of these special troops as it related to close quarters combat.

COL Orval J. Baldwin, FSSF supply officer, is credited with the skull crusher pointed pommel idea. The final rough sketch was sent to three knife companies for bids: Camillus, Cattaraugus and Case. The Case model was personally selected by Frederick himself. The W.R. Case & Sons Cutlery Company of Bradford, Pennsylvania, was selected to produce the knife which was designated in Ordnance Department documents as "Knife, Fighting, Commando Type, V-42".

So unique was the V42 knife that it was incorporated in the first design for the coat of arms of the FSSF flag manufactured in 1943. It is the only heraldic item to appear on the shield and a set of crossed arrows that make up the coat of arms. In 1960, when the FSSF was reconstituted as the 1<sup>st</sup> Special Forces, the parent regiment for all Special Forces Groups, the original coat of arms used by the FSSF was adopted by the 1<sup>st</sup> Special Forces. The shield of the coat of arms has never been changed. This distinctive unit insignia (better known as unit crest) of the 1<sup>st</sup> Special Forces still has the V42 prominently displayed in the center of the design between two crossed arrows. It has been worn by Special Forces soldiers since 1960 when it was originally approved for wear.

The FSSF was officially inactivated on 5 December 1944 in Villeneuve-Lobet, France. But the Case V-42 lives on to this day. Numerous other patches and crests use this knife for their central character as a symbol of stealth and courage.

The V-42 is a legendary knife that today is an enduring symbol of the most elite of the U.S. Army. No article of equipment is as synonymous with the FSSF as their V-42 Fighting Knife.

V-42 Song and Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RgtRy8BwHDag> or google the V=42