

Announcing... THE KOREAN WAR COMMEMORATIVE THOMPSON

A firing, limited edition of only 1500, selectively plated with 24-karat gold, honoring the Americans who first drew the line against Communism.



Korea — "The front lines of freedom."

President Ronald Reagan

For the first time in world history, Americans drew the line against Communism. The place was Korea. The names of the battlefields are immortal...the Pusan Perimeter...Inchon...the Chosin Reservoir. Here we came to the aid of freedom. 33,629 Americans gave their lives; 103,284 were wounded and 7,140 were captured.

Today, 40,000 American troops still patrol the DMZ — President Reagan calls it: "The front lines of freedom."

The Korean War Commemorative Thompson is the first commemorative tribute ever issued to honor the unsung Americans who first drew the line against Communism in the 1950s — and the Americans who continue today to hold that narrow line.

The tremendous firepower of the Thompson, with the knockdown punch of the .45 ACP cartridge, made it a favorite of the front line fighting men in Korea in stopping the human wave charges of the Red hordes. It is a proud American firearm to honor the brave Americans who defended freedom in this war.

When you hold this 12-pound weapon, it may bring back memories of those faraway places or — for the first time — let you experience what a friend or family member felt 30 years ago.

This project was created by The American Historical Foundation; each is specially built by Auto-Ordnance Corporation, official manufacturer of the famous Thompson.

Limited Edition of Only 1500

This is a strictly limited edition of only 1500, worldwide. Each is specially serially numbered between 0001 and 1500, with the prefix KW (for Korean War). This number is also inscribed on an accompanying Certificate of Authenticity. Each is being produced in a firing, semi-automatic version or, upon request, in fully-automatic for holders of Class III Federal Firearms licenses (please add \$350).

The fit and finish of each Thompson is presentation grade. Special inscriptions are roll-engraved and gold-gilt inlaid on both sides of the receiver.

Richly Plated with 24-Karat Gold

You sight across the 24-karat gold plated rear sight and the special, gold plated, two-ribbed activator knob. Your eyes move across the 35 deep cooling fins and along the high-polished and blued barrel to the hefty mirror-polished, 24-karat gold plated Cutts Compensator and

front sight. Your finger rests on the 24-karat gold plated trigger. Even the special, black, military style sling is affixed to swivels which are 24-karat gold plated and mounted with four 24-karat gold plated screws.

Genuine GI Stocks — Specially Finished

The solid walnut stocks are genuine GI production — originally made during World War II — as were most of the Thompsons used in Korea. They are now being removed from their original storage crates for this project. For the first time, they are being stained to a rich, extra-dark walnut shade, then given a finish as beautiful as the finest shotguns.

The rear grip is fitted with a black, red and blue cloisonne medallion, embossed with the Great Seal of the United States in the center and bearing commemorative inscriptions. The famous red and blue circular symbol of the Republic of Korea, worn by many GIs in the center of their Korean Presidential Unit Citation, forms the central design of the special cloisonne fired enamel medallions which are custom inset on both sides of the butt stock.

Not Just A Showpiece

But this is not just a showpiece. It is a firing Thompson. Because it fires in the semi-automatic mode, you do not need a special license to own it. Anyone who can own a standard hunting rifle can own the Korean War Commemorative Thompson. And because it's functional, it could even be called upon to defend your home and family — with the same famous .45 ACP ammo GIs and American shooters have used since 1911.

It is a dramatic symbol of combat. Designed by General John T. Thompson, this was the weapon that pioneered the use of General Thompson's term "Sub-machine Gun" — and the first weapon of this type ever issued to U.S. military forces.

The Thompson gained fame in the hands of all our service branches — Army, Marine Corps, Navy, and Air Force. It was the most highly desired, hand-held, close combat assault weapon.

Only 1500 will be issued to honor the first time when collectors pay a standard issue Thompson with a unique feature or two recognizable only to the advanced collector, the original issue price of this Thompson is particularly reasonable. It is a piece of workmanship you will enjoy owning and displaying, and you will be proud to pass it along to future generations of your family.

A solid walnut display case, lined with draped and fitted gray velvet, is also available. The entire gun is pro-



Optional walnut display case.

ected from dust and unauthorized handling by a clear, plexiglass lid, which is affixed with three solid brass hinges and three solid brass clasps with match-keyed locks.

How to Reserve; Satisfaction Guaranteed

This is available exclusively through The American Historical Foundation. You may write, call, personally visit or use the reservation form below. Satisfaction is fully guaranteed, or you may return for a full refund any time within one month.

If you do not have a firearms license, we will coordinate delivery with you through your local firearms dealer, after your reservation is received here. If you do have a license, send a signed copy, and the Thompson will be delivered directly to you.

The few men, museums and organizations who own one of these will have an extremely rare, firing showpiece which is assured a place of honor in any collection. It is a lasting, tangible embodiment of the courageous deeds and sacrifices of our countrymen who made that important first stand against Communism.

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Yes, I wish to reserve the Korean War Commemorative Thompson, selectively plated with 24-karat gold, with roll-engraved inscriptions and deluxe presentation finish. Only 1500 will be made. I will also receive a Certificate of Authenticity, membership in The American Historical Foundation and information concerning the history, care, display and firing of the Thompson.

My deposit of \$95 (or credit card authorization) is enclosed. Please invoice (or charge my credit card) for the balance due...

- In four equal payments of \$175,
- or for the balance.

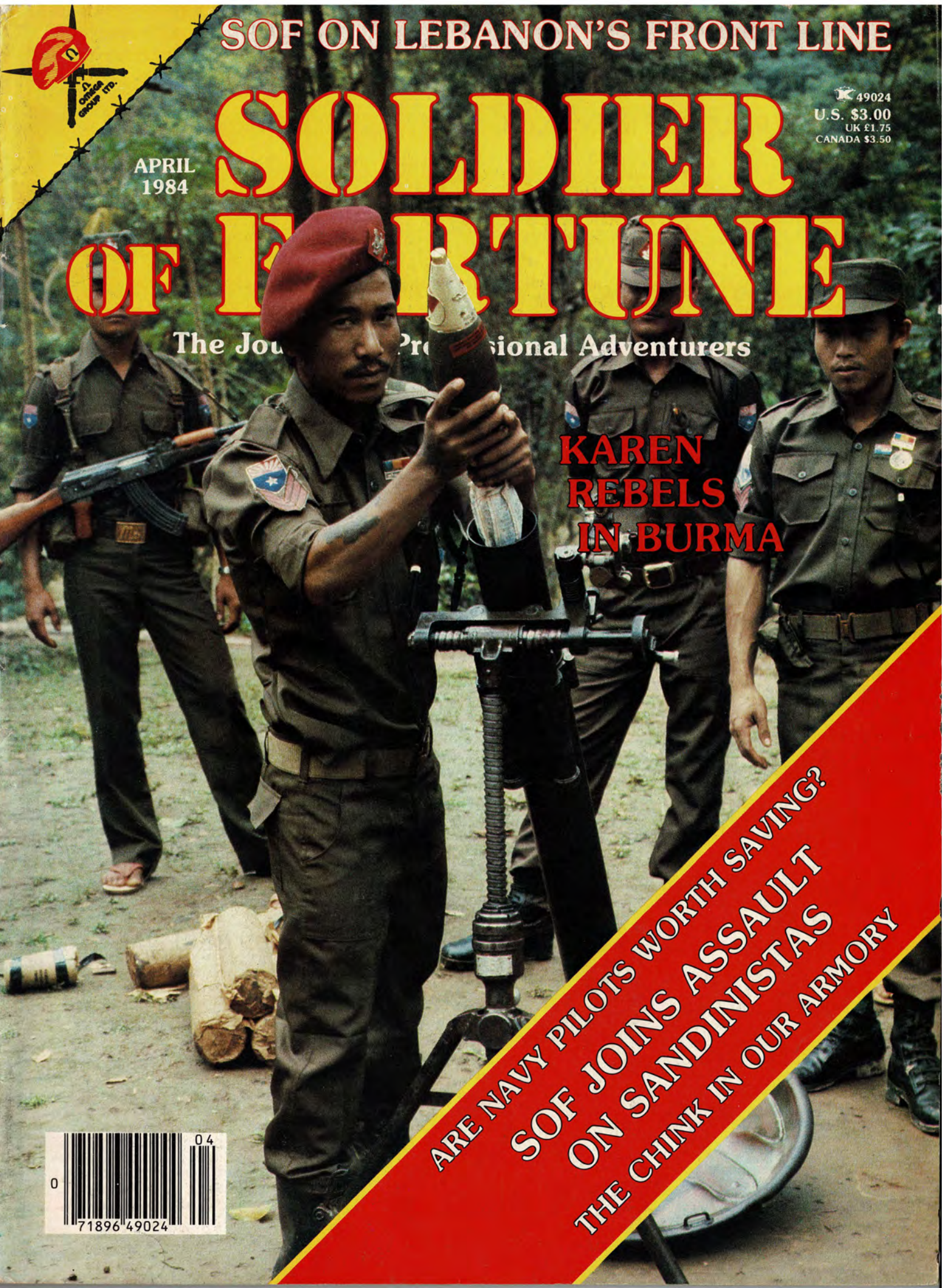
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Also please send the optional, furniture-finished walnut display case. Please add \$220 to the final charge of the method of payment I have selected above.

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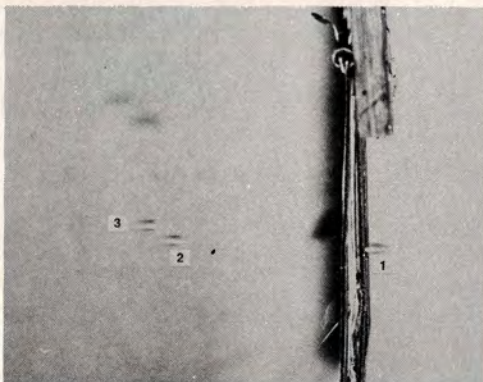
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COVER: National Karen Liberation Army trooper poses with 81mm mortar during SOF's visit to the Republic of Kawthoolei. Story on p. 58. Photo: Ralph Edens

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EDITOR'S NOTE

ONE of the most interesting documents brought back from Grenada was found by SOF Editor/Publisher Robert K. Brown in the 1979 correspondence file of the late Grenadian Prime Minister Maurice Bishop. In the file taken from Bishop's office was a letter written by "Roberto" to Bishop that has put *Washington Post* Foreign Editor Karen De Young in a compromising position.

The April 1979 letter had a notation on the envelope: "By Hand Courtesy of Karen De Young." "Roberto," who has been identified as Roberto Alvarez, a former member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and currently a student at Johns Hopkins School of International Studies in Washington, passed on a confidential remark about Bishop made by the U.S. ambassador to the East Caribbean states, Frank Ortiz, to De Young: "According to one source, Ortiz has said that he fears you may be in a state of paranoia and therefore may be led into making an unwise decision."

In a handwritten postscript, Alvarez noted, "The bearer of this letter, Karen De Young, is the source of the information concerning the Ortiz statement. Use it with her at your discretion. I think that she'll probably relay it to you, though she might withhold the name."

The letter also conveyed some nasty remarks about Ortiz' replacement, Sally Shelton, that suggested she could be made vulnerable; called the Brazilian chairman of the Inter-American Commission a "fascist" and exhorted Bishop to follow Lenin's teachings on the necessity of using an "iron hand" to put down capitalist bourgeois dissent.

When word reached *Washington Post* management that the letter could embarrass one of its top editors, De Young's boss, Jim Hoagland, got a little nervous.

Several copies of the De Young letter were floating around town. Among others, the U.S. government, *Washington Times*, *Washington Inquirer*, *Accuracy In Media* and *Soldier of Fortune* all had copies.

But the *Post* didn't. De Young, who was first apprised of the existence of the letter by me, told Hoagland the letter was a fake. But *Post* editors have learned to at least go through the motions of verifying their reporters' tales after getting burned by Janet Cooke, whose faked story on a 9-year-old heroin addict won a Pulitzer Prize in 1981.

We don't know if Hoagland's reporters found a copy, but *Post* management soon learned its contents when the story came out in other Washington press in January.

Alvarez claims he met De Young, by chance, in the Dominican Republic in 1979, when she was on her way to Grenada on assignment for the *Post*. Alvarez says when he learned De Young was Grenada-bound, he wrote the letter to Bishop and noted on the envelope and in the postscript that it was to be hand-delivered by De Young before asking her to deliver it. He was surprised when she refused to do so for "professional reasons."

So surprised, in fact, that he failed to erase the two notations when he later found someone else to deliver it.

De Young says she remembers being in the Dominican Republic at the time, but does not remember meeting Alvarez or being asked to deliver the letter.

Alvarez refuses to name the person who was the replacement courier. Predictably, the *Washington Post* has not published anything on "De Young-gate."

—Jim Graves

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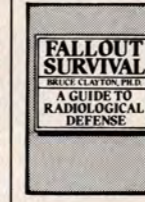
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by Dr. Ted Gambordella

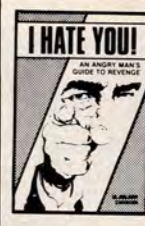
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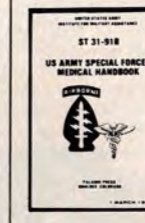


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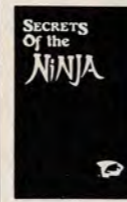
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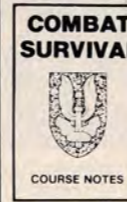
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GRENADA COVERAGE TOPS...

Sirs:

I just finished reading the best, most professionally written story published on the Grenada operation. "The Grenada Papers" was excellent. It beat *Time* and *Newsweek* coverage by a mile. As long as you continue this type of professional journalism I will continue to buy your magazine.

However, I fail to understand why a staff of writers who obviously know their business can't read a guidon. The guidon on page 64, February issue, clearly says Co. B, 307th Combat Engineer Bn. This unit is repeatedly referred to as the 307th Infantry throughout the story. Shame on you. May you never find a dry bunk, a change of socks or a can of peaches in your Cs.

J.A. Erickson
Pinehurst, North Carolina

Due to the tricky timing involved in getting the Grenada story into the February issue, it was impossible for the staff to catch my error. Instead of meeting the normal deadline, we had to drop the story into our final proof, forfeiting any chance to correct mistakes later. I wrote the photo cutlines in a mad rush the night before I left for Honduras on another assignment. As a consequence, when I made the error — turning the 307th Combat Engineers into the 307th Infantry — no other person on the staff could compare the cutline with the guidon photograph (sent to our color separator) until after the magazine was printed. Have you been practicing voodoo long? Even though your letter arrived after I left for Honduras' Mosquito Coast I was bitten by mosquitoes, savaged by sand fleas, wounded by a monster spider, had to sleep



wet once and didn't see a peach for a month. Couldn't you call the curse off?

I would also like to explain, for the benefit of some readers who have written in, the limited nature of SOF's coverage of Operation Urgent Fury.

Because of the restrictions correspondents were operating under in Grenada, our coverage was limited to a few units of the 82nd Airborne and the Rangers. The U.S. Navy SEALs, Marine Corps and other units from the 82nd got short-changed (no photos and no interviews) because 1) they had already left the island by the time SOF was allowed in or 2) they were in places on the island that were inaccessible to us.

The ground rules on Grenada were that

FLAK



we could take photos or obtain interviews if individual unit commanders would allow it. However, we had problems locating the units because the Joint Military Press Center would not provide transportation nor information about the location of specific units. Therefore, we had to take taxis to probable locations of troops, and then clear it with the local commander. It was strictly pot luck. — Jim Graves

REMEMBER DEWEY CANYON?...

Sirs:

I am in the first stages of developing a proposed book on Operation Dewey Canyon II/LAM SON 719, the invasion of Laos (29 January-9 April 1971). I would appreciate any readers who were connected with this campaign to contact me as soon as possible for an interview. U.S. Army participation included elements of the 101st Airborne, the 1st of the 5th Mechanized Infantry Division, the Americal Division, the 1st Aviation Brigade, and a host of smaller units. The more vets I hear from (regardless of the positions they held during the operation), the better. Call or write anytime.

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AFGHANS SHOOT BACK...

Sirs:

I'm proud to say I've been a subscriber to your fine magazine since issue one. Enclosed is a \$100 money order to the Afghan Freedom Fighters Fund. The mujahideen can use it more than I can here in Beirut. I wish we could give them one third of the ammo we have. They could at least shoot back with live ammo rather than just mortar flares, as we have done so far.

I hope to God that at least one round that my money helps to buy will kill at least one Russian or one of their henchmen. I hope others who are as frustrated as I am will contribute whatever they can.

A Sgt.
Beirut, Lebanon

LIFE WITH THE LEGION...

Sirs:

After reading *MERC: American Soldiers of Fortune*, by Robert K. Brown and Jay Mallin, I've come up with a few questions I hope you can answer.

- 1) Can I join the French Foreign Legion just by going to Fort de Nogent in Paris, or any fort for that matter?
- 2) Will I be in any trouble with my government for serving in a foreign army?
- 3) What is SOF's opinion of the Legion?
- 4) Is there any pro-Western country with a good military — e.g., West Germany, Israel — that an American can join?

I'm bored, which is why I ask. Since leaving the U.S. Army in 1973 I've done nothing worthwhile.

Jeff Fleishman

Yes, you can join the Legion at Fort de Nogent. No, you will not get in trouble with the U.S. government for joining the French Foreign Legion. For additional information on joining, write to the SOF office.

The Legion is a hard outfit. You are always suspected of being a potential deserter and slight infractions are punishable by physical abuses. Don't forget, you won't be able to return to the States for five years.

You may not join any West European army or the Israeli Army unless you have a residency permit or are a citizen of that country. — The Eds

AID TO FUTURE CHAMPS...

Sirs:

I have in hand your check for \$3,000, sent to me by Mr. George Nyfeler. I am lost for words to express my gratitude for this generous contribution to the state association to improve our junior program and get the kids to the national matches. This is a very worthwhile program as they are the ones who will carry the ball when we are gone.

W.E. Blackburn, President
Colorado Rifle & Pistol Assoc.

CANADIAN VIETNAM VETS...

Sirs:

Tony Bliss contacted me recently concerning my article on Canadian Vietnam veterans (*Maclean's Magazine*, 8 August '83), and suggested I write you.

For almost two years, I have been researching a book about Canadians who served in Vietnam. Estimates of the number of Canadians who enlisted or were drafted into the U.S. military during the Vietnam era run as high as 40,000. As you can imagine, I am having difficulty confirming that estimate with either the U.S. or Canadian governments. One senior Pentagon official swears there were no Canadians in Vietnam, but I have located about 200 Canadians who served and confirmed several deaths that are not listed among the 56 Canadians listed as KIA by the U.S. General Accounting Office. USMC sources say that Canadian recruits outnumbered American deserters by 10-to-1.

I would like to correspond with any Canadians who served in the U.S. armed forces in Vietnam. I can be contacted by writing: Doug Clark, 7 Douglas Cres., Fergus, Ontario, Canada N1M 1C1, or by phone: (519) 843-4019.

Doug Clark
Fergus, Ontario

DEAD WRONG...

Sirs:

After examining several magazines aimed at "the professional adventurer," I have concluded that your publication is the most creditable. There is now a magazine called *Soldiers of Glory* which seems to be designed, by the look of the "How to Join Up and Fight in Central America for Big Pay" cover, to entice potential SOF readers to grab it.

The material is sensationalistic and the

action photos phoney. One photo, claimed to be of an SAS member, is actually of an Israeli soldier, taken in 1956 by David "Chim" Seymour. Another claiming to be of members of Khomeini's team of assassins is in fact of Turkish civilian fighters in Cyprus in 1963, taken by Don McCullin.

The magazine is full of such falsehoods, as well as faulty and potentially deadly information. Regarding how to become a soldier in El Salvador, the advice is simply to fly down there. "Make your intentions known, and you will be contacted. That you can be sure of." I don't know how to become a soldier in El Salvador, but I wouldn't be idiot enough to show up there and announce my intentions to work as a mercenary.

My point is that it's a cheap fraud, and it ruins the credibility of your magazine when people associate it with the *real* journal of professional adventurers.

Simon Wright
Coal City, Indiana

IF YOU CAN'T SLEEP NOW...

Sirs:

As a member of the U.S. forces in West Berlin, I am constantly reminded of my reason for serving in the U.S. Army: guard towers looming in the background. This and the fact that the weapons in the towers point east remind me that this should not be allowed to happen again.

The way most Germans feel can be summed up by a story I once heard. An old woman went to her doctor, complaining the noise of U.S. armor near her house interrupted her sleep. What should she do? The doctor replied she should get another doctor. When she didn't understand, he said, "I'd rather hear 100 American tanks than one Russian on a bicycle."

Glenn Loud
West Berlin, West Germany

FONDA DOESN'T WORK OUT...

Sirs:

A current television commercial for RCA's TV Disc Player included a short clip of Jane Fonda's exercise video. If the fact that Fonda rates a 10 on your shit-list would influence you not to purchase the RCA machine, one gentleman who might be interested is Thornton F. Bradshaw, Chairman, RCA, 30 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, NY 10020.

If this country forgets KAL 007 as quickly as it's forgotten Hanoi Jane, it's in worse shape than we thought.

Robert G. Wheaton
San Antonio, Texas

THE ENEMY IS EVERYWHERE...

Sirs:

I would agree with the letters written to your magazine concerning "Traitor Jane" if the following were included in the same category.

- Every American-owned business that traded with a communist nation which supported North Vietnam during the war.
- All munitions manufacturers who produced defective ammunition for our personnel to defend themselves with.
- The weapons makers who did not guarantee their product was without flaw prior to delivery.
- Those Americans who gave, traded or sold information that was, or is, sensitive and vital to our national defense to any of our enemies — past, present or future.
- Those who profited from the blood of our brothers and friends during that period.

Let's identify the real foes so that we can place the title "Traitor" above their doors.

G. Harrison
San Francisco, California

BODY COUNT...

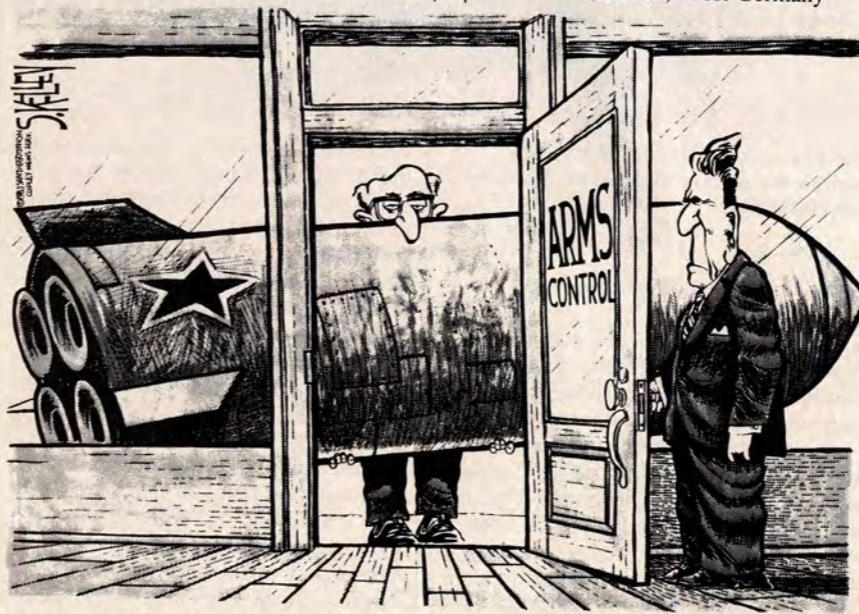
Sirs:

Let me introduce myself and our organization. I am a former Special Forces trooper, Vietnam veteran and 100 percent disabled, due to wounds received during my second tour.

Our organization is made up of veterans in southwest Florida dedicated to getting a Veterans Administration hospital built here. Currently, we must travel 130 miles to seek VA treatment. The VA estimates only 80,000 veterans live in the eight-county task force area, but we are currently trying to find vets in this area so we can count them to prove we number over 200,000. I am the Vietnam veteran coordinator. My job is to beat the bush and find these Vietnam vets.

Please tell these guys to contact the task force. It would help us all so much.

William Heuser
Southwest Florida Veterans Hospital Task Force
P.O. Box 126
Cape Coral, Florida, 33910 ✕



The door to an agreement is open. It is time for the Soviets to walk through it. — Ronald Reagan

AFTER an interruption of nearly four decades, Colt is getting back into the .380 pocket pistol business. Marketed as the Colt MK IV/Series '80 Government Model — .380 Auto, this new backup could fill the bill for people who like to clank when they walk.

To get my prejudice out of the way as painlessly as possible: I like the .380 Government Model, but would rather not stake my life on that caliber. But there are gun pundits and street cops who disagree with me. Look at the popularity of the Walther PPK/S. Indeed, there's a good market out there for .22LR and .22 WMR backups, too. And some of these guns have saved people's lives. Colt's .380 may replace a number of less effective pocket pistols that are already out there.

With an overall length of 6.12 inches and a total height of 4.37 inches, the .380 Government Model is smaller than most men's hands. The little Colt auto weighs just over 21 ounces, empty, and this should further aid concealment. It seems designed for the job.

The action is updated from Browning's original work, incorporating a firing pin lock, Star-design trigger and the Peter-patent camming barrel-lock. One popular modification will be the loss of the grip safety: It might have been hard to hit on such a small grip.

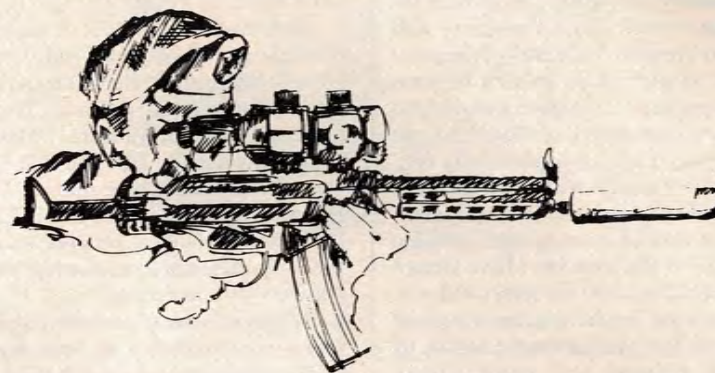
The safety system demands special mention. Not only is there a positive grip safety, but the firing pin is locked until the hammer is released by the sear. Furthermore, when the safety is on, the hammer is locked in position. You'll have to be pretty careless to get an A.D. out of the .380 Colt.

The .380 fires from a locked breech. The system is borrowed from the SIG P-210, and it certainly works there. My only question is: Why lock the .380 at all? The original Colt Model M — which began production in 1908 — didn't have a locking breech. In fact, I can't think of another locking-breech .380.

The system is unusual — but it works. All 300 rounds of Remington and Winchester/Western factory ammo fired and the pistol cycled without a hitch. For a semiauto straight out of the box, that's not too bad. For those who are trying to upgrade the old 9mm Short, it's not a good idea to feed it hollowpoints. As well as modern HP loads work, there's no need to take a chance on compromising this pistol's reliability with them. This becomes more obvious when you know that the .380's muzzle velocity is about the same as the .45's, and neither .380 nor .45 HPs usually expand because of low impact velocity.

The trigger wasn't particularly pleasant. Although I didn't measure it, the pull seemed heavy and it definitely scratched. Side-by-side with the test pistol, I fired one of the old run of Colt .380s, and found its trigger much better. (I admit that may be a function of wear.)

COMBAT WEAPONCRAFT



Pocketful of Colt by Ken Hackathorn



The Government Model .380: Colt's entry in the pocket pistol race. Photo: Ken Hackathorn

Still, perceived recoil was less in the new pistol.

Accuracy was inferior to that of the old blow-back blaster, but more than good enough for last-ditch purposes. I only had two problems with hitting the mark. First, and most important, the front sight is a low ramp: nearly impossible to pick up in a low-light environment. That's easily cured by a colored insert or a dab of paint. Second — and this is a more individual problem — my large hands kept me from gripping the piece firmly while keeping my accustomed finger-position on the trigger. As a result, my

first efforts grouped a consistent 8-10 inches left at 15 yards. Correction was made by sinking my trigger-finger deeper into the guard, gripping the trigger with the second joint, and blasting away. The print was right on target.

Colt's new .380 has an investment-cast frame and slide, and is well-finished. Grips are molded black checkered plastic with an inset Colt medallion. The magazine release button is right where it's supposed to be on a Colt, and the single-column box holds seven rounds.

This pocket pistol should prove popular. It's small, light, accurate, fast-handling and — above all — reliable. At a retail price of \$300 it should move fast. That's a deal. For more information, contact Colt Industries, Dept. SOF, Hartford, CT 06101. ☒

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THE earliest machine guns, such as the Gatling, Gardner and Nordenfeldt, were externally powered by the operator's elbow grease. Hiram Maxim first successfully drove a gun with the force of the cartridge's expanding propellant gases. Since Maxim, three methods have dominated the use of propellant energy to operate machine guns.

Although all these methods depend — more or less — upon movement of the empty case while there is still some gas pressure in the bore, the chamber must not open and the case should not move when the pressure is at its peak. Immediately after ignition, gas cannot escape rearward past the case because of the seal effected by the case neck and chamber walls. This sealing of the breech works in both small arms and cannon and is called rear obturation. Only after the pressure has dropped to a safe level and the case has contracted should it be free to move backward. The tensile strength of the case material (determined by wall thickness and other metallurgical properties) governs the safe pressure limit.

In blowback-operated weapons the energy for the cycle of operations is derived from the effect of gas pressure on the empty cartridge case. So that it can be shoved rearward by the empty case, the bolt is not locked to the barrel or the receiver. The counter-recoiling force is greater with straight-walled cases than with bottle-neck cartridges. In infantry small arms pure blowback systems have been relegated to use in weapons firing relatively low-powered ammunition — most commonly the 9mm Parabellum submachine gun.

In so-called "simple" blowback operation the bolt is stationary at the instant of primer ignition. As equal and opposite reactions, the bullet and bolt commence movement simultaneously. The bolt's inertia (largely a result of its mass), the recoil spring and the forces of friction are all that prevent the empty case from moving rearward before the pressure has dropped to a safe limit. Because of this, the bolt must be quite heavy unless very low-powered ammunition is used. Barrel lengths must also be reduced to minimize the period of high pressure. As the rewards are few, only weapons firing innocuous rounds like the .32 ACP have incorporated this principle. The Czech VZ61 Skorpion machine pistol (also made in Yugoslavia as the M61) is one of the few notable examples.

Most submachine guns fire from the open bolt position by what is called advanced primer ignition. By use of a tapered chamber to retard the cartridge's movement, the primer is ignited by a fixed firing pin while the case is still moving forward. Thus the force of the gas pressure is dissipated in stopping the forward movement of the bolt as well as overcoming the bolt's inertia from a position of rest and driving it rearward. This concept permits use of lighter bolts. Advanced primer ignition has been used in weapons up to 20mm (the British WWII Polsten naval cannon).

If the rearward movement of the bolt is



Auto Fire Operation: Blowback, Recoil and Gas



Representing the major types of auto-arms operation (from bottom to top): blowback-operated UZI SMG (Dutch-contract wood stock hand-checked by Israel Galili), gas-operated Mkl Bren gun and recoil-operated (gas-assisted) MG34 (author's collection). Photo: Peter G. Kokalis

somehow delayed until the pressure reaches a safe level, then firing from a closed bolt position — with its corresponding enhancement of accuracy — can be used with blowback operation. In addition, retarded blowback operation will accommodate high-velocity rifle cartridges without an unacceptable increase in the bolt's mass. Delay is usually caused by levers or rollers attached to the bolt which must be forced out of recesses in the receiver body. The earliest successful retarded-blowback machine gun was the Austrian Schwarzlose (see "Schwarzlose: Classy Classic," SOF, February '83).

Since there is no primary extraction in a blowback system, and the bolt is never really locked, empty case extraction is usually difficult and fierce. Somehow, friction and adherence between case and chamber must be eased. The Schwarzlose was fitted with a pump that squirted a drop of oil into the chamber between each extraction and loading. The best-known modern delayed-blowback series is, of course, that of Heckler & Koch (see "Heckler & Koch's New 94," SOF, December '83). The H&K weapons all have fluted chambers to ease extraction. Fluting is a better answer, since it avoids the abrasive combination of oil and

FULL AUTO by Peter G. Kokalis

battlefield grime. Equal gas pressure on all sides of the case minimizes friction as the case is withdrawn from the chamber.

Blowback-operated machine guns offer no power reserve to deal with the increased fouling from sustained use and most are designed to have sufficient power to operate when dirty. As a consequence recoil is usually severe and case ejection violent. Another example of delayed-blowback operation is the pathetic French AA 52 GPMG.

Recoil-operated weapons have the bolt and barrel locked together at the moment of primer ignition. They then move rearward together, relative to the receiver. The distance over which they move before unlocking defines the two categories of recoil operation. If this distance is greater than the length of the unfired cartridge it is called long-recoil, if less, short-recoil.

During recoil, pressure has fallen to a safe level and the recoil spring has begun to compress, but no other portion of the operating cycle has occurred. By definition then, long-recoil weapons will have very slow cyclic rates, e.g., the Danish Madsen LMG (400 rpm) and the French Chauchat (250-300 rpm). Another disadvantage is the disruption of aim and jarring of the weapon by the constant and substantial change in the center of gravity as the bolt and barrel move back and forth. The spread of recoil over a longer time frame does put less impulse on the gun's mount and some long-recoil automatic cannons, such as the 30mm Rarden, have been successfully fitted to light fighting vehicles. But, in general, long-recoil machine guns have not come up as consistent winners.

Hiram Maxim's machine gun was short-recoil-operated. So was John Browning's great series (the 1917/A1, 1919A4/A6 and M2 HB). The bolt and barrel of a short-recoil-operated machine gun move back only a short distance before separating (only six millimeters in the case of the .30-cal. BMG). Thus, the cyclic rate can be higher and the accuracy potential is not as likely to be affected by movement of the barrel.

Continued on page 105

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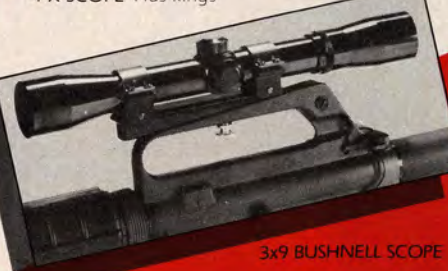
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CONVENTION CORRECTION...

The price for a double room at the Sahara Hotel for SOF's '84 Convention, 20-23 September, is \$43, not \$38 as reported in March's Bulletin Board column. The correct telephone number for the Sahara is (800) 634-6666. The nearby El Rancho Hotel (not Olanjo) also has reserved rooms for the convention; its phone number is (800) 634-3410.

REGRETFULLY YOURS...

It was with deepest regrets that *Soldier of Fortune* had to turn down an invitation by the U.S. Embassy Marine guards to join them in Canberra, Australia, for the 208th Annual Marine Corps Birthday Ball on 10 November 1983. Rumor is that Chief Foreign Correspondent Jim Graves, himself a former Marine (3rd Marine Division), had already ordered an Australia sticker for his travel-battered suitcase when SOF had to refuse. The celebration occurred about the same time as the Grenada operation and the Marine Amphibious Unit (MAU) landing in Honduras (part of the Big Pine II exercises) and Graves covered both of these events. Even though SOF couldn't attend the party, we were there in spirit. But next year...

MEDICAL RELIEF TO EL SALVADOR...

Refugee Relief International, Inc. needs donations of money, medical supplies and equipment for its ongoing medical-relief projects in El Sal-



Mike McPike, a recent visitor at SOF offices, presents Tom Reisinger, RRII president, with \$500 worth of medical supplies for use in El Salvador. RRII and SOF thank Mike for his generosity. Photo: John Metzger

BULLETIN BOARD

by Donna DuVall



SOF was there when U.S. Marine Amphibious Unit BLT 1/6 troops came ashore at Puerto Castillo, Honduras, in LVT-7. Photo: Jim Graves

vador. A list of needed items can be obtained by writing RRII, 6430 Nelson St., Arvada, CO 80004.

Contributions are tax-deductible and donors are advised to consult their tax advisers for accurate computations of the worth of donated items. RRII's identification number is: 74-2255573.

All items shipped should be in good serviceable condition with a packing list and a documented statement of value enclosed and sent prepaid to: Refugee Relief International, Inc., C/O Sal's, Loop 494 & Knox Drive, Porter, TX 77365 Attention: R. Edens. (Unfortunately, packages shipped "freight collect" cannot be accepted at this time.)

Although contributions of medical supplies and equipment are particularly needed, readers are encouraged to send cash donations as well (cash donations should be sent to the Arvada address contained in the first paragraph). Air-transportation and distribution costs are high and money is needed to get our teams and supplies into targeted areas. No contribution is too small. Your gift can and will save lives.

CENTRAL AMERICA DEFENSE FUND...

How would you like to go into combat with one pair of worn-out boots, one pair of thin socks, worn-out web gear, and without poncho, liner or cleaning gear for your weapon?

That's how the Salvadoran Army and the Nicaraguan Freedom Fighters do it.

Being brave, tough and willing isn't enough when you don't have the basic equipment. So if you have any of the following equipment that isn't being used, SOF knows a lot of soldiers who can put it to good use: combat boots, boot socks, fatigue or cammie uniforms (medium or small sizes only — we're not outfitting giants), rifle/MG

RECOGNITION FOR CONTRIBUTORS...

Any individual who contributes 1) funds, medical supplies or medicine to Refugee Relief International, Inc., 2) funds to the Afghan Freedom Fighters Fund or 3) equipment to the Salvadoran Army or Miskito Indians has the option of having his name mentioned in SOF with the amount of money or equipment donated. If you wish to be so recognized, please indicate this with your donation.

cleaning gear, web equipment, ponchos, poncho liners, field dressings, etc. Send them to El Salvador/Nicaragua Defense Fund, *Soldier of Fortune* warehouse, 5721 Arapahoe, Boulder, CO 80303.

For those of you who don't have any equipment, the Salvadorans and Nicaraguan Contras can use money. (When sending first-class mail, address SOF at P.O. Box 693, Boulder, CO 80306.) Whichever you decide to send, do it now and pass the word along to friends. After all, it is our freedom they are defending.

PMRS JUMP SCHOOL...

The Fourth Annual Parachute Medical Rescue Service (PMRS) jump school will be held in conjunction with the first Phantom Division Convention at Memphis, Tenn., 27-29 April 1984. PMRS is an all-volunteer, non-governmental, non-profit organization whose president is SOF Editor/Publisher Robert K. Brown.

New jumpers will receive complete pre-jump training and one jump — weather permitting. Experienced jumpers will participate in equipment-rigging and pathfinder training, and PMRS Team competitions. PMRS Emergency Volunteers who successfully complete the course will receive PMRS/Phantom Division first-jump certificates and log books.

The fee of \$150 per person includes Saturday lunch at the drop zone and the banquet on Saturday night, featuring Robert K. Brown as keynote speaker. Other meals, lodging and transportation to and from Memphis is not included. The official convention hotel is the Quality Inn West (901) 946-3301; they are offering a flat rate of \$35 per room, regardless of number of occupants (within reason).

In addition to the jump school, the Phantom Division Convention will feature a military collectors show (co-sponsored by the Memphis Area Military Collectors Association).

PMRS Emergency Volunteers, or those wishing more information about PMRS, should contact Alex McColl, *Soldier of Fortune*, P.O. Box 693, Boulder, CO 80306. Applications must be received, with payment, no later than 10 April 1984.

HELMET SAVES LIVES IN GRENADA...

The new Kevlar helmet, used for the first time in combat in Grenada, was credited with saving the lives of two soldiers, according to Lt. Gen. Richard H. Thompson, the Army's logistics chief.

The new helmet, which looks like those worn by German soldiers in WWII, was met with skepticism by old soldiers because it couldn't be used for everything the old steel pot could —



KABOOOM



like cooking or washing utensils — because of the built-in webbing.

But the 82nd Airborne troops who wore it in Grenada liked it. Two soldiers, who are unidentified, especially liked it. The first soldier was hit in the head by a AK-47 round fired from 25 yards and got nothing more than a dimpled helmet out of it. In the second case, a soldier's helmet was hit by a large shrapnel piece from a 20mm round, and he escaped serious injury.



U.S. 82nd Airborne paratrooper in Grenada sports new Kevlar helmet. Photo: Department of Defense

PANAMA: PATH TO GUERRILLAS...

The *Washington Inquirer* reports that Cuba is using Panama as a central transshipping point to supply arms to Latin American terrorists. The information, which was provided by former Assistant Secretary of State Thomas O. Enders to the Senate Security and Terrorism Committee, chaired by Sen. Jeremiah Denton of Alabama, came from the confession of noted Cuban gun- and drugrunner Jaimie Guillot-Lara, who was caught and jailed in Mexico for 10 months before being re-

leased in a prisoner exchange.

According to Guillot-Lara's testimony, the gunrunners, who often swap guns for drugs to be distributed in the United States, travel clandestinely over Panama's rugged, jungled mountains to Latin American destinations. Additionally, Panamanian banks are sometimes used to transfer funds for the weapons; Guillot-Lara reportedly used a Panamanian bank to transfer funds to Columbia's M-19 guerrillas. Panama's government has been unable to stop the flow of arms and drugs.

The *Inquirer* couldn't pinpoint which guerrilla groups were receiving arms, but it did note that several Latin American guerrilla organizations recently met in Columbia, according to the French news magazine, *Le Point*. Among the groups attending were: the M-19s, Salvadoran FMLN-FDRs, Guatemala's Guerrilla Army of the Poor (ERP) and the Peruvian Maoist *Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path) guerrillas.

RETURN OF THE MARINES...

Although there was not a single Sandinista on the beach and the beach at Puerto Castillo is a long way from

Continued on page 102



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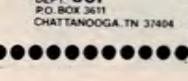
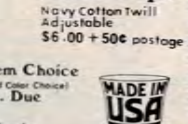
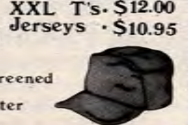
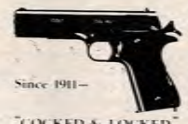
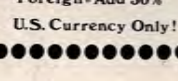
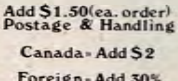
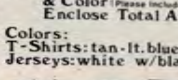
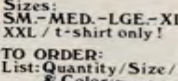
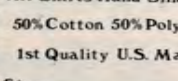
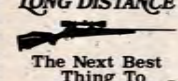
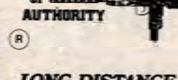
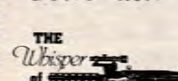
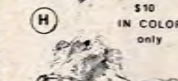


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I WAS THERE Salute to a Trooper's General

by Joseph A. Gray as told to M.L. Jones



Joseph A. Gray served as a private with the 25th Infantry Division during WWII. The 25th fought on Guadalcanal, Vella La Vella (Northern Solomons) and Luzon. In 1951 Gray enlisted in the U.S. Air Force, retiring as an E-8 in December 1967 with 20 years' service. As he tells it:

HE retired as a three-star general. If he had not put his men first and himself last, he would have gotten his fourth star. But, because of him, a lot of us are alive today who might be buried in the Caraballo Mountains, Northern Luzon, Republic of the Philippines.

The 25th (Tropic Lightning) Division was straddling Highway Five and pushing north through the Caraballo Mountains. Once through the Caraballos, we would enter the Cagayan Valley and drive northward, pushing the Japanese into the sea at Aparri. The 35th (Cacti) Regiment was on the east side of Highway Five, trying to make an end run and come in behind the Japs. This could be done if we could go over the Old Spanish Trail and come out at Aritao. But the Nips had other ideas and would not yield a foot. They had the advantage of high ground and were dug in deep all along the narrow, treacherous trail. Cacti was being cut to ribbons.

I was a radio operator with Fox Company, 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry Regiment, and Col. Stanley "Swede" Larsen was regimental commander. That night I was monitoring traffic between half-hourly hacks. About two hours after dark I heard Easy Company commander place a call and ask to speak with Swede.

When the colonel came on the air, Easy commander spoke rapidly: "Swede, we can't do nothing. They're knocking the hell out of us. They're looking right down our throats and there's no room to go around. We just have to go straight up the hill.

"And we can't do it, Colonel! You know how many men I lost today?"

"Only God knows how many I'll lose

Col. Stanley "Swede" Larsen (left) reviews operation plans a few days after Cacti's withdrawal from Old Spanish Trail.

tomorrow. You hear, Colonel? They want me to try again tomorrow. Can't you please do something, Colonel?" In his excitement, Easy commander had forgotten all about radio discipline.

It never took Swede Larsen long to make a decision. After a short pause I heard his boyish voice say, "Okay, I'll tell you what to do. Go out there in the morning - send your men out. When they get about 20 yards, just have them stop. Fire every damn round of ammunition you got. Make a lot of noise, and call for artillery.

"Then call me. Tell me you're pinned down. Say you're running out of ammunition and can't move. Now look, tell your men not to give me away. Tell them not to give us away. Make it sound real. Well, it will be real. You can't go forward.

"And then I'll say, 'Withdraw,' and you withdraw. Then we'll tell them we just have to do something else. Okay, Easy?"

"Yes, sir!" was the glad reply. "Thank you, Colonel, and I promise you we'll make it up to you. No one will ever know about this. And thank you, Colonel."

The scheme worked, and the following day, 20 March 1945, the Cacti Regiment withdrew from the Old Spanish Trail. The division slugged it out with the Japs and finally crossed the mountains at Balete Pass. But there was one last price to pay. On 16 May 1945, Brig. Gen. James L. "Dusty" Dalton was killed by a sniper, and Balete Pass was renamed Dalton Pass in his honor.

I returned to the Philippines in 1965 and visited Dalton Pass. As I stood there reading the monument erected to the memory of Gen. Dalton, I decided that Swede Larsen deserved a monument too. And I resolved to tell this story some day. Now that Gen. Larsen is retired, I can. So be it.

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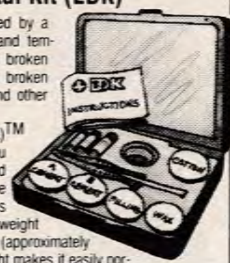
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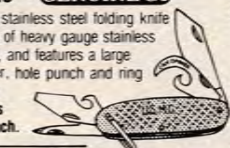
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EDK. No survival or first aid gear is complete without one. A must for campers, boaters, hikers, hunters, birdwatchers, accountants and survivalists. \$19.75/each.

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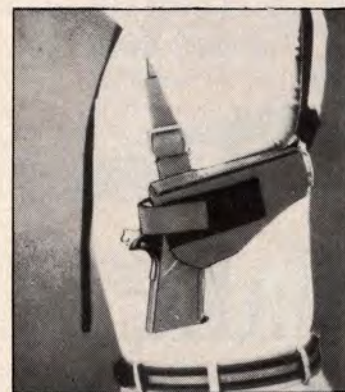
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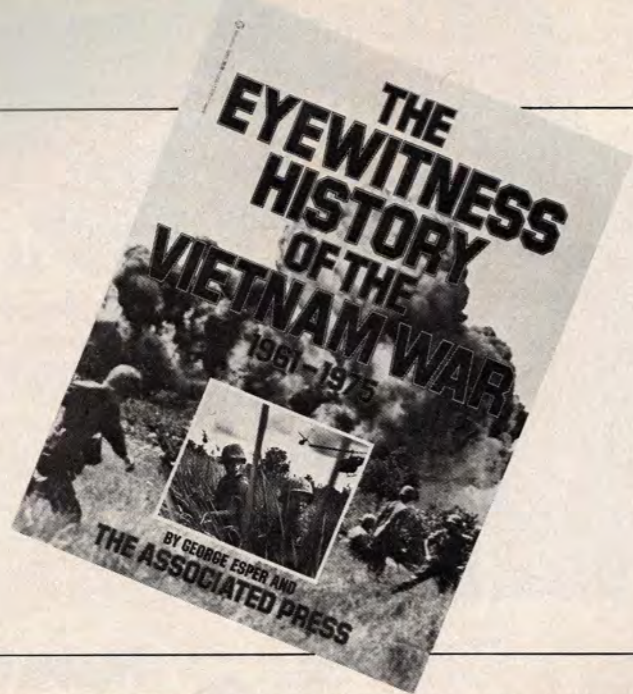
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IN REVIEW



THE EYEWITNESS HISTORY OF THE VIETNAM WAR: 1961-1975. By George Esper and the Associated Press. Ballantine Books, Dept. SOF, 201 E. 50th St., New York, NY 10022. 1983. 209 pp. Over 400 black-and-white

photographs. \$9.95. Review by John Metzger.

WE'VE seen quite a few Vietnam photo collections over the years at *Soldier of Fortune*, but never anything

quite like this. George Esper and the Associated Press have put together an incredible collection ranging from Pulitzer Prize winners to scrapbook snapshots to dramatic combat action photos that we saw every day on the home front, draped under front-page headlines.

Former Associated Press Saigon Bureau Chief and 10-year Indochina news vet, Esper draws on his intimate personal experiences with the war and taps the massive files of the Associated Press to chronicle the American involvement in Vietnam — from when the first advisers arrived in-country in 1961 to when the last Americans withdrew in 1975. His narrative provides the framework for over 400 black-and-white photographs of the war. Drawings, doodles and letters to families and girlfriends are inserted throughout the text to tell an even more personal story. The blood, guts, sweat, glory and tears — it's all here in print and picture.

Esper also does a good job of getting in all the "who-what-when-where-why-and-hows" of the war. Though true to form as a reporter, he also tells his own story, and with moving narrative paints a picture of the men, machines and land that made Vietnam what it was. Amidst this amazing collection of pictures, Esper brings forth a chronological show-and-tell of America's longest conflict.

Enough said. Any 'Nam vet wanting to relive experiences or quietly recall a few memories should get this book. ☒

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Pete Gerber, Chairman, Gerber Legendary Blades

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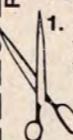
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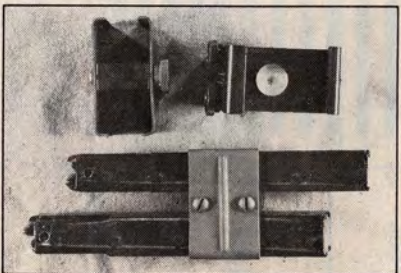
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WHEN IT'S A JUNGLE OUT THERE (Literally or Otherwise)

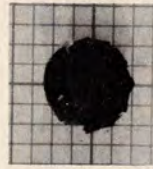
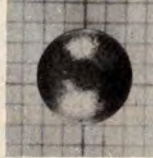
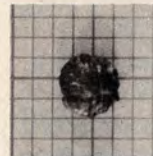
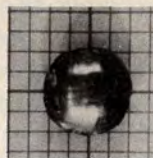
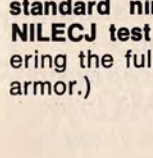
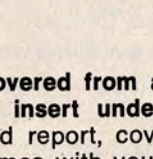
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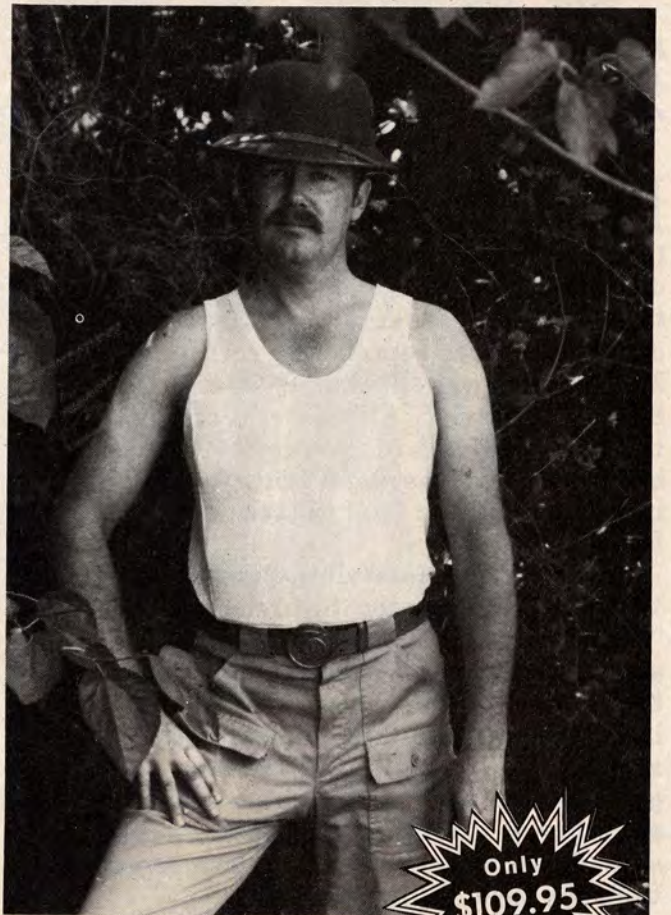
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EDITORIAL

Afghanistan: U.S. Missing PsyOps Bargain

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NIKOLAY Ryzhkov, a 19-year-old former private in the Soviet Army, met the American press the other day to explain why he had deserted Russian forces occupying Afghanistan. The press conference at New York's Freedom House was remarkable for the fact that Mr. Ryzhkov was there at all. He and another Soviet conscript, Alexander Voronov, were the first prisoners of the Afghan guerrillas to be released to the West with total personal freedom and the first to reach the United States.

In an exclusive interview, Pvts. Ryzhkov and Voronov had no startling revelations about "yellow rain" or Russian designs on the Persian Gulf. They did, however, give living proof that Soviet soldiers were severely demoralized. The two told tales of beatings by senior soldiers, of the selling of cooking pans and gasoline for cash to buy blue jeans, of the shooting of would-be deserters and of widespread use of hashish and opium as escapes from the ugly Afghan war.

The more significant aspect of their arrival in New York may be that finally the U.S. is willing to stick its neck out just a little to undermine the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. The U.S. government showed unexpected zeal in giving refuge to the two deserters. By contrast, the only Soviet POWs previously released by the Afghan mujahideen are being held by the Swiss government in virtual internment under a Red Cross-negotiated deal that provides for their eventual repatriation. One of this group recently escaped to West Germany but so far has been denied asylum, presumably on the ground that no one could be a refugee from Switzerland.

Russian emigres have worked to free the POWs. They have hoped that, in addition to saving lives, they could make the Soviet

occupation of Afghanistan a little more costly by encouraging further defections. The willingness of the Afghan guerrillas to cooperate is remarkable considering their earlier disappointments. They feel they were cheated by the Red Cross deal, since the Marxist Kabul regime reneged on the understanding it would release some mujahideen prisoners. But if the United States and West Europe will serve as havens and if the clandestine pipeline can be maintained, Mr. Ryzhkov thinks that as word spreads, snowballing numbers of Soviet soldiers will be willing to take that way out.

There are some further low-cost steps the U.S. government ought to consider if it's finally willing to take more open measures against the Soviet occupation. Afghan guerrilla groups and Russian dissidents have been working together on a "Radio Free Kabul," to broadcast both to Afghan natives and Russian invaders. The project has been hobbled by a low budget and technical problems, but in the few places where its FM signals can be heard, it is reported to be a tremendous boost to Afghan morale. In a sure sign of worry, the Babrak Karmal regime has been confiscating FM radios from Kabul shops. The resistance movement now lists the establishment of a strong medium- and short-wave radio very high on its want list.

The Afghans themselves are doing a lot to make the Soviets insecure. Diplomatic cables and refugee reports underscore a high point in August neglected by much of the press. In a coordinated offensive, guerrillas mortared a number of targets in Kabul, including the fortress of Bala Hissar, one of the Soviets' strongest positions. The attack sparked a mutiny among Afghan government troops inside the fort, and the fighting with the Russians lasted through the night.

Western help to the rebels ought to go beyond refuge for deserters or help with a radio. The guerrillas urgently need small air-defense missiles and such supplies as boots; if the West gave the mujahideen one-tenth of the hardware the Soviet Union pumped into South Vietnam, the cost of the Soviet occupation would be awesome indeed. For some reason, even this administration is still apparently unwilling to go this far.

There may be some promise, however, in the welcome the U.S. has given to Pvts. Ryzhkov and Voronov. Ensuring a haven for Soviet prisoners who do not want to return helps both the prisoners and the Afghan resistance, and the wonder is why any democratic nation should hesitate about providing them refuge. ✕

(For more information on Soviets captured in Afghanistan, see SOF's February 1984 interview with two other Russian prisoners of war.)

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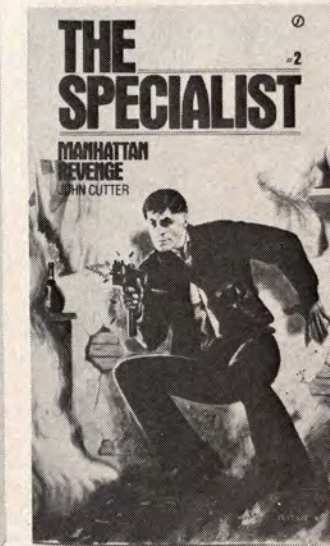


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RHODESIA'S HAND-PICKED PROFESSIONALS

Making Do with the Chosen Few

by Glen St. J. Barclay

FORMER Commander in Chief NATO Forces in Northern Europe Gen. Sir Walter Walker said in 1978 that the Rhodesian Security Forces could not "be defeated in the field either by terrorists or even a much more sophisticated enemy. In my professional judgment, based on more than 20 years' experience, from lieutenant to general, of counterinsurgency and guerrilla-type operations, there is no doubt that Rhodesia now has the most professional and battle-worthy army in the world today for this type of warfare."

Nothing that happened afterward gave him cause to alter this view. The fact was that, as an American military observer commented, the Security Forces in their encounters with the Patriotic Front "won every skirmish, every fire fight, every battle." It was an incredible achievement for a country which did not technically exist before 1965, which was subject thereafter to mandatory sanctions by the United Nations, and which had a white population never in excess of 274,000.

There is no mystery about the reasons for the Rhodesian success. They simply turned

their liabilities into assets. Lacking anything like the resources or the technology to overwhelm the insurgents with conventional military operations — as had been tried by the French and the United States in Indochina and by the Portuguese in Angola and Mozambique — they deliberately set out to outmatch their opponents on the level of personal combat. They confronted the terrorists with an army of super-terrorists and beat them at every turn.

They did, of course, have unusual human resources to draw upon. Few countries can

have had quite as intense a military tradition as Rhodesia. A tenth of the entire white population of the colony had died in the Matabele and Mashonaland rebellions of 1896-7. Fifteen percent of the white population, the maximum physically possible, served in World War I. A similar proportion enlisted in World War II. Rhodesia provided more fighting men relative to its population in both conflicts than any other part of the British Empire and possibly of the world.

This tradition continued after 1945. A Rhodesian Squadron of the Special Air Service operated in Malaya during the Emergency, and 400 men of the Rhodesian African Rifles were sent to the Suez Canal Zone to defend the British base there in 1952. There could scarcely have been a single Rhodesian family in 1965 in which at least one member had not had some active military experience.

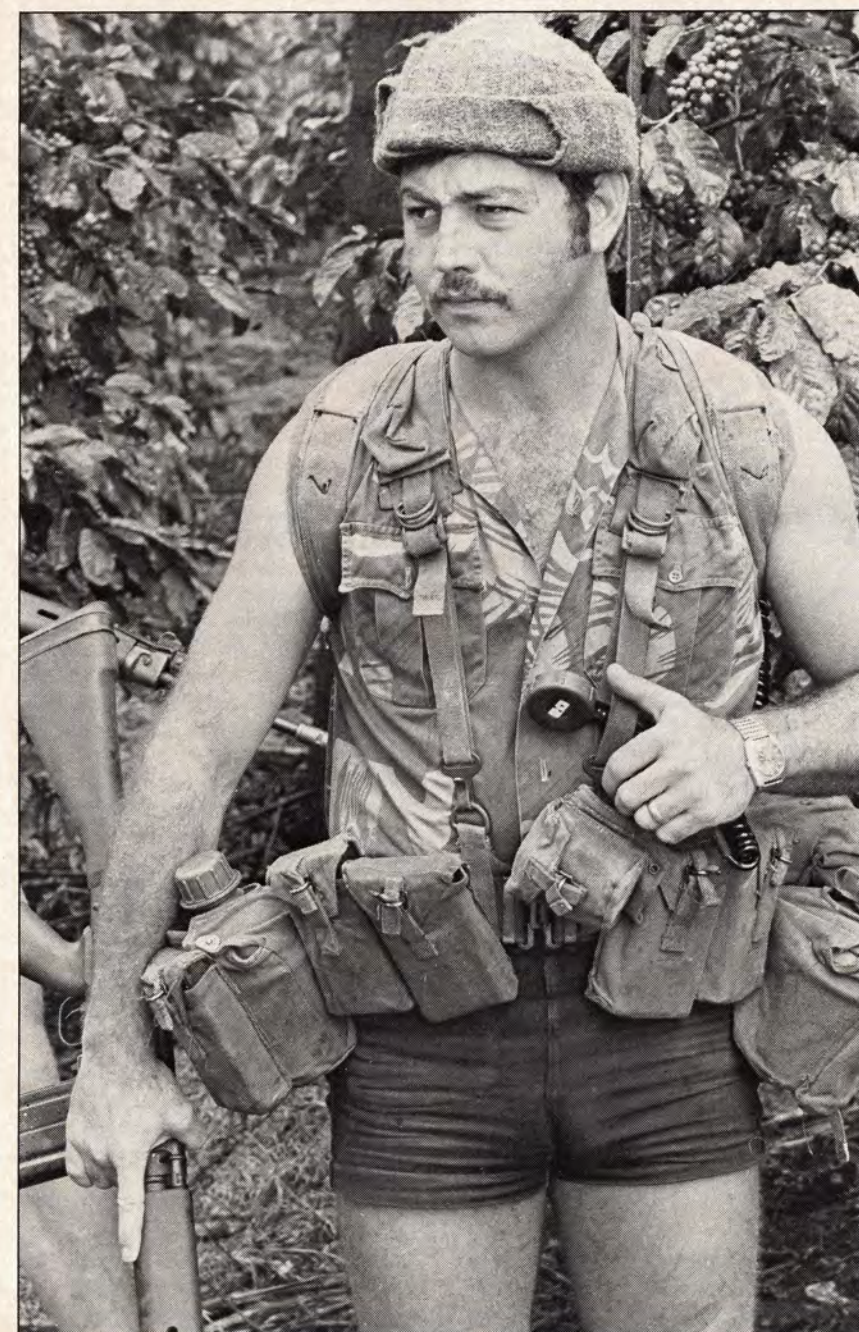
And it was military experience in a very special tradition. The Rhodesians had virtually invented the tactics and organization of the Commando and Ranger units of WWII. Their colonial mounted infantry in

DOWN-UNDER DON

Glen St.J. Barclay, a reader in International Relations at the University of Queensland, Australia, and a member of South Africa's *Instituut Vir Strategiese Studies*, is an internationally published military historian. His work has appeared in *Military Affairs*, *Pacific Defense Reporter*, *The Australian Journal of Defense Studies*, *Naval War College Review* and, now, *Soldier of Fortune*.

Black troops of the Rhodesian African Rifles were good by anyone's standards. Photo: Al J. Venter

No pretense in the field: Rhodesian radioman exemplifies no-frills, businesslike approach to COIN warfare. Photo: Al J. Venter



the 1890s had been formed into sections of four, with leaders elected by the sections themselves. It was a system which uniquely cultivated the individuality of each fighting man. It also responded to the peculiar Rhodesian temperament.

Young Rhodesians not only enjoyed a high standard of living in one of the healthiest climates in the world. They also, as the official historian of Southern Rhodesia in WWII admitted, "usually exerted plenary powers over some unfortunate native piccanin and learned thereby the habit of command." It might have been socially reprehensible behavior and not conducive to ideal relations between the races, but it was excellent preparation for exercising authority in the field.

Perhaps a more useful characteristic was their readiness to learn from the experience of others. The civil security organization, the famous British South African Police, formed a Police Air Wing to deal with urban disturbances in October 1957, along the lines of the Kenya Police Air Wing, developed during the Mau Mau emergency.

In September 1961 Supt. Bill Bailey of the BSAP formed a specialized antiterrorist unit, the "Sinoia Commandos," which was given official recognition as the Volunteers Additional Training Organization or VAT, an anticipation of SWAT and other special police units. Its members were all in their early 20s, armed with FN rifles and light machine guns and trained to infiltrate guerrilla strongholds aggressively in search-and-destroy operations.

An SAS Squadron was formed as part of the Regular Army in January 1964. And in November of the same year, 1st Battalion Rhodesian Light Infantry was reorganized



a commando unit with the green beret as part of its uniform by its new commander, Peter Walls, who had led the original Rhodesian SAS Squadron in Malaya.

What had thus emerged by 1965 was a collection of elite specialist units, corresponding to police divisions rather than to any conventional military organization. This process was accelerated with the onset of the guerrilla war. The VAT was reorganized on a national scale in August 1966 as the Police Anti-Terrorist Unit (PATU), under the direction of Col. David Stirling, another veteran of C Squadron, SAS.

A separate outfit, the Police Urban Emergency Unit (PUEU), was formed for the specific purpose of dealing with urban terrorism. Stirling revived the old mounted infantry organization, dividing his units into sticks of four to five men, each with its own chosen leader and with at least one black policeman as tracker.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs, which was primarily concerned with the administration of tribal lands, formed in 1973 its own paramilitary force of Vedettes, later renamed the Guard Force, trained in bush warfare and with police powers of arrest, to administer and defend the protected villages established to counter guerrilla infiltration, as had been done in Malaya.

Most colorful of the new units was of course the Selous Scouts, named in honor of the great white hunter, Frederick C. Selous. It was developed in 1975 from the Rhodesian Army Scouting Wing, which had itself been developed from No. 1 Training Wing of the Rhodesian Light Infantry. They were trained to meet the severest demands of unconventional warfare by Maj. Ronald Reid-Daly, yet another SAS veteran of Malaya.

A highly original move, which responded directly to Rhodesia's acute shortage of manpower and resources, was the resurrection of the cavalry arm. Mounted infantry units were formed in 1975 by both the BSAP and the army, the latter being later

gazetted as Grey's Scouts, in memory of a volunteer outfit of that name which formed part of the Bulawayo Field Force in 1896.

There was no doubt that the Rhodesians turned to the horse in the first instance because they didn't have enough helicopters or armored personnel carriers for scouting and surveillance. But the fact was that the horse had advantages in its own right as a counterinsurgency weapon. It could move where motorized vehicles could not; it was far quieter and less conspicuous; and it could be terrifying against ill-disciplined opponents.

With true Rhodesian enterprise, the Grey's Scouts then proceeded to breed what their commander called "fearsome foxhounds that can sniff out and invariably flush an enemy from cover, thus enabling troopers and mounts to be more effective." The Rhodesians never had any inhibitions about adopting the simplest, most practical solutions to their enormous problems. They were not looking for golden mousetraps. Nor were they trying to find super-weapons. They were trying to develop super-soldiers.

No troops ever looked uglier in the field or prettier on the parade ground.

Nobody has done so more successfully. The specialization process had gone as far it could well go by 1978. Apart from PATU, PUEU, the Guard Force, Grey's Scouts, the Selous Scouts and the four SAS squadrons, the Rhodesian Light Infantry itself had been organized entirely into three commandos and a support commando. The only element of the ground forces to retain a conventional military structure was the predominantly

black Rhodesian African Rifles, with its two battalions and a depot company.

No military doctrine was ever more justified by results. The security forces maintained overall a kill ratio of about eight to one in their favor throughout the guerrilla war. The RLI Commandos actually improved theirs from 35-to-1 to 50-to-1. Even allowing for deliberate exaggeration and unintentional error, it added up to nothing less than total superiority.

The Rhodesians themselves explained this success as being due primarily to the fact that they had not been in a position to make the same mistakes as the French, the Americans and the Portuguese, who had "blindly adapted European patterns of warfare (in the form of ponderous armor or static, heavily fortified garrisons) to jungle terrain and evasive guerrilla tactics."

The employment of large forces, S. Monick argued in the security forces' journal, *Assegai*, was "disastrous to successful COIN warfare. The absorption of increasing numbers of military personnel into terrain which renders conventional warfare impossible is the strategic objective of the terrorist Viewed in this light, limited manpower resources are not a key to ultimate defeat, but to ultimate victory, as they necessitate tactical and strategic thought adapted to evasive guerrilla warfare."

One might easily fancy that in adopting this kind of doctrine the Rhodesians were simply making the best of a bad job. But the fact is that they made no attempt to maximize even the numbers which they had. At the outset of the guerrilla war, some 5,800 whites and 6,300 blacks were deployed on active service in the army and the BSAP. By 1978, the numbers had risen to about 7,000 whites and 12,000 blacks. By contrast, about 12,000 whites and 15,000 blacks enlisted for full-time service in WWII, out of a population one quarter as large. The womanpower of the white population was barely tapped, only 226 being accepted into the various branches of the Rhodesian

Women's Service, out of over 2,000 volunteers.

Nor is it wholly true that the government in Salisbury deliberately economized in its use of white manpower by using blacks in combat instead. The common assertion that the security forces were about 80-percent black is only partially true. Blacks did account for 87 percent of the increase in numbers of the security forces engaged in an active combat role after 1972. But the whites were still doing most of the fighting and getting most of the medals. By the end of 1978, 193 whites and 68 blacks had been decorated for gallantry, and 398 whites and 194 blacks had died in action.

The Rhodesians were simply not trying to match the Patriotic Front in terms of numbers. They were determined to outmatch them in quality. Of 400 trained soldiers screened for the Selous Scouts every eight months, only 100 of each batch were selected for the training program. Only 10 of these normally finished the course. The SAS squadrons were even harder to qualify for and the RLI Commandos little easier.

What is perhaps most surprising is that this rejection of conventional military organization did not involve any rejection of conventional military tradition. The Rhodesian Army Command was concerned above all else that professional standards should not slip under the stresses of the guerrilla war. Rhodesian officers were, for example, urged to pay heed to the SALT negotiations — which could be of no possible relevance to their situation — because "professionally the Rhodesian soldier needs to pay closer attention to this aspect of military conflict for it embraces many concepts which are not part of the experience of our local tacticians." They were not likely to be, either.

Education Officer Col. K.J. Busby deplored "the canard that everyone is too busy to write professional material because of the demands of the terrorist war. In fact, this attitude should never have been allowed to gain currency because the need to circulate

professional knowledge becomes more acute in a war situation." To this end, articles were published in *Assegai* on the latest technology of tank warfare, on the grounds that "it would be criminal for us here in Southern Africa . . . to ignore the likelihood of a Soviet-backed tank offensive," although there was nothing of which there could in fact have been less likelihood.



"Hearts and Minds" programs were an important part of frustrated Rhodesian strategy for lasting victory. Black children joke with mounted policeman. Photo: P.C. Winterbach

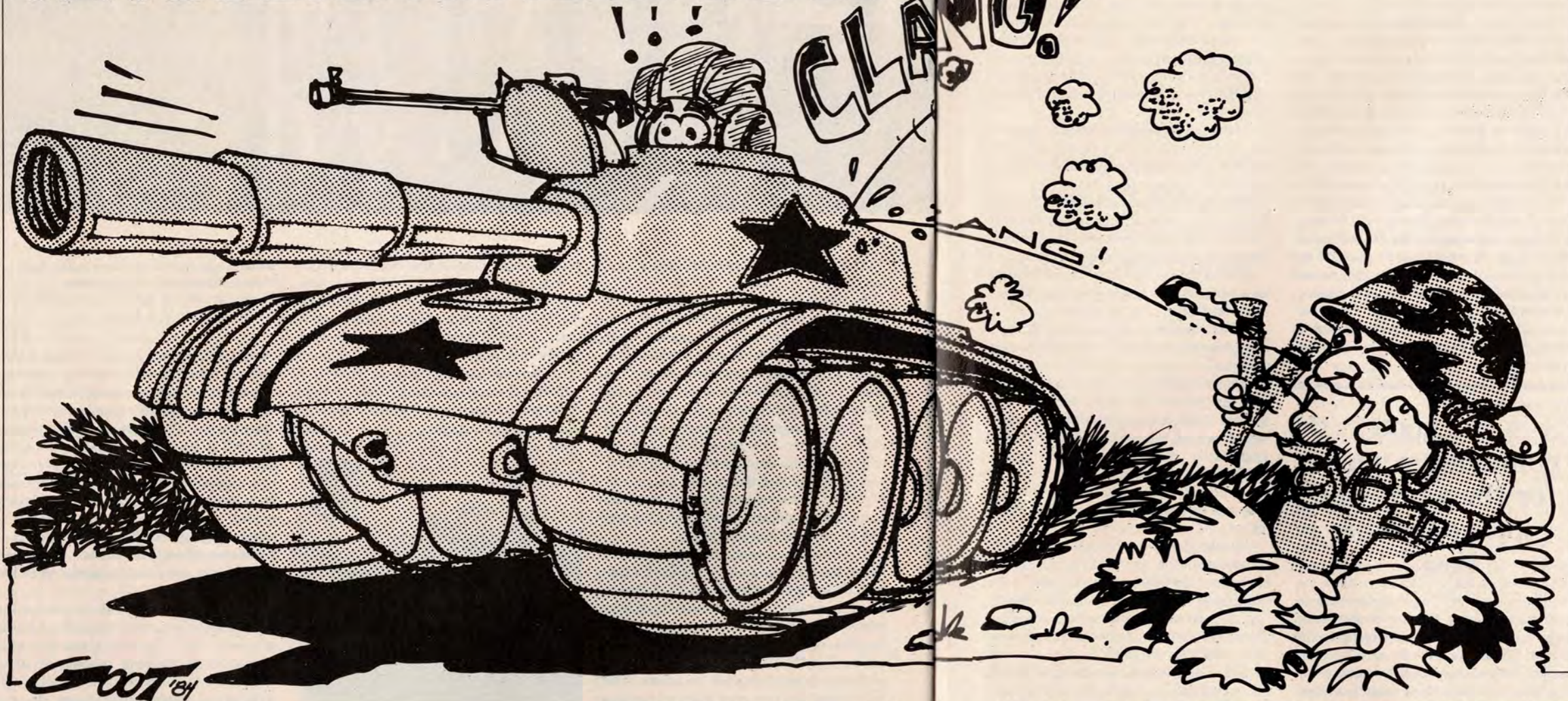
The attitude of the Army Command was stated authoritatively by Lt. Gen. A.L.C. MacLean, Walls' second-in-command, and like him yet another laid-back ex-SAS veteran of jungle warfare. "A small, thor-

oughly professional army," he told a passing-out parade of officer cadets, "can defeat a much larger non-professional force, but a small semi-professional army will not defeat a vastly larger non-professional army. It is becoming increasingly evident that in the short-term junior officers are not worrying about increasing their military knowledge and are quite happy, 'slaying gooks. . . . Classical war teaching is erroneously looked upon with disdain We cannot afford to degenerate into a semi-professional army with expertise in COIN operations only."

Professionalism involved ceremony. New and flamboyant medals and ranks were invented. New regimental marches were composed. Deliberately glamorous, theatrical uniforms were designed. Old jungle fighters like Walls and MacLean appeared on state occasions girt with swords and hung about with stars, crosses and sashes like Czarist generals. It all added up to a unique blend of the regular and the adventurer. No troops ever looked uglier in the field or prettier on the parade ground. In the bush, the Rhodesians outmatched the Patriotic Front in every aspect of the guerrilla's craft. In full dress, they looked like chocolate soldiers.

There is no arguing with success. The Rhodesians proved that it is possible to combine a complete mastery of unconventional warfare with all the traditional qualities of professional soldiering. They proved that specialized elite groups can develop expertise and *esprit de corps* which enable them to hopelessly outclass less trained or less motivated opponents. In an age mesmerized by numbers and technology, they showed how to maximize human resources by making the best use of the individual fighting man. ✕

THE CHINK IN OUR ANTITANK ARMORY



This article is reprinted with permission from the Armed Forces Journal International. It appeared in AFJ's November 1983 issue.

WE live in an age of exploding technology. When that technology is applied properly, significant successes can be achieved. Unfortunately, it is also an age where, with increasing frequency, untested theories and poorly conceived concepts are spawning many costly failures.

For better or worse, the U.S. military is placing primary reliance on sophisticated weaponry to maintain a competitive edge. It will be for the better if the weapons can do the job; for worse, if they cannot. The jury is still out on many of these high-tech systems. Not because they won't work. Most will. At issue is the availability of sufficient technical competence to keep all of them working under sustained combat conditions.



GENERAL DEVELOPMENT

A contributing editor for *Armed Forces Journal*, Brig. Gen. Eugene M. Lynch, (USA-Ret.), received a battlefield commission in World War II. He served in Korea as aide-de-camp and personal pilot to Gens. Walton Walker and Matthew Ridgway. In Vietnam he commanded the 2nd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, until he was wounded in action.

The Distinguished Service Cross is one of the many decorations bestowed upon the general. Lynch's last active-duty assignment was as military assistant to the director of Tactical Warfare Programs, Office of Research and Engineering. All told, he has spent over 20 years in combat research and development programs.

by Brig. Gen.

Eugene M. (Mike) Lynch, USA, Ret.

No single problem has received more attention than that of killing tanks. Our inventory includes numerous systems designed to accomplish the task at ever increasing standoff ranges. New programs are underway to begin the destruction process long before the enemy masses for a concerted attack. If the scenarios supporting these new systems prove accurate, and the weapons perform as predicted, the front-line infantryman will never find himself "eyeball-to-eyeball" with a Soviet tank.

But from what I have seen of these scenarios, most are not accurate. Why? Because they are designed to show our sophisticated weapons in their best light. In the process, they invariably show the enemy at his worst. Further, they depend upon too many things going right for them to succeed. As history has shown, though, many more things go wrong than right in combat. The side that wins is usually the one whose inventory includes the means to overcome

the adverse effects of the "wrongs" at the point of decision. In Europe, that point will have been reached when a Warsaw Pact tank faces a NATO infantryman, perhaps at sling-shot range.

Two recent conversations brought such problems into sharp focus. The first occurred during a reunion of my WWII armored division. A number of fellow infantrymen, veterans of three combat campaigns in Europe, joined me in rehashing some of the bitter battles we had faced together. The second, some weeks later, involved four Korean War survivors at a reunion of our 1950 "rapid deployment force" — "Task Force Smith."

Although the experiences of these two groups were separated by five years and thousands of miles, they shared a common bond. Both had faced the greatest physical and emotional challenge of modern warfare — that of facing superior tanks with inferior antitank weapons. Not many ever qualified

for this exclusive "club" and lived. Today, their ranks have thinned to but a handful.

This was a generation of soldiers who had been raised on fundamentals. These included: Don't lie to the troops; know your men; know your enemy; weapons don't win wars, men do; and an army begins to lose a war when the first doughfoot is unable to hold his position. Years of combat exposure had proven the wisdom of these simple basics. As concerned patriots, they wanted assurance that today's Army, with the added experience of Vietnam, would be even more sensitive to their meaning. Sad to say, they found otherwise.

Each reunion had scheduled a senior active-duty officer as guest speaker. The veterans looked forward to the presentations, expecting to receive an honest, in-depth assessment of the United States versus the Russians. They also assumed that the speakers would provide an impartial critique of the strengths and weaknesses of the present-day Army. Instead, they were exposed to a litany of statistics and percentages, gross claims of weapon and personnel superiority, and specious scenarios which reduced warfare to one big computer exercise.

Many of these veterans have sons in uniform. Others had talked to ex-GIs who had recently left the service. Still others were familiar with recent articles critical of various military programs. What the senior officers presented did not square with what they had heard and read. The contradictions were upsetting.

Since I had been in WWII, Korea and Vietnam, and had spent time in R&D as well, I became the target of their penetrating comments and questions. The subject most often raised was that of the hand-held anti-tank weapon. The question most often asked was whether the present-day bazooka could kill a Russian tank. They were shocked when I answered, "No."

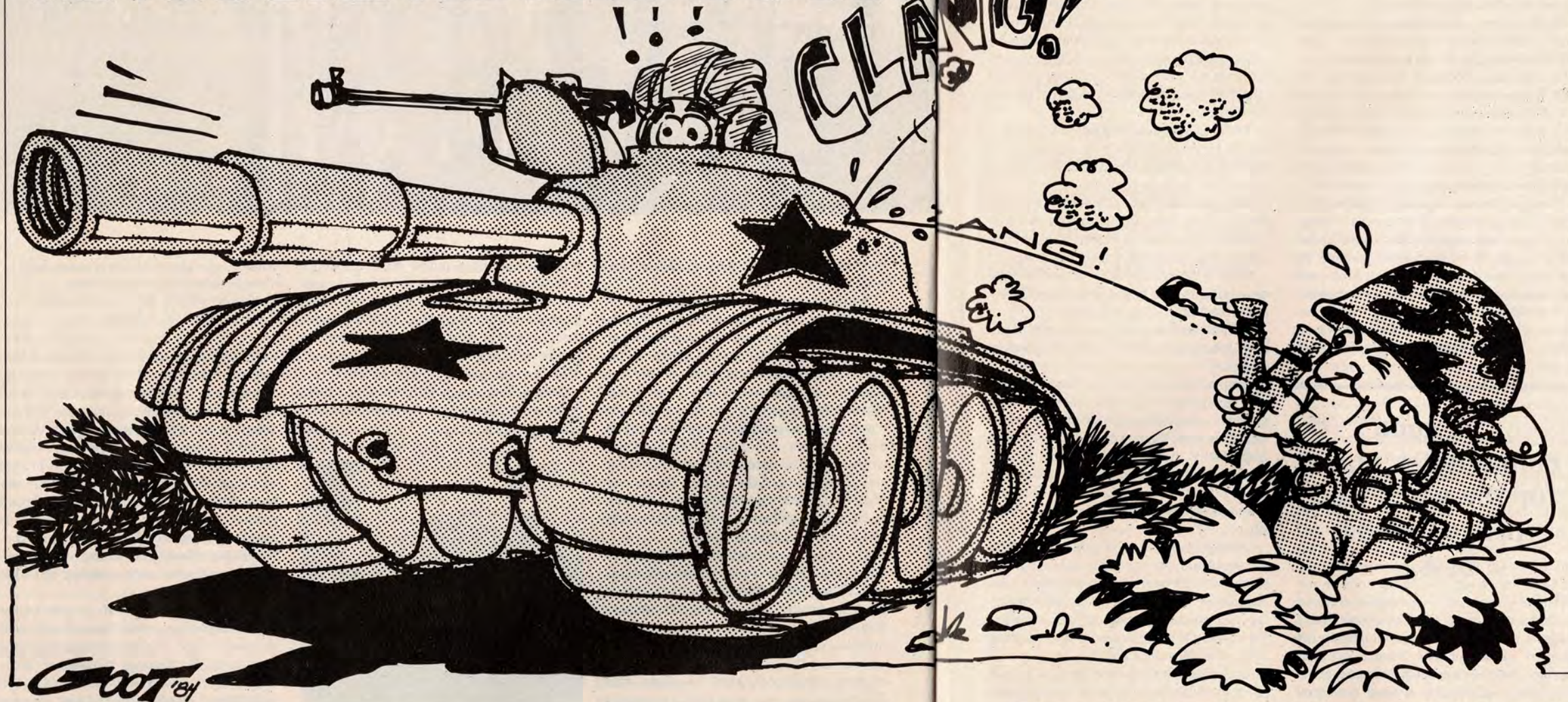
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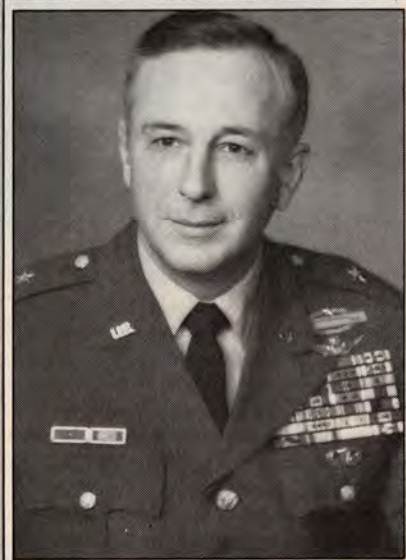
THE CHINK IN OUR ANTITANK ARMORY



This article is reprinted with permission from the Armed Forces Journal International. It appeared in AFJ's November 1983 issue.

WE live in an age of exploding technology. When that technology is applied properly, significant successes can be achieved. Unfortunately, it is also an age where, with increasing frequency, untested theories and poorly conceived concepts are spawning many costly failures.

For better or worse, the U.S. military is placing primary reliance on sophisticated weaponry to maintain a competitive edge. It will be for the better if the weapons can do the job; for worse, if they cannot. The jury is still out on many of these high-tech systems. Not because they won't work. Most will. At issue is the availability of sufficient technical competence to keep all of them working under sustained combat conditions.



GENERAL DEVELOPMENT

A contributing editor for *Armed Forces Journal*, Brig. Gen. Eugene M. Lynch, (USA-Ret.), received a battlefield commission in World War II. He served in Korea as aide-de-camp and personal pilot to Gens. Walton Walker and Matthew Ridgway. In Vietnam he commanded the 2nd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, until he was wounded in action.

The Distinguished Service Cross is one of the many decorations bestowed upon the general. Lynch's last active-duty assignment was as military assistant to the director of Tactical Warfare Programs, Office of Research and Engineering. All told, he has spent over 20 years in combat research and development programs.

by Brig. Gen.

Eugene M. (Mike) Lynch, USA, Ret.

No single problem has received more attention than that of killing tanks. Our inventory includes numerous systems designed to accomplish the task at ever increasing standoff ranges. New programs are underway to begin the destruction process long before the enemy masses for a concerted attack. If the scenarios supporting these new systems prove accurate, and the weapons perform as predicted, the front-line infantryman will never find himself "eyeball-to-eyeball" with a Soviet tank.

But from what I have seen of these scenarios, most are not accurate. Why? Because they are designed to show our sophisticated weapons in their best light. In the process, they invariably show the enemy at his worst. Further, they depend upon too many things going right for them to succeed. As history has shown, though, many more things go wrong than right in combat. The side that wins is usually the one whose inventory includes the means to overcome

the adverse effects of the "wrongs" at the point of decision. In Europe, that point will have been reached when a Warsaw Pact tank faces a NATO infantryman, perhaps at sling-shot range.

Two recent conversations brought such problems into sharp focus. The first occurred during a reunion of my WWII armored division. A number of fellow infantrymen, veterans of three combat campaigns in Europe, joined me in rehashing some of the bitter battles we had faced together. The second, some weeks later, involved four Korean War survivors at a reunion of our 1950 "rapid deployment force" — "Task Force Smith."

Although the experiences of these two groups were separated by five years and thousands of miles, they shared a common bond. Both had faced the greatest physical and emotional challenge of modern warfare — that of facing superior tanks with inferior antitank weapons. Not many ever qualified

for this exclusive "club" and lived. Today, their ranks have thinned to but a handful.

This was a generation of soldiers who had been raised on fundamentals. These included: Don't lie to the troops; know your men; know your enemy; weapons don't win wars, men do; and an army begins to lose a war when the first doughfoot is unable to hold his position. Years of combat exposure had proven the wisdom of these simple basics. As concerned patriots, they wanted assurance that today's Army, with the added experience of Vietnam, would be even more sensitive to their meaning. Sad to say, they found otherwise.

Each reunion had scheduled a senior active-duty officer as guest speaker. The veterans looked forward to the presentations, expecting to receive an honest, in-depth assessment of the United States versus the Russians. They also assumed that the speakers would provide an impartial critique of the strengths and weaknesses of the present-day Army. Instead, they were exposed to a litany of statistics and percentages, gross claims of weapon and personnel superiority, and specious scenarios which reduced warfare to one big computer exercise.

Many of these veterans have sons in uniform. Others had talked to ex-GIs who had recently left the service. Still others were familiar with recent articles critical of various military programs. What the senior officers presented did not square with what they had heard and read. The contradictions were upsetting.

Since I had been in WWII, Korea and Vietnam, and had spent time in R&D as well, I became the target of their penetrating comments and questions. The subject most often raised was that of the hand-held anti-tank weapon. The question most often asked was whether the present-day bazooka could kill a Russian tank. They were shocked when I answered, "No."

The thoughtful sessions which followed were so unlike the many I had been exposed to in Washington. The problems of killing a tank were analyzed in depth. But instead of addressing the subject from the weapon side alone, as is so often the case in the Pentagon, equal emphasis was placed on the role of the gunner. In the process, all of today's myths regarding hand-held weapons were discussed and dismissed.

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I was disturbed. Nowhere could I see past Army experience being reflected in present Army thinking, especially as it concerned the antitank problem. Somehow the cogent observations and personal experiences of this dying breed of dedicated soldiers had to receive serious consideration. The analysis which follows is an effort to correct this shortcoming.

Before dealing with our front-line antitank needs, it would be worthwhile to determine *why* we have not been successful in

developing an effective weapon. Although many reasons can be cited, I'll limit my coverage to three which appear to have had the greatest impact.

● **First.** We tend to look at war through a telephoto lens. Too much emphasis is placed on long-range weapon performance and early engagement. The critical close-combat phase is viewed as an adjunct or secondary action. Yet the moment of truth for a defending force occurs when the enemy concentrates his combat power while in transition from the attack to the assault. This happens at "eyeball" range.

● **Second.** We have become mesmerized by sophisticated weaponry. A preponderance of our analysis is limited to weapon-versus-weapon comparisons. Little thought is given to the physical and psychological factors affecting employment. Thus, the weapon takes on a life of its own. By the time these factors are identified (often proving that the weapon should be scrapped), it has become the "only game in town."

● **Third.** We are too "big-picture" oriented. Most studies today deal with the broadest aspects of war. Seldom are the intricacies of execution measured at the platoon and squad level. Too often, when serious deficiencies are identified, we hear the age-old cliché that good leadership will correct them. But good leadership can only bring out the best in men under stress. It cannot overcome the worst in plans or weapons if failure is inherent in their design.

These practices have led to three assumptions which may not prove to be valid under combat conditions:

● **1.** Long-range air-to-surface and surface-to-surface missiles will be the primary means of destroying masses of approaching enemy armor.

● **2.** Tanks and mounted crew-served weapons will be the primary means of achieving first-round kills along the line of contact.

● **3.** Hand-held antitank weapons will be a supplementary, last-ditch alternative.

Such assumptions appear valid if one uses the big picture approach. Especially when the supporting scenarios show us doing everything right and the enemy doing everything wrong. But, as experience has shown, many factors beyond the planner's control come into play. And their impact can be devastating.

Three factors are of primary importance to military operations:

● **Weather:** This factor affects a military command at all echelons. Unpredictable, it forces plans to be changed, timetables to be altered, and operations to be canceled. It is at the close-combat level that its effects can be most encompassing. For it may have an adverse impact on the visibility of troops, mobility of vehicles, reliability of weapons, and flexibility of response.

● **Terrain:** This factor always presents a challenge. But its impact varies based on the depth of the study. Military history is replete with examples of "big picture" plan-

ners sending troops into untenable areas. Worse, they fail to anticipate the extent to which weather can change the characteristics of terrain on a moment's notice. A hard-surface road can turn into a quagmire within minutes. Sadly, to ensure that they will not be known as small thinkers — i.e., those who cannot see the woods for the trees — planners often issue orders which place the infantryman in a position of not being able to see the enemy for the trees.

● **The enemy:** Perhaps no factor is treated more simplistically in our scenarios. If the military wants to justify a new and expensive weapon, it makes him 10-feet tall. When they want to prove the effectiveness of a weapon, he becomes a duck in a shooting gallery. And whenever they want to minimize weaknesses in weapons, tactics or strategy, they have him play the role of a buffoon, stumbling about the battlefield.

Make no mistake about it, the Russian is a first-class adversary. His current writings and supporting arsenal reflect a solid understanding of the principles of war and the importance of firepower, mobility and shock action. If he were to attack in Europe, he would throw the book at us. Those soldiers whose only war experience was in Vietnam would be in for the shock of their lives.

"A good commander plans for the worst and prays for the best."

There is nothing more awesome than a major armor offensive. Accompanying fire support fills the air with thunder, steel and smoke. Defenders quickly lose concentration and continuity. In a short time their efforts are reduced to small, uncoordinated and often futile responses. When both weather and terrain favor the attacker, his advantages accrue rapidly. More importantly, the defender may be denied the use of the primary systems upon which he planned to base his response.

When these three factors are considered, the current list of assumptions becomes somewhat suspect.

Restrictions in visibility imposed by weather or enemy actions may prevent long-range surveillance, acquisition and employment of the air and surface missile systems. If this occurs, engagement ranges and times would be reduced drastically along the line of contact.

Restrictions imposed by weather and terrain may seriously limit cross-country mobility at the most crucial time.

Restrictions imposed by weather, terrain and enemy actions (artillery, missile, air, anti-air, etc.) may deny sustained exposure

and employment of friendly supporting weapons in areas of greatest threat. In such a situation the commander would be denied the flexibility to conduct a cohesive defense.

There's an old expression: A good commander plans for the worst and prays for the best. So let us assume the worst in our European scenario and assess the results. Applying these debilitating effects to that arena, a very different combat picture emerges.

An inability to exploit our long-range acquisition and engagement capabilities will preclude inflicting significant damage to the attacking force before they reach the assault positions.

Tanks and crew-served antitank weapons may experience difficulty in moving to firing positions, and encounter devastating counterfire once in position.

Infantrymen, using accidents of terrain for cover and concealment, may be the only "mobile" antitank platforms available to deliver fire against the attacking force.

If all of the above were to occur, then the new priorities for employment would be:

- Hand-held antitank weapons.
- Tank and crew-served weapons.
- Air-to-surface and surface-to-surface missiles.

Ironically, this is just the reverse of what our "big picture" approach has been advocating. It also challenges the current priorities of antitank weapon developments. Most importantly, it reflects the possibility that the very weapons upon which we propose to place primary reliance to stop the Russians may not be employable during this critical phase.

Having identified the general nature of the problem from an infantryman's point of view, we can begin to see the need for a hand-held weapon with a total kill capability. To preclude repeating past mistakes, however, it is necessary to identify the more critical employment criteria.

Based on Russian experience in WWII, their evolving doctrine and current armor inventory, the U.S. antitank can expect the following:

● **Targets.** In the vanguard of a Soviet attack will be the first line tanks — the T-64, -72 and -80. During the assault phase of an attack, it can be assumed that they will be highly concentrated on a fairly narrow frontage. They will either be preceded or accompanied by supporting infantry. The eight-inch-plus frontal armor, together with a severely sloping surface, presents a formidable defense against penetration. Accompanying direct and indirect fire will place drastic limits on a gunner's freedom to engage.

● **Engagement Ranges.** This is a function of weather, terrain and enemy actions. Under ideal conditions, the maximum range of a weapon may be exploitable. In worse-case situations, where heavy foliage, built-up structures or enemy fire limit time or range, engagements can occur at less than 50 meters.

● **Types of Shots.** This has become a controversial subject. Studies based on the 1973 Arab-Israeli War advocate that flank and rear engagements of tanks can be a normal tactic for the infantryman. I question the soundness of this conclusion. To take a conflict out of context, and attempt to transfer your findings to another area of potential conflict is extremely dangerous. Even worse, plotting hits on tanks without correlating them with the combat conditions under which they were obtained is to treat a complex problem in a cavalier manner.

Why doesn't the American infantryman have a weapon that can kill a tank at a reasonable range?

The Soviets differ from the Arabs in every respect. If they were to launch an offensive into Western Europe, their objectives would be encompassing and their execution devastating. Under such conditions, front-line antitankers would have to engage their targets frontally or, at best, from 45 degrees to each side. Rapid closure and the protection of accompanying infantry would deny flank or rear shots under all but the most ideal conditions.

Any antitank weapon design involves trade-offs and compromises. The greatest challenge to the development community, though, is to ensure that the trade-offs do not include capabilities which should not be compromised. To reduce this possibility, the veterans were asked to list critical characteristics for a bazooka in descending order of importance. Views differed on some of the less important items; there was complete agreement on simplicity, reliability and the first four listed characteristics. Their priorities:

● **Lethality.** The primary purpose of an antitank weapon is to kill a tank — from any angle. This capability must not be compromised.

● **Accuracy.** To kill a tank, you must first hit it. The longer it takes to achieve a successful hit, the more vulnerable the gunner becomes. Therefore, inherent in this priority is the need for a first-round hit at maximum weapon range.

● **Easy employment.** The gunner must be able to fire the weapon from both sides of the tube. He seldom has a chance to select an ideal firing position.

● **Ready availability.** This is primarily a function of credibility. If an infantryman knows the weapon can kill a tank on the first hit, he will carry it everywhere. It was rare to find a Panzerfaust or an RPG-7 discarded on the battlefield. They usually were found with the gunner — alive or dead.

● **Ruggedness.** The infantryman's world is harsh. Build the weapon to withstand the bumps and bruises.

● **Safety.** This applies to carrying it around the battlefield. From an engagement standpoint, only normal precautions apply.

● **Dimensions.** The primary purpose of the weapon is to kill a multi-ton tank. If it can do the job, the infantryman will carry it — and find a way to use it. Its dimensions are of little importance. From a results standpoint, one single-round weapon, heavy enough to do the job, will always weigh less than several lighter weapons needing multiple rounds to achieve the same results. Length means little as well. The bazookas we gave the Russians in WWII were 54-inches long. A loaded RPG-7 is 53-inches long. Their successes in combat are legendary.

● **Cost.** Assuming that the above criteria can be met, the infantryman will possess the same kill capability as a tank. Under adverse combat conditions (as in the Battle of the Bulge and Task Force Smith) an infantry company, if properly equipped, can achieve the same terminal effect as a tank company. The cost differential is obvious.

● **Noise.** The decibel level during a tank-antitank battle is deafening. Bazooka gunners who engaged enemy tanks stated they couldn't remember hearing the weapon fire. As one stated: "The medics always have cotton available."

In the past several months, I have come full circle. Almost 40 years ago, I stood in the doorway of an Alsatian house listening to enemy tank engines roaring from within the woods to my front. I looked at the bazooka (100 yards range) being held by a member of my squad. I looked at the 300 yards of open terrain between the woods and our position. I looked at the countless firing positions available — but none within 100 yards of the woods. I looked, I thought, and I couldn't come up with a way to even the odds. We were outgunned.

Countless infantrymen before me had faced the same challenge and were found wanting. Others who followed were no better off. All we could do was pray that a weapon able to do the job would arrive before the inevitable. For me, it happened. Others were not so fortunate.

Today, the same nagging question persists: Why doesn't the American front-line infantryman have a weapon that can kill a tank at a reasonable range?

I've tried to provide some of the answers. In retrospect, though, they appear to have generated still more questions. But this time the focus is not on the weapon itself. The onus has shifted to those responsible for providing it. For despite their enviable record of technological successes, a 40-year failure still remains on the books.

The hand-held antitank need has remained constant over that same 40 years. It has been reinforced with the experience of countless confrontations — from North Africa to Europe to Korea. Unmet, it circles like a vulture over every trouble spot where

American troops stand in the vanguard. The need is still simple. The infantryman must be able to kill an enemy tank. ✕

COMBAT VETERANS ASK "WHY?"

by Brig. Gen. Eugene M. (Mike) Lynch, USA, Ret.

Conversations with WWII and Korean infantry veterans are both rewarding and disturbing experiences. They are a rare breed of American. Few had been highly educated. Most were citizen soldiers. Yet all proved their mettle in the "devil's arena." Although they had served in the armed forces, their primary allegiance was never to the government or the military. It was to nation, family and that small group of comrades who had shared the rigors of close combat.

Casual observers at a reunion of combat veterans are amused and moved by the sights. Aging men, embracing with tear-filled eyes; uncontrolled laughter when humor is drawn from a tragic event; firm-set jaws beneath a jowled face as the flag passes; stooped frames straining to attention as a list of the dead is read; gossamer gazes creeping over wrinkled faces as the name of a departed comrade falls on failing ears; man-boys, who once were forced to be boy-men, reliving an era of sacrifice and success.

Having been an infantry squad leader in combat, I saw the price you pay for mistakes in war.

Seeing my comrades from the past was most rewarding. At the same time, though, hearing their concerns for the future was most disturbing. I had been one of the few citizen-soldiers from that group who had gone on to serve in our two less successful efforts to "make the world safe for democracy." Therefore, while I was a part of the gathering as we recounted the past, I found myself apart from them as we talked of the future. For in many ways, we had parted company when that great crusade was over.

Having been an infantry squad leader in combat, I saw the price you pay for mistakes in war — and I could never forget. As I rose through the ranks and went on to other wars, I was appalled by the extent to which that "price" was

Continued on page 88

WHITE STAR WARRIORS

Special Forces Discover Laos

by Capt. James M. Perry, USA, Ret.

NIGHT descended slowly, the moon rising full and mellow on the dimly-lit horizon in the east. It was eerie, almost as if God had somehow gotten off His timetable. I watched the angry red sun pass over the hills toward Bangkok and I remembered the sailor's ditty: "Red sky at morning, sailors take warning. Red sky at night, sailor's delight."

It was 10 July 1959, and we were a hell of a long way from the sea. I wondered if that verse still applied this far inland. My instincts said it did. Tomorrow would be a tranquil day. A day of organizing, shaking hands and meeting our Lao counterparts. The Pathet Lao communists, who were only a few hours away, wouldn't dare disturb the peace of this lovely day on the *Plateau des Bolovens* in southern Laos.

We had landed late that afternoon, two A-Teams of the 77th Special Forces Group (Abn.), Ft. Bragg, all under the command of Lt. Col. Arthur D. "Bull" Simons. He was 200 miles distant, establishing his C-Detachment headquarters in the capital city of Vientiane. All around the country, other A-Teams were setting down simultaneously in 14 of the tiny nation's 16 provinces. They wouldn't go near Samneua or Xieng Khouang. Those two provinces had been allotted to the Neo Lao Hak Xat (Laos' communist faction) in the brief peace that followed the war between the Royalists, the Neutralists and the Extremists. Our landing at this quiet river town of Pakse signalled the beginning of the American effort to keep the Royal Lao "lamb from being eaten by the Ho Chi Minh tiger." Operation White Star was under way.

Cotter, the radioman, fiddled with the frequency for Hanoi's six o'clock news broadcast in French.

"Les techniciens Americains sont arrives en Laos pour la guerre..."

"What war?" we asked ourselves. And how had Hanoi gotten the news so fast?

Operation White Star, which had begun at Bragg as White Horse, was one of the most carefully guarded secrets on Smoke Bomb Hill. The morning I was called to marshal at Pope Air Force Base for departure, I practiced the charade the intelligence officers had advised us to.

"See you at five!" I called out as loudly as I could, waving to my wife standing in the door. I turned and walked down the long sidewalk, wanting to look back, but not daring. I knew she was biting her lip to hold back the tears. They had taught her to do that in the top-secret dependent's briefing.

"You ladies have been called here so that we may tell you where your husbands are going," said the man from the State Department. "Their safety is now in your hands. A

security leak now could condemn FC-3 to a certain death." The briefing had been the decision of Col. Donald Blackburn, the 77th's CO.

"Yes, tell the wives," he said. "If they know where their husbands are going and the danger they face when they get there, we won't have a leak from them."

It had been a wise decision. The ladies received the information with typical reaction reserved for women who are married to Green Berets. My wife, Reba, told me about the briefing later.

"It was sooo secret," she said. "I felt like Madam 007, getting briefed with all those vital facts. Anyway, where is Pakse, and did you know Mike de la Pena will be with you?" What? Someone had jumped the gun. No, I didn't know where Pakse was and no, I didn't know that Mike de la Pena's team would be there with me.

"Where did you get that information?" I asked.

"The mail sergeant. He was telling us how to address our envelopes when we write."

"What did he say?"

"We write you here, to Ft. Bragg. Nothing else."

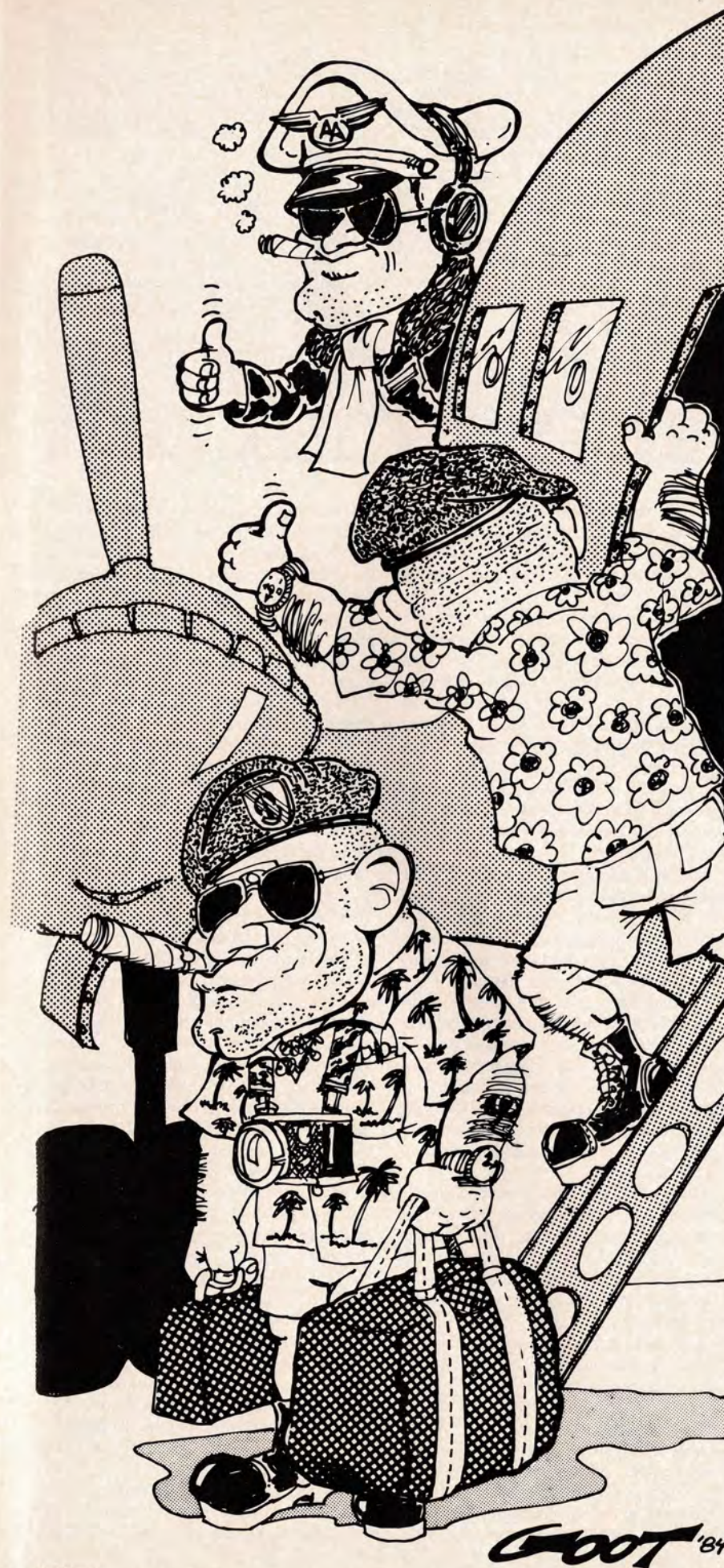
"Then how in the hell did you find out I'd be in Pakse?"

"The briefing map. Your and Mike's teams were assigned to Pakse."

"He showed you a briefing map?!" I asked incredulously. She nodded.

"The colonel said it was important we knew exactly where our husbands were located." She softened a little, more concerned that I was going off to war. She told me about the wife who had broken down at the briefing.

"Your cover story, ladies, should you be



asked," said the briefing officer, "is that your husbands are in the Philippines helping the army there chase *Hukbalahap* guerrillas in northern Luzon." He shuffled a foot in discomfort, adding, "... that way, if White Star takes any casualties, we can discount the deaths as the result of some other, more distant war."

There was a scream from the back of the room. "Oh, my God!" Several women turned to comfort her. She sobbed into her handkerchief.

"He never told me he was going off to war!"

But, if Hanoi knew and they would so boldly announce it on their widely heard six o'clock news broadcast, where had the leak come from?

Col. Charles Simpson, in his book, *Inside The Green Berets*, (Presidio Press, 1983) says of the White Star Operation in Laos, "Security was so tight that SF troopers who served in Laos in those early days are still, as a matter of conditioning, reluctant to discuss their mission there."

Perhaps that's true of some, but not for me. The war in Laos was like the war in Vietnam, and at that time very few Americans knew where either country was located.

"Where in the hell is Laos?" I had asked stupidly at the first briefing. Mr. State Department uncovered the map, pointing with a finger to a place I thought was a part of Thailand.

"We liken it to an inverted cocked pistol," he said, tracing the "hammer" around Phong Saly Province. "But you won't be going up there. Too close to the Chinese border. Besides," he added, "we've already got enough Americans up there to worry about." He waited for the question. It came a few seconds later.

"What Americans?"

"Dr. Tom Dooley and his little border-town hospital," he answered. "If any one of your team members goes, it will be your medic."

"Hey, Roberts! You start Chinese language school tomorrow!"

"Funny, Captain. Very, very funny," Roberts growled.

FC-3 was comprised of 107 officers and men, all of us in civvies. We would operate as technicians for the Royal Lao Army and as such, we would operate in whatever civilian clothing we wanted to wear. They gave us a clothing allowance of \$300 each, most to be spent on clothing, the rest on a personal handgun. The day we drew the money, there was a race to Fayetteville to snatch off the best handguns.

These, more than anything, were on our minds, since we wouldn't be allowed to carry military weapons in plain sight. I chose a used Browning 9mm Parabellum. It wasn't in the best condition, but my armorer could fix that. Ninety dollars down and \$210 to go.

The Bull had authorized the wearing of jump boots and issued khaki, provided they had no laundry marks. All my khaki was

REGULAR AUTHOR

Capt. James M. Perry, USA (Ret.), is becoming a regular contributor to SOF. His last article, "High Risk HALO," appeared in the February '84 issue. With 24-years' service in both Army and USMC, the captain has more than a few tales to tell.

This story, his third contribution to our pages, is the second of several articles about White Star, the Special Forces operation in Laos in 1959. Future issues will continue Perry's story.

Perry's first work for SOF also dealt with Special Forces in Laos: "Bull in Indochina Shop," SOF, January '84.

well used and I turned to clothing issue for the new stuff I needed. I spent more precious dollars for a few gaudy shirts, several heavy leather belts, and a Randall knife, a thing I've long become accustomed to having in the field.

By the time I got around to a hat and an extra pair of boots, I had shot my wad. I scrimped on the underwear, though I knew we'd get searched for any ID marks later on. GI socks and GI shorts went in the bag, and GI khakis got their long sleeves and legs cut off by my wife. I tried on my civilian attire and looked in the mirror.

God! I looked like a White Hunter just escaped from the African bush! I fingered the white sidewall airborne haircut. "No more haircuts," they had said. "Just hope that what you've got grows out before we land." But it didn't. It never did and I was much relieved to let the Lao barber cut my hair. He didn't know any other way but the one they used at Bragg, up one side and down the other.

All of our frantic buying in Fayetteville had aroused the curiosity of merchants in the know about activities at Ft. Bragg.

"Where you Special Forces boys a-going this time?" some would ask.

"Lemme see that red shirt," you might counter, hoping to avoid the question. "Large size." You shrugged it on and was it ever bright!

"Well, you sure ain't going in the field with that," the merchant beamed. You walked around with an airborne swagger and admired yourself in the glass, then shrugged off the shirt and pointed to another.

"You're right," you said, laying the red shirt on the counter, "maybe you'd better give me the green one."

It went that way from day to day, a little here and a little there. Some of the frenzied buying alerted the S-2 and he advised the Bull to have us slow down.

"Stagger your buying hours," the Bull said. "Get things in different parts of town. Word's getting back here that Special Forces is doing something strange." He looked us over, pointing that accusing finger at each man in the room.

"First man blows the cover on this operation, innocently or not, is going to spend the next three years at the North Pole."

We slowed our buying, but by then we had cleaned out the three gun stores in town and all the shops that had Randall knives. The incidence of automatic weapons not working in Laotian high humidity bothered us the most.

"You'll be cleaning them 'til hell freezes over," my armorer said. "Sweat, salt, all bores, all calibers. Shit! If it was me going, I'd settle for a good old S&W .38."

I took his advice and traded my Browning back to the dealer. It cost me \$10 to boot and the gun merchant got back a perfect pistol. I had run it through the gun clinic, had it Parkerized and its worn-out parts replaced. He turned it over and over in his hands, critical.



"Done ruined this weapon," he said, "all this here dull finish. 'Course," he added, "bluing does shine in the moonlight. Say!" he asked, "you boys going to war or something?"

There were other things that might have tipped our hand. Most of us strong drinkers, we now avoided the clubs, fearful too much to drink might loosen our tongues. We were also seen jogging as a unit down Longstreet Road, dressed in civvies, heavy Canadian rucks bumping on our backs. Sally Brown avoided Jane Doe, whose husband was in another C-Team, and Alice Jones quit trading gossip with Mary Smith. A blanket of cool silence descended on FC-3's final hours of activity.

And then the three C-124 Loadmasters bumped to a landing at Pope. They came in low, each one in trail, each one shifting to a growling new prop setting over the housing area at Corregidor Courts. My wife looked up from the kitchen table, listening.

"Sounds like you're on," she said softly. We must have blown a little more cover at Travis AFB, where we had to hold over for several hours while they changed an engine on one of the planes. An old friend passing through from Okinawa recognized me in the coffee shop where all 107 of us were waiting, each of us decked out in our new civilian clothing.

To all of his inquiries, I insisted that I'd been canned from SF and was trying to get to Hawaii to start a new life. He sensed our cover. Bending over, he jerked a thumb in the direction of the others and whispered hoarsely, "All them other Green Berets fuck up too?"

And then there was the aircraft crew. They hadn't known our final destination, nor had they known our cargo. We put it aboard in their absence. There were several GP bags full of demo and many, many rounds of ammo for the two M1919A6 machine guns. None of it had been declared as hazardous cargo.

Several hours into the flight, we started getting out of the last remnants of our mili-

tary clothing. Pistols were clamped on. We were "sanitized" by the intelligence officer who came along, giving up every shred of ID. Photos, letters, dogtags, anything which would fix us as just out of Ft. Bragg. The crew chief went forward to talk to the pilot.

"Something screwy's going on back there," he told the aircraft commander. "Them guys are cuttin' the laundry marks outta their scivvies!"

By the time we reached Clark AFB in the Philippines, it was obvious that the aircraft crews had to be briefed. I sat in on that as the Bull gave them the word.

"You're leaving us at Bangkok," he explained. "If anyone asks, you dropped us off here. If you're the same crew that picks us up, I hope to God you've kept your mouths shut. A leak now could cause some of us to come out in a wooden overcoat."

The Thai police surrounded our aircraft at Dong Muang International, making sure no one got near us. But from their menacing display of submachine guns, I'd say they were making sure that none of us wandered out of the area. We bucketed the equipment out of the C-124s and stuffed it in Air America C-46s and C-47s. We still had several hours in which to fly into Laos, each separate aircraft targeted for its own remote airstrip in that country.

My team had the C-47 to Pakse, just as my wife had told me. Mike de la Pena's team came along after I hooted to him from the open door.

"Hey, Mike! Over here! You want a make a liar out'a the Old Lady?"

We were being assigned to the Fourth Military District, there to train several Royal Lao companies in the use of their American weapons. I crawled up into the cockpit and behind the pilot, Johnny Li.

"Any chance of flying the right seat?" I asked, as I had also asked of the C-124 crew.

"You fly a '47?" he wanted to know. "I'd like to think I can," I laughed. I had also said the same thing to the C-124 com-

mander. They let me fly that monster for several hours, fighting the controls all the time, until they burst out laughing, no longer able to keep the secret. The A/C reached over and flipped a switch. The plane lurched as sensitivity returned and I gained fingertip control over the yoke.

"What the hell did you do?" I asked, gentling the lumbering aircraft back on course.

"Aileron booster," he explained. "You've been flying without the plane's help. At this rate, we figured you'd be dead from exhaustion by the time we reach Wake Island."

Johnny nodded at the empty co-pilot's seat.

"He needs the break," he said, "but before you sit down, point out some controls for me."

I identified the flap handle, the gear lev-

er, the manifold pressure gauges. I put my fingers on the magneto switch and the start button. I got the seat.

The co-pilot moved to the small bunk in the cabin but not before I handed him back a hand grenade and a sawed-off shotgun.

Li curled it from the corner of his mouth: "Grenade's for fishing in the Mekong. Shotgun's for potting small game. You'll see."

The overflight to Pakse was hair-raising in itself. I had never encountered such foul weather. Li had to constantly change course to dodge the thunderstorm activity that hung over the vast, green jungle floor below. Sometimes we had to bump through it, Li white-knuckling the controls. In between clouds, he tried to reassure me.

"Weather out here's like a reluctant virgin!" he yelled over the roar of the engines. "She really wants to give you a little bit just

so's you'll come back!" We hit another thick, wet cloud and the bottom fell out. Li backed off the throttles and wrestled the controls.

"But," he continued as we shot out of the other side, "she don't want to be a widow before she's a bride!"

"I don't get it," I said, puzzled. He clenched his thumb and forefinger together and shoved them under my nose.

"Tight," he said, "just like them clouds back there. Too much of either one'll give a man a heart attack!"

I put the gear and flaps down. One quarter. Johnny asked for half. I lowered the handle to the next notch and we stood more up on our nose. The small, black macadam strip popped up in front of us from nowhere, the equally small town of Pakse nestled up beside it. Around its hips rode the swirling, red Mekong, its muddy waters turning an almost perfect horseshoe before it shot south and down into Cambodia. I gave it a mile's width at that point.

Li backed off on the throttles. I rested my hand on top of his, ready to assist. His face lit up.

"Hey!" he said, pleased. "You're a good co. Maybe we'll fly some more together!"

We were on the ground now and the taxi was over. Johnny chopped the throttles and shut down. A Lao officer jumped up in the cargo compartment and started shaking hands exuberantly.

"*Bonjour!*" he cried through a double row of beautiful white teeth. "*Bonjour!*" De la Pena scratched his head.

"Damn!" he spat, "French!" "Well," I answered, "get on with it. Practice your Lao."

Mike tucked his hands in under his chin and broke at the waist.

"*Simbai dee baw,*" he said in Laotian. "How are you?"

"Oh?" the officer raised an eyebrow. "This is not the supply plane from Legion headquarters?" Mike shook his head.

"*Nous sommes Américains,*" he replied.

"*Americains!*" the Lao breathed excitedly, hardly believing. Then he ran to the door and hooted through a cupped hand.

"*Les Américains ici!*" he yelled excitedly to those outside the door. "*Les Américains sont arrivés en Pakse!*"

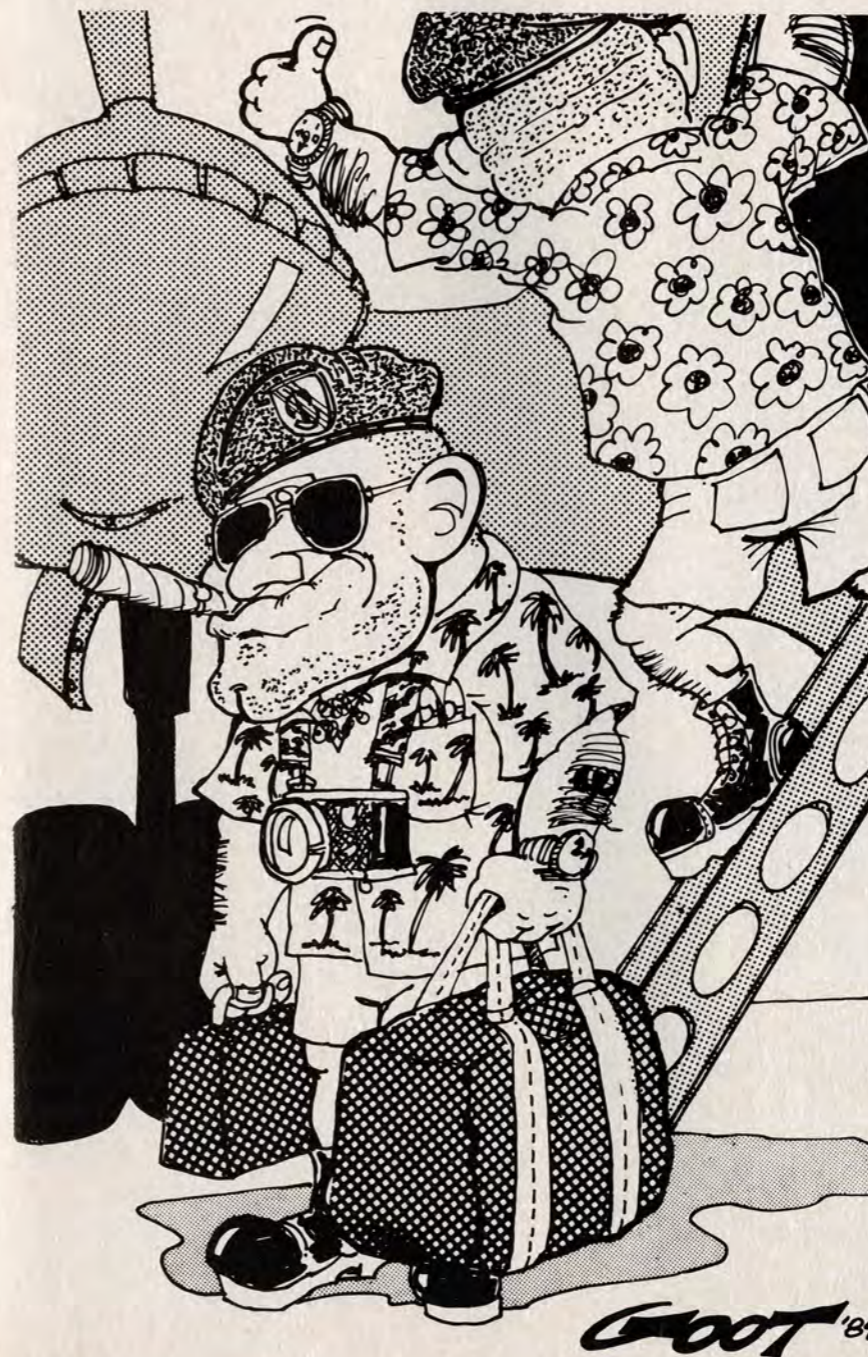
My weapons man pushed his way to the door and stared out at the peaceful jungle setting. Soon he pulled his head back in and turned to me.

"Shit!" he said, disgusted. "Let's go home. Ain't no fucking war here!"

I rested my hand on the butt of my .38 and thought about that as I swung down to the ground.

"Tight," I said to myself, much relieved. War would come rolling across the plateau long before we were ready for it, and like Johnny Li's comment on the weather, "tight," like a reluctant virgin.

Too much of either one could give a man a heart attack. ☒



BATTLE FOR SOUK EL-GHARB

SOF Penetrates Lebanon's Front Line

Text & Photos by Michael Sullivan

GRIMY, a week-old beard covering his face, eyes tired from days without sleep, the Lebanese Army lieutenant sat quietly on the sofa in the lobby of what had been a fashionable hotel.

Both arms were bandaged, wounded by shrapnel from a Soviet 122mm rocket that had killed three of his men the day before. The white bandages were already filthy with sweat and dirt.

But despite his wounds, the lieutenant spoke calmly about the fighting he and his men were locked in with Syrian-backed Druze militias in the strategic Shouf Mountain town of Souk el-Gharb, just eight miles from downtown Beirut.

Outside, rocket, mortar, RPG and machine-gun fire rained down on Lebanese Army positions holding the heights. The "whoosh" of shells passing overhead filled the air. The sharp crack-crack-crack of automatic weapons echoed up and down the ridge.

But the officers of the Lebanese Army battalion holding the ridge, even during the heaviest shelling,

calmly discussed the fighting as they sat eating oranges on sofas in the lobby of the Hotel Hajjar, turned into a temporary HQ.

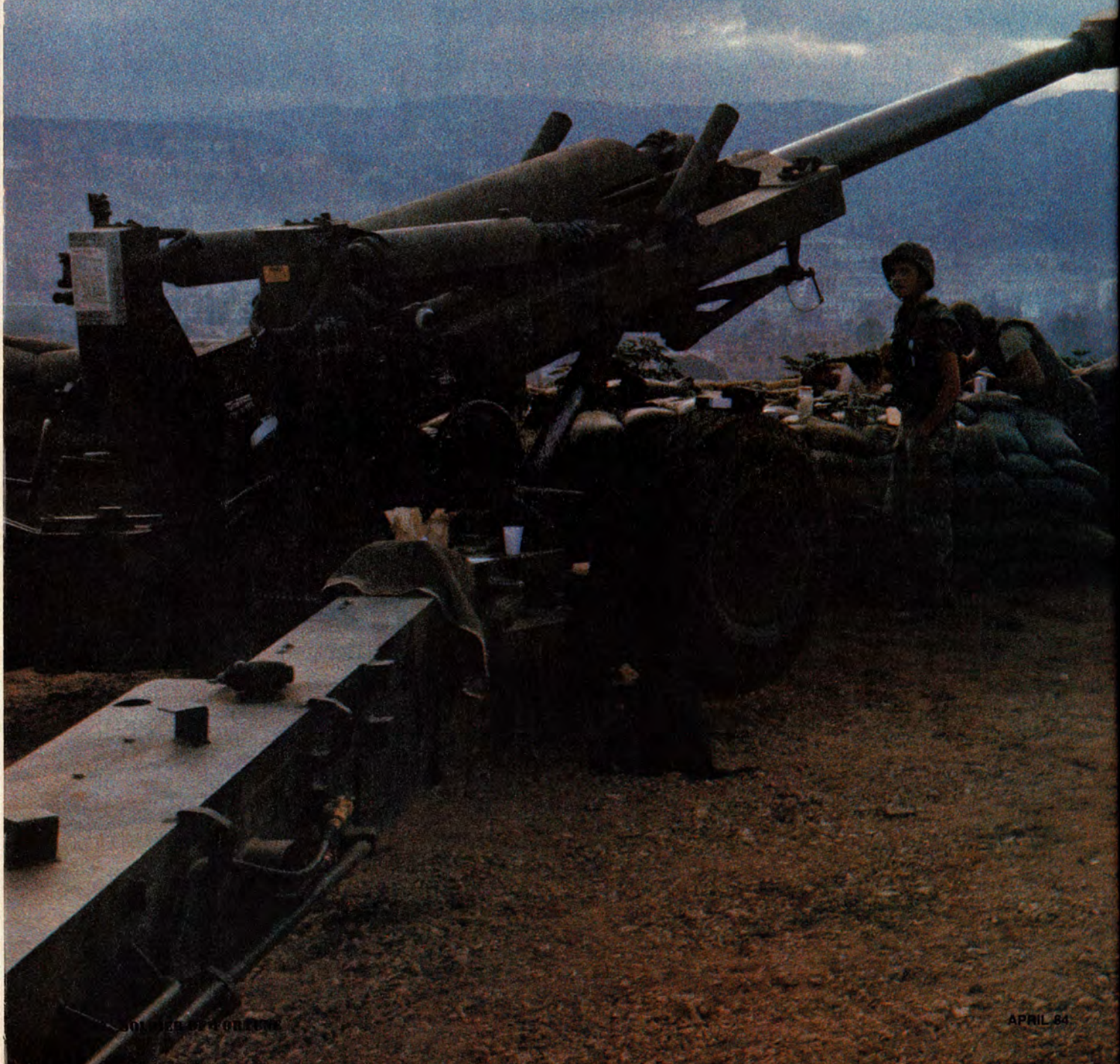
Occasionally, one would grab a walkie-talkie and speak to junior officers manning the lines, but mostly they seemed to be enjoying their first respite in three weeks of heavy, and often hand-to-hand, fighting.

"In four days we've taken three miles," said the bandaged lieutenant.

Continually, enlisted men shuffled through the hotel, carrying M16s, M60s, M79 "bloopers," crates of ammo and food. Never, however, were they far from their weapons.

"Today is quiet," said the bandaged officer, as shells hit along the road in front of the hotel. The whine of a shell could be heard every few minutes, but no one seemed to pay any attention. The day before, the ridge had been an inferno as shells hit positions at the rate of one a minute.

The hotel took five direct hits.



Marines take tense break in M198 155mm howitzer hilltop emplacement above Beirut.



ABOVE: M16-carrying Lebanese Army soldier wears U.S.-issue flak jacket during September battle with Druze militia in mountains outside Beirut.

It showed the effects. Windows were blown out, tree limbs and lawn furniture littered the front, shrapnel-gouged holes were jagged in the low garden retaining walls. Shell casings littered the grounds. But the officer's casual attitude was typical of the others gathered around during what many would have considered heavy shelling. Their battalion had taken and held Souk el-Gharb, pushing down the Shouf to cut off the Druze positions east of Beirut and Moslem militias in the city's southern suburbs. The soldiers now were fighting for Kaifoun — another village — in the seemingly endless rounds of factional fighting that has pitted Moslem against Christian here for centuries.

Their opponents were well-armed Druze militiamen, backed by Syria and Palestine Liberation Organization dissidents who later would turn their guns against Yasser Arafat, holed up in his final enclave outside Tripoli.

Outside the HQ was the litter of war and signs of the furious fighting that had swept this ridge. A dozen M113 APCs lined the main street, sheltered by a hillside. The few jeeps, used to race officers or badly needed gear where the larger APCs couldn't get to, were all pocked with bullet and shrapnel holes.

Hundreds of shell casings from all calibers of weapons from M16s to Soviet 23mm guns, littered the street, mingled with glass from blown-out and shattered windows. Scraps of webbing, no longer identifiable, littered the roadway.

Every shop had been hit in the street fighting, shrapnel and bullet holes punched through windows, walls and doors. In many homes every room was fucked up, furniture overturned, bullet

RIGHT: One-by-six and sandbagged Marine bunkers in Beirut seemed adequate in September '83 but by year's end several leathernecks had died when Druze artillery zeroed in.

holes everywhere. Roads were torn and rutted by artillery, RPG, rifle and MG hits.

The place was a fucking mess. Inside the Hajjar Hotel a makeshift first-aid station had been set up to treat the wounded. But it was just a place for a quick patch-up; nothing fancy could be done on the two mattresses laid out on the lobby's tiled floor. The badly wounded were ferried down to regular hospitals in Beirut.

When I first arrived at the hotel a TV cameraman was being patched up, hit in the stomach by shrapnel from a rocket while covering the fighting for Kaifoun. A quick patch on the wound and a fast ride back to town for him. Later in the day British troops of the multinational force medevacked the wounded cameraman to Cyprus.

In the lobby soldiers lolled on mattresses dragged from hotel beds, cleaning their gear or catching a quick nap. Everyone was on the ground floor; the upper levels were empty because of the shelling.

Occasionally a shell would slam in front of the hotel with a deafening roar, blowing out more glass.

As we sat in the lobby, the front of the hotel took a direct hit, spraying broken glass and pieces of window frame across the entryway. The soldiers, used to near-misses and feeling safe inside a building, barely looked up. No one was hurt. But for several reporters it was more than enough and they took the first car back down to the city. Later, the major backed his command APC up to the

Even before November bombing Marines' opinion of Beirut position came in loud and clear.



Africa and two in Rhodesia. Next he traveled to Australia where he hitchhiked across the western outback and worked on a cattle station in North West Australia. He also worked on a sheep station in New Zealand.

Late in 1979, Sullivan institutionalized his itching feet by becoming a reporter for UPI. He joined the *Washington Times* staff for the paper's inaugural issue in May 1983.

As a reporter, Sullivan has covered the world's hot spots from Afghanistan to Lebanon. This is his first on-the-spot coverage for SOF — but we're sure it won't be his last.



CAB RIDE by Michael Sullivan

Getting to the front in Lebanon isn't hard: Just hop in a cab.

The only real difficulty in getting to the fighting in the Shouf Mountains just east of Beirut was finding a taxi driver willing to make the trip and someone to share the \$225 tab.

Some cabbies, showing a certain amount of common sense in a country that has been at war with itself for eight years, declined politely when asked if they would go to Souk el-Gharb, the scene of heavy fighting and shelling between Lebanese government troops and Druze militia backed by Syria and dissident PLO factions.

Others, with a smile and a healthy "combat pay" add-on, would say, "No problem, hop in."

The fare was a flat 1,000 Lebanese pounds, about \$225.

Because of the expense, reporters often would ask around the lobby of the Commodore Hotel — main hangout and temporary home for many — to find someone to share the trip and expenses with. Not many editors understand a reporter who puts in an expense chit for \$225 for just one cab ride.

The cost was steep because the cabbie was in just as harrising a position as the reporters and photographers out to get some good "bang-bang" copy and pictures. The driver stood a good chance of getting not only his car, but himself, blown away.

For his \$225 the cabbie had to wait — sometimes all day despite constant shelling — until the reporter was ready to go back to town. While reporters went about their business, the cabbie parked his car and waited at the Lebanese battalion HQ, a bombed-out hotel.

Piling into a variety of aging or new taxis, a carload of reporters would wind its way from Moslem west Beirut where the Commodore was, to the Christian east side of town before climbing into the hills. The best taxis, by far, were large English cabs with lots of leg and head

room. But more than likely you would end up in a smaller, more-clapped-out vehicle that looked like it might not make it around the block, let alone into a war zone.

On one occasion, two carloads had to pile into one cab when the second taxi died on the climb into the hills. Somehow, the second cab, overloaded and going about five mph, made it, although all of us had to get out and push at one point.

After the cab made the climb, it had to pass through Christian militia checkpoints and smaller villages on the slopes of the Shouf.

At the checkpoints, tough-looking Christian Phalange militiamen in plain olive-drab uniforms, AK-47s and AKMs slung across their backs, would check credentials, demanding to see Lebanese government and army passes, before allowing the car to pass. Often, Lebanese Army troops, invariably also Christians, would loiter nearby, suspiciously eyeing reporters.

Past the final checkpoint, the road into the Shouf became a tortuous, dusty affair fully open to shellfire or the random sniper who decided he needed a little practice. One network-hired cab took a sniper round one day.

Once clear of the open hillside, the road, barely wide enough for one car, snaked its way through several small villages. When a Lebanese Army APC was met you made sure to get the hell out of its way. The APC wasn't about to stop and the soldiers riding atop didn't look like they'd be bothered by flattening a carload of reporters.

On the last hairpin curve heading into the main road on the ridge was a burned-out APC, the victim of a direct hit. At the other end of town was another destroyed APC — both testaments to the fighting on the ridge.

Being downhill, the trip back to Beirut usually was taken at full speed.

The approved driving method was "Let's get the fuck out of here as fast as we can" as cabbies careened down the Shouf and sped into east Beirut at 80 mph.

WANDERLUST

Mike Sullivan likes colorful places with strange-sounding names.

Vietnam came first. Sullivan was a rifle-squad leader of Indian Co., 3rd Bn., 7th Marine Regiment, in I Corps.

His next port of call combined college with the Hawaiian Islands. Sullivan received his B.A. in history from the University of Hawaii in 1973.

For the next five years, Sullivan worked his way around the world, first in Africa and then in the Pacific. He spent a year on a kibbutz in Israel, another in South



Wounded Shi'ite Amal militiaman carries AK-47S on patrol in Beirut suburbs.

hotel's front door to block any shrapnel or a straight shot into the lobby.

For the newly reconstituted Lebanese Army the battles for Souk el-Gharb and Kaifoun were a heady testing ground. A test they had to win.

The battalion CO asked again if I wanted to go further up the line. When I said yes, he said I could hop into the first available APC to get a closer look.

Ten minutes later, after waving goodbye to the major and the relative security of the Hajjar Hotel, I was wedged into an APC crammed with crates of .50-cal. ammo, an RPG-7, a 60mm mortar and a *Time* Magazine photographer. The driver, who had kept the engine running, wasted no time racing hell-for-leather up the road. The theory, a sound one, was the less time in the open, the less likely you were to get your head, ass or any other part of your anatomy shot off.

Not understanding any Arabic except a few swear words, I gave the driver and his No. 2 — a perpetually smiling teenager with an M16 strapped across his back — a thumbs-up sign as we careened up the roadway, scattering everyone in the way.

A few minutes later we came to a screeching halt by what used to be a house, but now looked like a junk pile. Windows knocked or blown out, pro-government signs spray-painted on the walls, furniture overturned and strewn about.

The family that owned the house, like most in the two towns, had taken off when the fighting began. The Lebanese Army troops didn't seem to have looted anything, but the place was a mess from having been caught in the middle of a war.

Scrambling from the APC I was greeted by a U.S.-trained first lieutenant who said his name was Tony and who commanded the forward positions.

Like the officers down the road, he was dirty and unshaven, having led the point elements for several weeks. But also like the other officers, his spirits were high as he continued to hold the high ground overlooking dug-in Druze tank positions on a ridgeline one mile to the east. The artillery and rocket rounds were coming from other Druze-held



ABOVE: Marine relaxes in commander's cupola of U.S. armored vehicle while showing the flag in Beirut. BELOW: Overhead cover on Marine OP bunker provides only minimum protection — will not defeat direct hit from 82mm mortar, much less artillery.



RIGHT: Good terrorists: PLO mourns dead with decorated photos in Beirut graveyard.



BELOW: Lebanese Army M113 APC with turret-mounted .50-caliber MG patrols village of Souk el-Gharb in mountains near Beirut.



positions around the town of Aley, several miles to the north.

But closer at hand were snipers and machine-gun nests dug into Kaifoun and the outskirts of Souk el-Gharb.

Parked in front of the house was another APC, used by Tony as a command post. Inside the APC was yet another lieutenant and the two — equally grimy but confident — kept in touch with their men via walkie-talkie. In the turret a trooper kept watch with the .50-cal., constantly eyeing the roadway and open ground to our south.

The house and another up the road overlooked a half mile of open ground to Kaifoun and the Druze positions to the east.

As Tony outlined the situation, artillery shells and rockets continued coming in about every five minutes, some hitting less than 100 meters from us. With one particularly close hit, fragments ricocheted off the APC as the gunner quickly ducked from his exposed perch. But the Lebanese just smiled and shrugged.

As in the hotel, Tony and his men seemed to take the shellings in stride.

But on a balcony two soldiers manned a sandbagged machine-gun position as they scanned the country, making sure to keep a low profile. Down the road, exhausted soldiers slept where they could to catch up after days without rest.

One soldier, oblivious to the crash of the shells, the roar of the APCs, the tanks trading gunfire, slept soundly on a bare mattress — his M16 draped across his chest, a rag over his face to keep the flies away.

Across the street and up about 200 yards were two more houses manned by the Lebanese.

We were greeted with a hearty handshake and a shouted "Shit, motherfucker," from the officer in charge, a 23-year-old lieutenant who had trained at Ft. Benning.

He said he spent his first week with the Americans learning how to swear and proudly showed off his entire vocabulary in the best Airborne fashion as he derided Druze leader Walid Jumblatt and his entire family for several generations in the most graphic terms.

The house was like any other on the ridge, blown apart. Parked between the houses was yet another APC — used by the Lebs as mobile HQs. Ducking through one house, stepping over soldiers sleeping in stairwells, we cut across back areas, using knocked-off shutters as bridges. A little round-about, but it kept us out of snipers' crosshairs.

It was easy to figure out why the soldiers slept in the stairwells: They were the most-protected parts of the houses.

To reach the most-forward position — yet another destroyed house manned by a platoon — meant a quick jolting ride in an APC, but because of the vehicle's height it would not cover the final 200 yards. A destroyed APC, a charred and abandoned victim of a direct hit, was mute testimony to the effectiveness of the Druze gunners.

We covered the final 200 yards in a mad dash on foot, crouching low and scaling two retaining walls to reach our objective.

Spaced out to let another reporter and Lebanese soldiers go ahead, I hugged my cameras to my chest and dashed across the dirt road, then angled up toward a low retaining wall just below the house.

There, we helped each other, using a 55-gallon drum to reach a gap blown in the wall. Beyond the

SOF WEAPONS

ADPA '83

SOF Looks at the Arms of our Future

Text & Photos by Peter G. Kokalis

WAR isn't all explosives, smoke and small-arms fire. As slow starts showed in World Wars I and II, and even Vietnam, if the homework hasn't been done, field performance is going to suffer. The American Defense Preparedness Association (ADPA) represents the people who are doing that homework. In order to keep America prepared for war — no matter how little we want it — the ADPA meets to examine trends and exchange ideas. ADPA's Third International Symposium on Small Arms met in October 1983 at the USMC Development and Education Command in Quantico, Va.

Coordinated as usual by Col. Paul H. Scordas (USA, Ret.), ADPA's director of weapons technology, the symposium was the largest ever. The 318 participants represented Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, England, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Norway, Singapore, Switzerland and all five branches of the U.S. military, the FBI and the Secret Service.

The symposium stressed the continuing need for progress in human engineering and training. The specific immediate challenges of modern small-arms technology are quite obviously to 1) decrease the weight of weapons and ammunition, lightening the load of the rifleman and enhancing his effectiveness on the battlefield; 2) improve munitions effectiveness, and 3) improve weapons reliability.

One of the more interesting responses to these demands is the Olin/HK Close Assault Weapon System (CAWS). CAWS represents an impressive attempt to fulfill the Mission Essential Need Statement for a modern fighting shotgun, based on British studies in Malaya and U.S. experience in Vietnam. With a design philosophy that heeded no previous constraints, the Olin Corp. first developed the ammunition, then Heckler & Koch created the weapon. The 3-inch 12-gauge belted brass case cannot be used in conventional weapons (although the HK gun will accept commercial 12-ga. ammunition). Eight .36-caliber pellets make up the 000 Buck load with an effective combat range out to 150 meters. A 20-flechette-per-cartridge load offers steel-plate penetration.

The weapon itself — more than vaguely reminiscent of the G-11 caseless gun (see SOF's ADPA report in the March '82 issue) — is recoil-operated and fires from the closed bolt. The plastic body is of bull-pup configuration. CAWS has selective-fire capability with a cyclic rate of 250-300 rpm. It weighs nine pounds with an 18-inch barrel and an overall length of 30 inches. A 10-rd. box magazine is used and a twist-on choke and sound suppressor are available. Reversing the cheekpiece changes ejection from right to left, making it possible to fire the weapon left-handed. Ambidextrous safety and day/night sights are also incorporated in the CAWS.

The envisioned offensive uses are for close assault and ambush/counter-ambush patrols. Defensively the CAWS can be used in security and close combat roles. Unfortunately, no prototypes were on hand at the symposium for inspection or firing, nor were any photographs available.

Unveiled for the first time was FN's Milo 15 General Purpose Heavy Machine Gun and its 15mm ammunition. FN's objectives in development of the Milo 15 were to replace the .50-cal. Browning HMG with a comparatively lightweight gun, surpass the performance level of the ComBloc 14.5x114mm cartridge and compete with the 20mm cartridge in performance with much lower cost of weapon and ammunition. Two energy levels were initially examined: a scaled-up .50 cal. at 35,000 joules and a scaled-down 20mm at 38,600 joules. As the

smaller the caliber, the greater the penetration at a given velocity, the scaled-up .50-cal. round proved to be the better route. Ball, tracer, AP steel core, tungsten-core APDS (armor-piercing discarding-sabot) and explosive ammunition were developed with muzzle velocities of 3,360 fps. The links are of the push-through type.

The gun itself has a number of unique features. Firing from the open bolt, it is gas-operated. The bolt locks on a barrel extension and ejection is to the bottom. The barrel is of the quick-change type. Feed can be changed instantly from the right- to left-hand side without removing the belts. The cyclic rate is 700 rpm. However, the weight of the receiver and barrel group is 110 pounds (28

BELOW: Mini-UZI, only recently available to law-enforcement and government agencies, features 1000 rpm cyclic rate. CENTER: Ultimax 100 5.56mm NATO

SAW fires 400-600 rpm from 60- or 100-rd. drums. Long travel of bolt carrier reduces recoil of 10.5-lb. MG. BOTTOM: Far from machismo, Steyr rep fires AUG full-auto from chin in demo of low counter-recoil and nonexistent muzzle climb.



BELOW: Sparks fly from .50-cal. SLAP as zirconium tip marks impact on armor plate. BOTTOM: M2 HB



fires Norwegian Raufoss .50-cal. Multipurpose ammo designed to defeat choppers and light armor.



pounds more than the Browning M2 HB). Although it can be mounted on the M3 tripod (which weighs 44 pounds), a towed ground mount has been developed which, complete with the gun and 200 rounds of ammunition, weighs 600 pounds. The Browning M2 HB is already almost too heavy for use as an infantry ground gun. In my opinion, 28 pounds more is not acceptable for the infantry ground role.

Meanwhile, the venerable .50-cal. Browning cartridge is not quite ready to roll over and play dead. A/S Raufoss Ammunisjonsfabrikker of Norway described the Norwegian NM 140 Multipurpose .50-cal. round which has been optimized to defeat helicopters and light armor and increases the lethal effects of the .50-cal. machine gun significantly. Adopted by Norway and France, with license agreements in Belgium, Spain and the United States, the exterior configuration is that of the U.S.

API projectile. However, the exterior yields 20 effective incendiary fragments combined with a penetrator core. Another new development, now ready for engineering tests, is the U.S.-designed 7.62mm NATO and .50-cal. SLAP (Saboted Light Armor Penetrator) ammunition. The projectile has a zirconium tip which produces a pyrophoric effect for a target signature.

Now admittedly, FN's new 15mm cartridge is much more effective against Soviet APCs than older .50-caliber AP ammunition. How it stacks up against the new, improved .50-cal. rounds remains to be seen. While the weight increase of the Milo 15 HMG is of small consequence for helicopter or vehicular mounting, it detracts from its general-

purpose role at the infantry level. Finally, are we ready to introduce another caliber into the already crowded supply pipeline? I doubt it.

Colt Industries displayed the M16A2, recently type-classified by the U.S. Army and previously adopted by the USMC. In addition to the features already described (See "Guns, Guns," SOF, March '82, p. 35), I noted that a cartridge case deflector for left-hand shooters has been added to the rear of the ejection port and made integral with the upper receiver casting. The pistol grip has an additional finger swell below the trigger guard. The M16A2 is one of the very finest infantry rifles in existence and represents a significant improvement in effectiveness over the M16A1. It should serve us well until the turn of the century. By that time, it is expected that the move to caseless ammunition will occur.

Much has been made of the vast amount of ammunition expended in Vietnam to produce one casualty. Most often, this has been laid on the doorstep of inadequate training procedures. Yet, during a presentation on the effects on hitting performance by adding a sight rib to the M16A1 rifle, Paul H. Ellis — an industrial designer from the U.S. Army Human Engineering Laboratory, Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md. — stated that the Laboratory's research found that 80 percent of all rifle fire during both World War II and the Korean War was pointed, rather than aimed. The experimental sight rib increased hit probability in pointed fire. Aimed fire adds significantly to the infantryman's exposure time.

The instinct to survive is strong in all of us, except perhaps the armchair gun writers who, never having felt the heat of battle, are warmed by the burning winds emanating from their mouths. The fact is, when large numbers of projectiles are flying in your direction, pointed fire will predominate and aimed fire will be the exception. This is not simply a personal opinion based on my own combat experience. It is a researched phenomenon and the conclusion of the Army Human Engineering Laboratory study, the results of which were delivered at the symposium. It behooves small-arms technologists to continue the development of equipment and techniques that recognize this aspect of human nature.

Other topics presented at the symposium included the Australian Army, night vision goggles, optimization of boattails for small-arms bullets, the effectiveness of depleted uranium AP ammunition, limited range training ammunition, programmable fuses for medium-caliber shells, declutching feeder developments and the M-21 Meyer Ammunition Module Emerson Electric (MAMEE) feed and storage systems for the GE GAU2B/A 7.62mm NATO minigun and future small-arms requirements of the USMC.

Demonstrated at the firing range were the GE GAU2B/A 7.62mm NATO minigun, the Hughes 7.62mm NATO chain gun (EX-34), the Steyr line of assault rifles and sub-machine guns, Beretta sub-machine guns and pistols,

Smith & Wesson auto pistols, H&K pistols, sub-machine guns and rifles, Finnish Jati-matic sub-machine gun, Chartered Industries of Singapore's Ulimax 100 SAW, the Galil 7.62mm NATO semiautomatic sniper rifle, the Mini-UZI submachine gun, the M249 SAW, the Hawk Engineering MM-1 12-rd. 40mm grenade launcher, the Enfield Royal Small Arms Factory's ARWEN smoke, gas and grenade projector, a variety of improved munitions through the M60 GPMG and Browning M2 HB, and a bevy of mortars, grenade launchers and antitank rockets.

The symposium ended with an impressive night firing demonstration put on by the USMC. Gen. Hopkins of the Marine Corps most aptly summed up small-arms technology's *raison d'être* when he said, "Small groups of determined men with rifles and machine guns still rearrange borders and determine the destiny of nations — despite nuclear weapons."

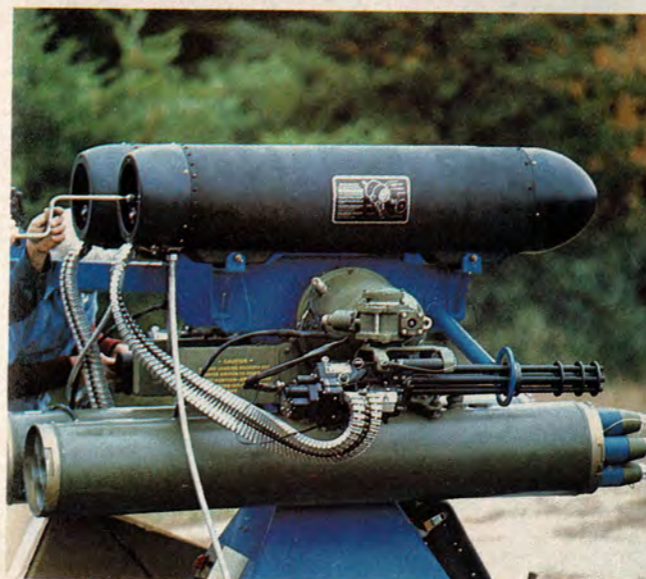
Those interested in further information concerning the goals, activities and membership requirements of the American Defense Preparedness Association should address their inquiries to ADPA, Dept. SOF, Rosslyn Center, Suite 900, 1700 N. Moore St., Arlington, VA 22209. ✕

RIGHT: Latest production 5.56mm NATO M249 SAW features longitudinally-grooved fore-end and less-obtuse pistol-grip angle: the finest MG ever placed in U.S. inventory. BELOW: Suppressed Model 12S Beretta SMG.



LEFT: Toxic fume levels less than five percent of self-powered MGs make EX-34 Hughes Chain Gun a top competitor in turret or cupola installations.

LEFT: Fired from naval deck mount, Browning .50 demonstrates experimental Saboted Light Armor Penetrator (SLAP). LOWER LEFT: GE GAU2B/A double minigun — 12 barrels in all — fires 4,000 rpm of 7.62mm NATO. Fed from 3,000 M21/MAMEE feed/storage system, remote-controlled guns automatically shut off when cone of fire might endanger weapon from excessive traverse.



M158A1 launcher with seven 2.75-inch rockets in each pod attached below. BELOW: Adopted by Israeli Defense Forces, Galil 7.62mm NATO semiauto sniper model with Nimrod 6x40 scope on side mount, adjustable cheek-piece, rubber butt-plate, two-stage trigger and compensator/muzzle brake.



LEFT: Developed decades ago as riot-control weapon, 40mm grenade launcher is reborn as MM-1, firing 12 of any mix from smoke, gas, beehive or HE ammo selection. Inserts for 12-ga. are available for 16-lb. revolver.

RANGERS TO THE RESCUE

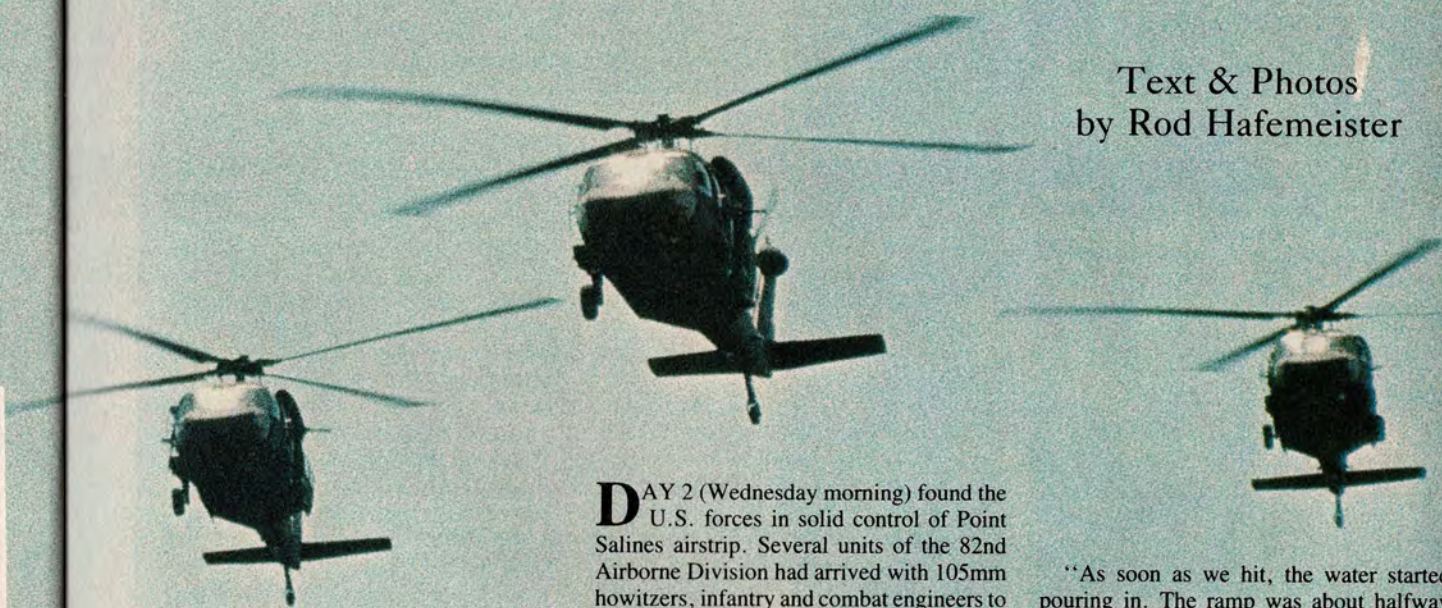
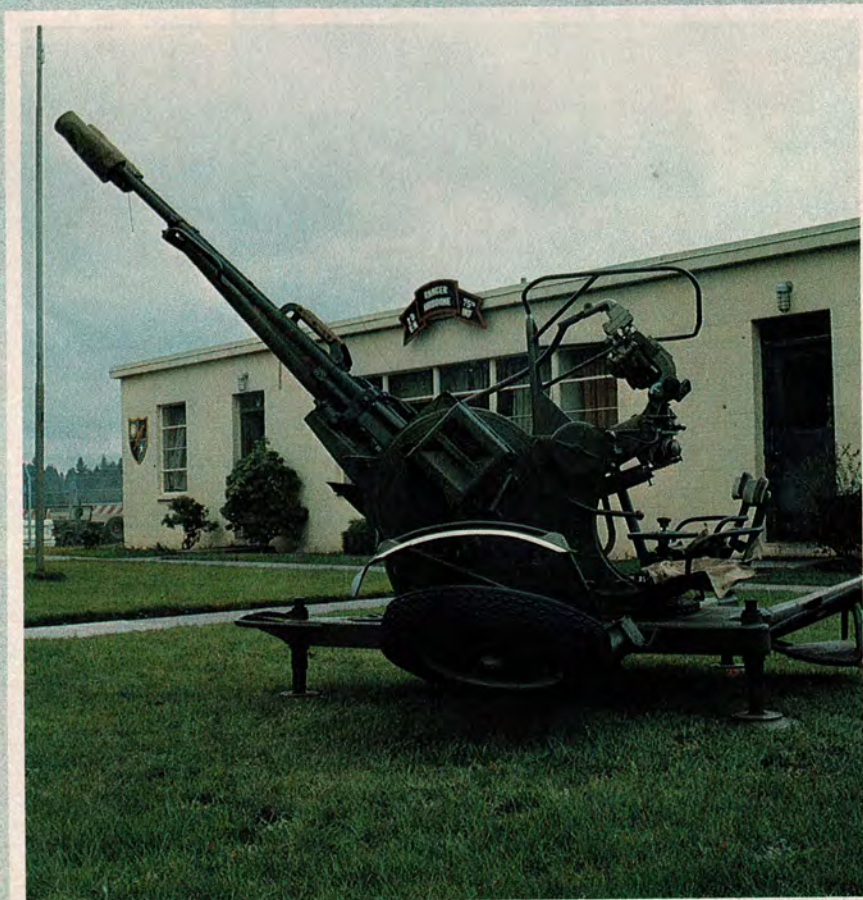
Routine Operation Turns Perilous on Grenada

Text & Photos
by Rod Hafemeister



During Grenada invasion, U.S. Army Rangers used USMC CH-46 helicopters for assault on Grand Anse campus because of their greater lifting capacity, but next day's combat assault on Point Calivigny was made in UH-60A Blackhawk helicopters (above). The Blackhawk — which can carry 11 troops, three crewmen and two pilots at maximum speed of 184 mph and range of 373 miles — proved to be one of the best performers under fire in Grenada. Photo: Jim Graves

Among other items which 2nd Battalion, 75th Rangers, found in their gear upon return from Grenada was this ZU-23 antiaircraft gun. The ZU-23mm is one of the finest antiaircraft guns in the world. Thanks, Yuri.



When SOF reported on the liberation of Grenada (see "The Grenada Papers," SOF, February '84), we could only print two of Rod Hafemeister's reports on the Rangers. We're completing his observations now. SOF will analyze the intelligence we uncovered on Grenada in a later issue. — The Eds.

DAY 2 (Wednesday morning) found the U.S. forces in solid control of Point Salines airstrip. Several units of the 82nd Airborne Division had arrived with 105mm howitzers, infantry and combat engineers to reinforce the 2nd Battalion, 75th Rangers. Word was that the Rangers might be extracted before dark.

Then the command came down: "Get ready for a mission." The rest of the medical students were still stuck at the Grand Anse campus and the Rangers were going to have to rescue them. While plans were made and logistics coordinated, the men checked their weapons and equipment. Ammo was redistributed to maximize firepower.

The Rangers boarded Marine CH-46 helicopters late that afternoon at Point Salines. The choppers lifted out, swung out to sea and headed for the beach at Grand Anse.

Roaring in at wave-top level, the choppers came over the beach and began receiving sporadic small-arms fire from the surrounding jungle. One chopper was hit and crashed into the surf. One of the Rangers described the experience:

"As soon as we hit, the water started pouring in. The ramp was about halfway down so we started popping the escape hatches. One of the door-gunners was blasting away with his .50, keeping their heads down. The water must have been four-feet deep in the chopper. They finally got the ramp down and some of the guys got out; the rest of us bailed out the hatches. We must have been stuck in there about 10 seconds. It seemed like a hell of a lot longer.

"Some of the guys hung up their rucks in the hatch and had to ditch 'em. The lieutenant took some shrapnel or something in the foot, but didn't realize it until later.

"As I waded ashore I heard rounds whistling over my head and I hit the deck. I looked up and realized it was an A-6 firing up the bad guys. After that we didn't take any more fire.

"As soon as we hit the shore we headed down the beach. We ran about 500 meters 'til we linked up with the rest of the guys, and joined the perimeter. Scared the shit out of me!"

Meanwhile, the rest of the Rangers had secured the objective. Some cleared buildings while others formed a protective corridor for the students. As sporadic, ineffective fire continued, CH-53 Sea Stallion helicopters landed and extracted the students.

As the last load lifted out, a yellow smoke grenade was activated to signal the CH-46s, circling offshore, to return for the Rangers. They clambered aboard and took off for the airstrip. Total time on the objective was 26 minutes.

Prior to U.S. Ranger assault on Cuban/Grenadian training camp at Point Calivigny, target was prepped by AC-130s and carrier-launched air strikes. Substantial damage inflicted prevented Cuban/Grenadians from offering heavy resistance.



Aerial view of Grenada showing Point Salines air field, Grand Anse medical campus (behind point, just right of center) and St. George's, the capital (at top).



WHAT IS A RANGER?

by Rod Hafemeister

During the first few days on Barbados, the second most frequent question asked by the press was, "What is a Ranger?" (The most-asked question was, "Why can't we go to the island?") The confusion is understandable. The Army has never gone out of its way to publicize the Rangers, and the units themselves have a healthy paranoia of the media.

In 1974, Gen. Creighton Abrams signed the order creating the Ranger Battalions. In it he described Rangers as soldiers who must be able to "do things with their hands and weapons better than any other soldier." The Rangers have used this as their prime directive ever since.

A Ranger is defined as anyone who has successfully completed the U.S. Army Ranger Course at the Infantry School at Ft. Benning, Ga., or as anyone serving in a U.S. Army Ranger unit. Currently, there are two battalions of Rangers on active duty. They are the 1st Battalion (Ranger), 75th Infantry (Airborne), stationed at Hunter Army Airfield, Ga., and the 2nd Battalion (Ranger), 75th Infantry (Airborne) at Ft. Lewis, Wash. They are more commonly referred to as 1st and 2nd Battalions. (See "U.S. Army's Rough and Ready Rangers," SOF, April '82.)

When the Special Forces were formed, they derived their lineage from both the First Special Service Force and the Ranger Battalions of World War II. When the Army formed Ranger LRRP (Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol) companies during Vietnam, they drew their lineage from the 5307th Composite Group of WWII — Merrill's Marauders. The two battalions were formed from the remaining companies in 1974 and still draw their lineage from there.

The best description of a Ranger battalion is that they are commandos, but that isn't totally accurate. They are organized as ultra-light infantry battalions. Their heaviest equipment is a combination of M60 machine guns, M224 60mm

Troops from the 2nd Battalion, 75th Rangers, who received individual awards for actions on Grenada salute the Ranger colors during ceremony at Ft. Lewis, Wash.

mortars and M67 90mm recoilless rifles. They normally have only two jeeps assigned, but as shown by the Grenada operations, they can get more if needed. In fact, the Rangers can get virtually any equipment they need for a specific operation. The decision to use Rangers is made at the highest levels in the Pentagon and, if they need something, they get it.

Until 1983, the chain of command above the Ranger battalions was somewhat obscure. Ultimately, they worked for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, but it wasn't always clear who the immediate boss was. In 1983, First Special Operations Command (SOCOM) was formed at Ft. Bragg, N.C. SOCOM brought under one umbrella all Army special operations units: Special Forces, Rangers, Psy Ops, Civil Affairs, etc. Current commander of SOCOM is Brig. Gen. Joseph C. Lutz.

Creation of SOCOM seems to be solving the problem of mission definition in the special-ops field. The Special Forces are going back to their original functions as instructors and advisers. Ranger battalions are being given primary responsibility for "direct-action" missions. These range from precise "surgical strikes" to the full-blown airborne assault used on Grenada.

Rangers are ideal for rapid mobility and fast precision operations. The average Ranger private is as well-trained as many NCOs in normal units and is the key to Ranger success. Every troop is trained to take immediate action to resolve a situation and is highly capable of independent, small-unit action.

Rangers conduct extensive live-fire training and believe in making training as realistic as possible. Although this sometimes results in training casualties, it obviously minimized them on the real thing in Grenada.



Largest number of civilian casualties on Grenada came when U.S. Navy jet bombed unmarked mental hospital at Ft. Frederick that shared ridgeline with People's Revolutionary Army headquarters. The air strike was called in to take out guns that had downed U.S. helicopter. One target was a Russian BTR-60PB firing from trees located just below hospital (extreme left in photo).

Unknown to the departing Rangers, some of their buddies had been left behind. Eleven troopers had moved up the beach as flank security and had not realized the extraction was in progress. Their radio was not working properly, and in the melee of loading the Rangers from the crashed bird, nobody realized they were missing. As they saw the departing choppers, the 11 men realized they were in trouble. It was getting dark and they were isolated.

Fiddling with the radio, they were able to contact a unit of the 82nd Airborne Division. They were advised to move west down the beach until they linked up with the paratroopers. Moving quickly and cautiously, they started down the beach.

It was dark when they reached the crashed chopper. Just beyond, a line of cliffs butted against the sea. Reluctant to move through hostile jungle in the dark, the Rangers decided to check out the chopper. They found three rubber life rafts inside, and decided to use them to get around the rocks. They inflated the boats and moved out, using rifle stocks and helmets as paddles. Almost immediately they realized they had another problem.

Two of the boats started sinking. They transferred all of the equipment into the one functional boat, but that didn't leave enough room for everyone. Two Rangers jumped into the water, grabbed the boat and started to swim along with it. For several hours they fought tides and currents, making poor headway.

Suddenly, out of the darkness, the Rangers heard the roar of a CH-47. The chopper spotted the boat and started dropping flares to mark their location. Soon a patrol boat approached and took them aboard. The rubber raft with the equipment was tied off, and the troops were taken to the USS *Carron*.

Here they encountered "The Mad Major." Some guy wearing sterile fatigues (no insignia) with only his gold oak leaf of rank.

He immediately became ecstatic at the prospect of having a group of Rangers available. He wanted to return to the island with the troops and go hunting for Gen. Austin. The Rangers were not impressed with his lack of an insertion/extraction plan and the dearth of intelligence on his target. As tactfully as possible, they avoided being commanded by him.

Next morning, the Rangers were transferred to another ship. The "Mad Major"

was also offloaded; thankfully, the Rangers never encountered him again. Around noon that day, they returned to the airstrip by CH-46. They were greeted by the normal harassment given any troopers who suffer a break in contact.

The Rangers figured they were about done. The 82nd was establishing a firm hold, the students were safe, their mission accomplished. ✕

THE CRAZY AMERICANS

by Jim Graves

Much about the American forces who landed on Grenada on 25 October 1983 came as a shock to Grenadians.

Four years of propaganda had convinced some Grenadians that Imperialists (the term used by the New Jewel Movement for Americans) were "white, vicious and evil."

Thus, Grenadians were a little surprised when the troops came ashore. Quite a number of the Americans turned out to be black, and there was not a single reported incident of vicious or evil behavior.

Civilian Grenadian casualties were light, about 19 according to the best information available to SOF, and the Grenadians seemed to harbor no hard feelings about those.

Two civilians were killed by errant shots during the attack on the Cuban warehouse at Frequente and 17 civilians were killed when an A-7 dropped a 250-pound bomb on a mental hospital known in Grenada as the "Crazy House."

The bombing of the hospital was regrettable, but understandable under the circumstances. The unmarked hospital was located only 75 yards from Fort Frederick, a People's Revolutionary Army headquarters. Fire from Fort Frederick was responsible for bringing down a helicopter on the first day of the battle.

Gen. Hudson Austin, Defense Minister and commander of the PRA, is as responsible as anyone for the incident. Austin had placed a Grenadian flag on the hospital to confuse it with the Fort Frederick HQ building and had two gun positions near it: a BTR-60 hidden in trees just below the wing that was hit and a ZU-23 on the hill on the other side of the hospital. Gen. Austin at one point had demanded that the staff of the hospital arm themselves. They failed to do so, but Grenadians say Austin did release and arm some of the patients.

The incident was viewed as unavoidable by Grenadians, in general, and even by the hospital staff. One of the nurses at the hospital, a U.S. citizen, stated she would have done the same thing had she been in the soldiers' place.

Although Grenadians had no trouble dealing with the Americans' invasion — in fact the majority of them, 91 percent, were in favor of it — they did have trouble understanding American humor.

On Tuesday, 1 November, the 82nd Airborne PsyOps teams were traversing the island in jeeps and helicopters broadcasting a "surrender" message taped by a former New Jewel Movement leader.

I was standing in the central marketplace in St. George's, surrounded by hundreds of Grenadians, when a jeep pulled up and the U.S. troops started playing the message. The Grenadians gave me odd looks when I cracked up as the intro music blared forth.

It was Wagner's *Ride of the Valkyries*. Obviously, the Grenadians hadn't seen *Apocalypse Now*.

But the most puzzled Grenadian I saw was a lady who was in the process of burning her NJM Fourth Anniversary T-shirts when she was stopped by U.S. paratroopers. She knew she wouldn't be arrested for possession of the T-shirts, but never in her wildest dreams had she imagined that American troops would pay \$7 each for the obsolete T-shirts.



Navy Public Affairs petty officer with Fourth Anniversary T-shirt for New Jewel Movement. The T-shirts were hastily pulled out of a fire when Grenadians discovered Americans would pay top dollar for them.



This is the first of a three-part series on the insurgencies of Burma's hill tribes: the Karens, the Shans and the Kachins. Since 4 January 1948 when Burma gained independence from Britain and established the coalition Union of Burma, the government has been unable to quell the ethnic insurgencies. The Karens are the second largest ethnic group, next to the Burmans, and constitute approximately seven percent of the population. — The Eds.

WHEN the Burmese Army began its long-awaited move against the Karen Rebels last June (making strictly illegal use of U.S. helicopters in the process), there was a lot of excitement on Embassy Row in neighboring Thailand. A stunning Burman victory was predicted.

But the prediction was wrong. By the time the attack ended, the U.S. government had egg on its face and was trying hard to keep the details from coming to the attention of Congress. Two shiny new Hueys were lying in the jungle like crumpled beer cans, and the Karens were grinning from ear to ear. They had downed both Hueys with a homemade mortar. That's right, a home-made mortar.

It happened this way. On 2 June 1983, the word went out among foreign military attaches and journalists in Bangkok that a massive Burmese operation had begun that day. The predicted outcome was practically universal: This time it was all over for the Karens.

The U.S. Embassy in Rangoon knew that the Hueys were involved, but made no protest. On the face of it, this was highly illegal because the Hueys were given to Burma's military dictatorship only for use in suppressing opium traffic out of the notorious Golden Triangle, far to the north where the borders of China, Burma, Laos and Thailand come together. The Burmans had given their word that the choppers would not be used for population control. But everybody

ABOVE: Kawthoolei boasts simple but effective radio net. Photo: Karen National Liberation Army

RIGHT: Karen HQ Security Company wears variety of uniforms, and carry variety of weapons. Photo: Ralph Edens

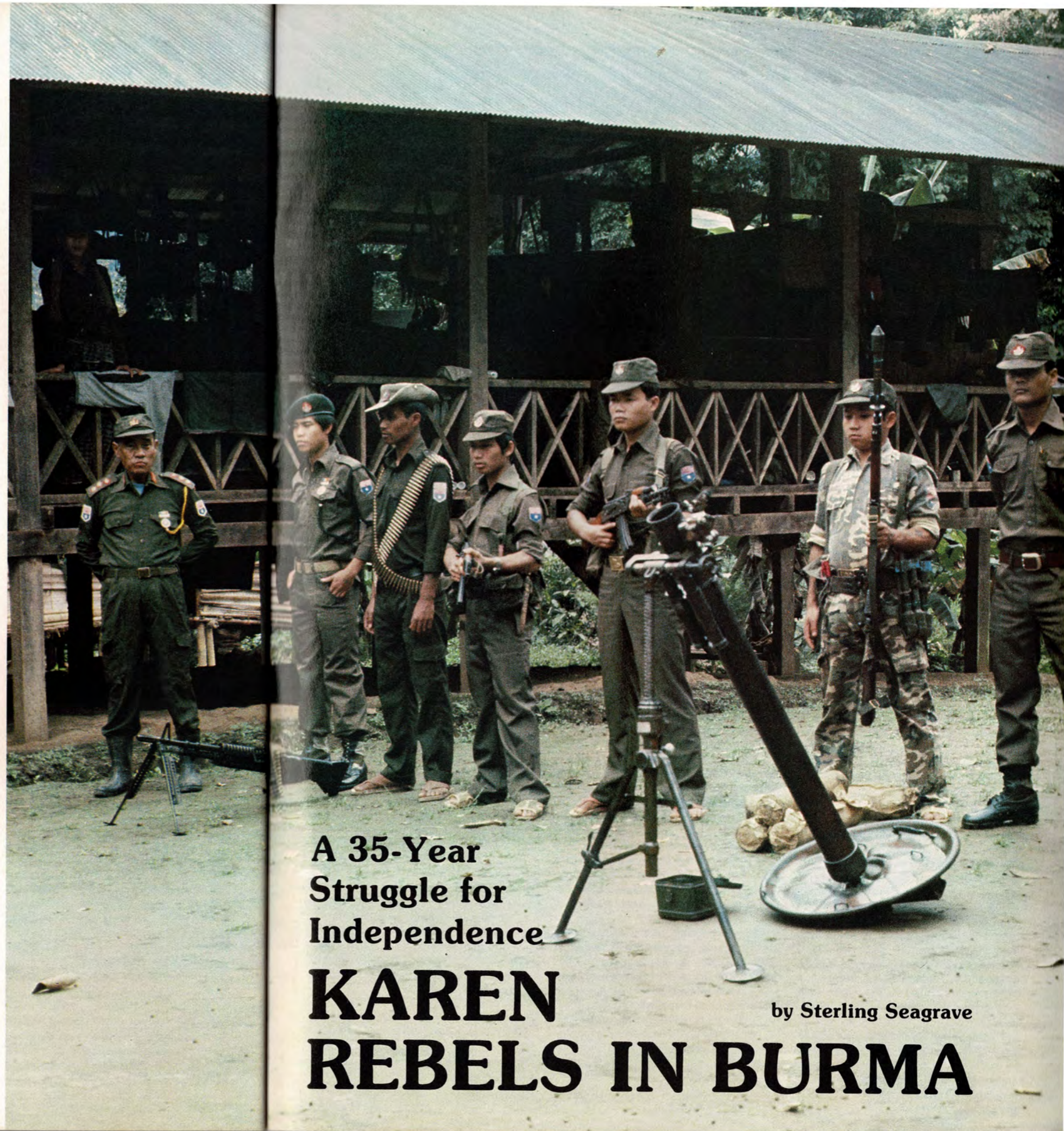
knew that they were using them anyway to suppress the ethnic rebels.

There had been arguments before congressional committees over the years, pointing out that U.S. aid was being abused and used to destroy political enemies of Burma's strongman, Gen. Ne Win. This was one reason why the foreign embassies were watching the latest campaign so closely.

Another reason was the dangerous proximity to the Thai border. The Thai government maintains good relations with the Karen people and their rebel leadership. It makes sense.

The Karens are a well-educated, stable ethnic force with British-trained military leaders. They are traditionally anti-communist and have been struggling against Burmese oppression for nearly 40 years. The Karens control the jungled mountains that serve as a buffer between Thailand and Burma. They dominate an area larger than New England, including rich countryside ranging all the way from the long southern tail of Burma up to the bridge on the River Kwai, northwest of Bangkok, and northward along the Salween River to the edge of the Golden Triangle, where the wild and beautiful countryside comes under the control of a different group of ethnic rebels, the Shans.

The Thais obviously like having the Karen buffer zone. The rebels are permitted to operate on the Thai side of the border with minimal interference. On the other hand, Bangkok is traditionally frosty toward Rangoon: They have been enemies for centuries. Burmese armies — mounted on war elephants — sacked the Thai capital at Ayudhaya in the 18th century. Still, despite pretenses of neighborliness, periodic skir-



A 35-Year
Struggle for
Independence

KAREN REBELS IN BURMA

by Sterling Seagrave

mishes erupt between Thai and Burman border patrols.

On 2 June, the Burmese Army struck first at a remote Karen outpost guarding Nawtaya Pass at the top of the Dawna Mountain Range. This is the only direct route through the mountains from the Burman-controlled lowlands into a Karen stronghold in a broad valley along the Thai border, near the town of Mae Sot.

The Karens have controlled the big, secluded valley for decades, successfully thwarting all Burman attempts to seize it. It is an important part of the Karen rebel nation (which has its own prime minister, cabinet, tax structure, school system, teak lumber mills, etc.). But this time the small Karen garrison at Nawtaya Pass was understaffed, reduced to only five soldiers. The rest were away on raids against Burman garrisons to the west.

As a result, the Burmese Army was able to overrun the outpost, but lost two dead and one wounded, while the five rebels retreated to the nearest Karen garrison (at Ler Bar Lu Kho) where there was another battle. But all of this was only preliminary.

The main Burmese Army force was headed for the strategic town of Mawpokey, where the chief Karen radio transmitter was situated. This town, on the Burman side of the border river, has Karen schools and mills, plus a hearty export trade to Thailand in cattle, teak and minerals. It is close to Karen headquarters and symbolic of the Karen's success in running a rebel nation within a nation.

Units of the Burmese Army's 44th Light Infantry Regiment had the town surrounded before dawn on 5 June. One company managed to infiltrate the town in the dark. When they were discovered, fighting began. There were only 40 Karen soldiers in Mawpokey at the time, but as the attack commenced, every able-bodied Karen in town ran for weapons. The Burmans who had infiltrated were driven out. They regrouped, forded the river and made their way through Thai territory to the Thai village of Mae Tan to attack the Karen defenders from behind.

It was a well-planned operation, supported by Hueys bringing in howitzers and ammunition, and taking out wounded. The Karens realized that they were in trouble.

The first day's battle raged from 0530 until sundown. The Burmans lost 102 dead and 94 wounded. The Karens lost nine killed and 18 wounded. Although taken off guard, the Karens reacted swiftly.

Main force units and commando teams converged on Mawpokey from every direction. A battalion of the Karen's 7th Brigade, plus the 101 Special Force who were rushing to relieve the siege of Mawpokey, clashed with Burmese Army elements at nearby Pwe Taw Roh, a battle that lasted two days. Other battles occurred up and down the valley.

On 9 June, the Burmese Army seemed to have the upper hand when seven rebels, led by young Saw Law Eh, slipped up to the enemy field headquarters on the football grounds at Taleka. They were toting a



Karen dignitaries stand in front of main battle tank in 1968 photo. From left to right: Prime Minister Saw Than Aung, President and Defense Minister Maj. Gen. Bo Mya and the late "chief ideologist" Mahn Ba Zan. Photo: Sterling Seagrave



APRIL 84



ABOVE: Robert K. Brown approaches Karen stronghold, sharing native riverboat with Saw Sampson, Karen Minister of Foreign Affairs. Photo: Ralph Edens LEFT: Karens move men and materiel along jungle rivers from Thailand to Burmese bases in shallow-draught "Long-tail" boats. "Tails" are long steel drive shafts connecting propellers with powerful inboard engines. Photo: Ralph Edens BOTTOM LEFT: Rugged terrain and dense vegetation typify most of Karen "Republic of Kawthoolei." Photo: Ralph Edens

homemade mortar and five rounds of ammunition. While they struggled to set up the crude mortar, they watched one Huey being loaded up and prepared for takeoff, while another took on wounded.

When the first Huey lifted off, Saw Law Eh began firing. His first round seemed to go astray, and the first Huey was clattering off over the tree tops when it suddenly exploded in midair. His second shot fell on the football field and seemed to have been wasted. But shrapnel splinters from it tore through the second Huey, which by then was about 20 feet off the ground. The chopper dropped like a stone and sat on the field with the rotors turning for about 10 minutes before the engine stopped.

There was nothing visibly wrong with the Huey, but a Karen radioman in the group heard the pilot say he felt pain over his bladder and the co-pilot complain of chest pains. Shrapnel had hit them just enough to cause panic and keep them from flying out. Both pilots seemed unable to move. They had to instruct a soldier aboard how to stop the engine.

A third mortar round meanwhile fell on the field, but did not explode. The last two rounds were expended holding back the

Burmese Army troops charging Saw Law Eh's position. The Karens beat a quick retreat.

When the Karens were gone, the Burmans blew up the Huey. Nothing was wrong with it, but the only men who could fly it to safety were out of commission for the season. The Burmans did not want to leave it for the Karens. The rebels did capture several howitzers and a large quantity of other weapons and ammunition.

The Burmans were now showing definite signs of giving up. The loss of the two U.S. helicopters had brought their confidence crashing down. They called in jet fighters to cover their retreat. The Karens were now organized and coming in full strength. Karen main force units were now ready to take on the Burmans, one-on-one.

On 11 June, nine days after the battle had begun, two battalions of the Karen main force engaged the Burmese Army at Taleka, killing 60 and wounding 70 before the Burmans finally gave up and withdrew through Nawtaya Pass. During the last skirmish, one of the Burman jet fighters, a U.S.-made AT-33A, was damaged and tried to make it back to Pa-an Airbase near the Salween delta, but it crashed short of the runway,

killing the pilot.

In all, the Burmans lost 215 dead, 219 wounded, two Hueys, one jet fighter, several artillery pieces and large quantities of smaller weapons and ammo. The Karens lost a total of 18 dead and 26 wounded. The Karens captured two French mining engineers — whom they were still holding as this article went to press — for exchange. What had begun as a major military campaign had turned into a disaster.

Diplomatic relations between Thailand and Burma chilled to a record low for the decade. The Thais are famous for their permissiveness and tolerance, but this hospitality did not extend to Burmese Army troops crossing into Thai territory for a sneak attack.

The most embarrassing result, however, was the loss of the Hueys. If they had been used successfully, neither the U.S. Embassy in Rangoon nor the one in Bangkok would have made a great issue out of their illicit use. There is a good chance that it would all have remained buried in classified cable traffic to the Pentagon and State Department, with only minor repercussions. Americans have learned that it is not fruitful to try to slap the Burmans on the wrist. The

Burmans are tough, independent and highly intelligent, with one of the world's oldest and most interesting cultures, and an impressive military tradition. They like to do things their own way, even if it means angering Washington, Peking or Moscow.

But the fact that the two Hueys were destroyed while engaged in an illegal operation (not to mention one involving penetration of the Thai border), caused red faces all the way up to the Executive Office Building on Pennsylvania Avenue. According to sources at the American Embassy in Rangoon, the ambassador was "madder than hell," and sources at the American Embassy in Bangkok said the embassy staff was "whooping it up" with glee.

The battle of Mawpokey was given lavish treatment in Bangkok's English-language and vernacular press. There were amusing stories "warning" journalists "not to attend" Karen press conferences. The stories, published at the instruction of the Thai government, made a point of stating exactly where and when these press conferences would be staged.

As for Congress and the long-simmering issue of sending Hueys to Burma for "opium suppression," there was an outside chance that this incident would trigger a review of U.S. military aid abuses. But only an outside chance. After all, who had ever heard of these Karen rebels, and who could get excited about them when they were not called a national liberation front?

The United States should realize that the



ABOVE: Evening formation at Karen HQ. Photo: Ralph Edens **RIGHT: Karen troops on training exercise. Continuous training over the years helped outnumbered Karens repulse better-manned and -trained Burmese Army during June '83 surprise attack. Photo: Sterling Seagrave** **BELOW: Karen "chief ideologist" Mahn Ba Zan (center) jokes with Karen elders and Karen soldier. Photo: Sterling Seagrave**

struggle for Burma will never be settled without the Karens' participation. They are the only rebel force close and strong enough to hit the Burmans where it counts. This last confrontation was not the first time they have proved it.

In August 1948, just eight months after the Union of Burma became independent from Britain, the Karens moved suddenly and swiftly to end their quarrel with the Burmans. In less than 10 days, Karen forces swept across the country, seizing the cities of Thaton and Moulmein without firing a shot, and closed to within 10 miles of Rangoon. The Burmans were stunned. Counterattacks failed to dislodge the Karens from the area around the international airport.

Finally, the Burmans used a ruse. They offered to hold peace talks under a truce flag. The British ambassador and two other diplomats carried the offer to the Karens and persuaded them to agree. Reluctantly, the Karen leadership entered Rangoon under white flags, leaving their troops with strict orders not to violate the truce.

In their absence, Burmese Army units raced forward to gain strategic battle positions. The Karen soldiers watched in fury, their orders preventing them from blocking this betrayal.

In the city, the Karen leaders were prepared to negotiate a peaceful settlement. But they were astounded to be greeted instead by Burmese demands to lay down their arms. Now that the Burmans had treacherously gained the upper hand, they wanted nothing short of total, unconditional Karen surrender.

The Karens had no choice. Their leaders were trapped in Rangoon. Their soldiers were without senior officers — surrounded, outgunned and outnumbered.

After staging one of the most stunning military campaigns of the postwar years, the Karens had allowed themselves to be duped. Their cause collapsed as quickly as it had sprung into motion. The bewildered Karen forces straggled back into the hills that divide Burma and Thailand, where they continue their uneven struggle today, more than three decades later.

Why were these tough, determined guerrilla forces tricked so easily?

And why does their cause remain tragically unfulfilled today?

The truth is simply that the Karens are



straight arrows, unable to comprehend the duplicity of the Burmans. The Americans and British always liked the Karens because of their basic honesty — or naivety.

And herein lies the pathos of their historic struggle.

The Burmans, on the other hand, take pride in being able to get around life's obstacles by cleverness, cunning or brute force, as displayed so beautifully by George Orwell in *Burmese Days*. They are charming, witty, artistic, handsome, lazy, full of music and laughter — and homicidal tendencies.

In Rangoon, hit-and-run drivers are often murdered by angry bystanders. In the countryside, young men don't think twice about ambushing and raping village girls if they catch them off guard. Rape, after all, is just a strenuous form of seduction; and if the girl



is a Karen, that's even better since Karens are not Buddhist, but rather Christian — "eaters of foreign religion."

Few things are as amusing to Burmans as a tale of outwitting or making fools of the mountain people. It does not matter whether the victim is Shan, Kachin, Karen, Mon, Arakanese, or from one of Burma's many smaller ethnic groups. The Burman always sees himself as the fox in a sort of Aesop's fable.

The Karens came down into Burma thousands of years ago, in one of the Mongols' periodic migrations. Their lore speaks of crossing the Gobi Desert from the wind-swept steppes and forested taiga of Central Asia. They still possess relics of their ancient script, a written language that nobody in living memory has deciphered.

The Karens settled in the fertile lower valleys of Burma, gradually drifting south to mingle with the Mon people in the area that now includes the Malay Peninsula and the southern tails of Burma and Thailand.

Burma's geography has ensured its survival over the centuries. Rugged mountain ranges run north and south, blocking conquest from India or China. Rich river-fed valleys lie between the mountains. The rivers run down from Tibet, and include the Irrawaddy and the Salween, two of the world's great rivers.

More than a thousand years ago, the Burmans swept down in a migration from the Himalayas. They are not Mongols, but rather Tibetans, heavily influenced by the Hindus of India.



The Burmans pressed south and gradually took over the soft pockets of rich farmland in the lower plains of Burma, replacing the ancient kingdoms and pushing the Karens and Mons up into the jungles toward Thailand. There, the Karens became an oppressed minority, preyed upon for centuries by Burmese armies mounted on elephants.

Venerable No. 4 .303 Enfield rifle and rifle grenade are typical examples of weapons available to Karens through their normal supply channels: capture and black market. Photo: Ralph Edens



The tide was turned when Britain came East in search of empire. From India, the British invaded lower Burma in the early 1800s and waged a series of Anglo-Burmese wars to dominate the entire country. The Burmese monarchy was terminated in humility.

Shrewd English colonial administrators placed the civil service in the hands of Indian carpetbaggers, who could be trusted to be servile. The colonial army's native troop units were composed not of Burmans but of Karens. It was typical of the British to administer a colony in this way. They recognized the Karens as fundamentally simple people, not given to mischief.

American Baptist missionaries, who arrived along with the first British invaders (my ancestors included), also recognized kindred spirits and took fast to the Karens. Missionary schools and churches sprang up like mushrooms, and the Karens eagerly accepted fundamentalist Christianity.

Although the Burmese resented foreign domination, the Karens were accustomed to it. To the Karens, the ruler's character was important — not his nationality. The British treated them fairly and rewarded their hard work and loyalty.

On the other hand, the Burmans had been brutal overlords, stifling the Karens and jealously excluding them from education or government participation. So the Karens were more than willing to help the British administer Burma, and enjoyed their protection. Karen officers were trained at Sandhurst and gained significant mid-level ranks

BURMA SCHOLAR

Few people can write with more authority about Burma than Sterling Seagrave, the sixth generation of his family who has lived and worked there. Seagrave's father, Dr. Gordon Seagrave, ran a missionary hospital in northern Burma on the Chinese border and was widely recognized for his work among the Burmese and for his book, *Burma Surgeon*.

During a brief visit to the United States in 1937, Sterling Seagrave was born in Columbus, Ohio, but was taken to Burma at age six weeks, where he remained until WWII broke out. Seagrave's father sent his family to India, and eventually the United States, when the Japanese invaded Burma in 1941. Dr. Seagrave remained with the British Army in Burma's jungles and became the chief medical officer for Gen. Joseph W. (Vinegar Joe) Stillwell.

At the end of WWII, the Seagrave family returned to Burma until civil unrest forced them to withdraw to India and later the States again. Dr. Seagrave remained in Burma. Sterling completed his education in the United States and Venezuela, and traveled in Latin America as a merchant seaman before becoming caught up in the Castro Revolution. He was arrested by the Batista secret police and spent three days in the dungeons of El Principe fortress in Havana before being released.

This experience led him to journalism, and he returned to Cuba to spend the last nine months of the revolution in the mountains of Pinar del Rio with Castro's rebel forces.

He worked for several U.S. newspapers and magazines, including the *Washington Post* and *Time* in Paris, before returning to Burma just before his father's death in 1965. He was forced out of Burma and his father's hospital complex was turned into a military garrison by the Burmese Army in an attempt to control the insurgencies of the hill peoples.

Seagrave stayed in Southeast Asia for the next 10 years, where he freelanced for *Life*, *Esquire*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Saturday Evening Post*, *Reader's Digest* and *The Far Eastern Economic Review*, before returning again to the States. He worked four years for *Time-Life Books*, for whom he authored *Soldiers of Fortune*.

Seagrave is probably best known to SOF readers for his 1981 book, *Yellow Rain* (see "In Review," SOF, March '82), the most definitive work to date on the Soviet use of chemical warfare in Southeast Asia.

Seagrave has just completed a new book on China, *The Soong Dynasty*, which will be released by Harper & Row in late spring. He lives on a large sailboat in Chesapeake Bay.

in the British forces.

On the eve of World War II, the Japanese secret service took advantage of Burma's internal situation to turn the tables on Britain. Spies arriving as crewmen on Japanese ships offered help and training to Burmese nationalists. Thirty Burmese "comrades" were smuggled out in freighter bilges for military training and political indoctrination in Japan, Formosa and Hainan. When Singapore had fallen and the Japanese were massed in Siam (the official name of Thailand before 1939 and from 1945 to 1949), their overland invasion of Burma in 1941 was spearheaded by the Thirty Comrades, leading an army of Burmese rabble.

Unfortunately, the Karens were in the path of the invaders. First the so-called "Burma Independence Army" and then the Japanese Imperial Army had to cross through the Karen heartland to get from Bangkok to Rangoon. Anybody who got in the way was cut down.

Murder, rape, pillage and arson swept through the hills as the Burmans revenged themselves upon the Karens. The physical atrocities were imaginative and extreme: Ears and breasts were sliced off, genitals were skewered, women were impaled. The Burmese cutthroats who composed the invasion spearhead were mostly criminals, smugglers, dope runners and ruffraff who had fled to Bangkok to escape the British constabulary.

The poorly prepared British in Burma, as in Singapore, were badly routed. Only the appearance of William Slim, a British officer, saved them from ignominious defeat. Slim staged a fighting withdrawal to India that remains one of the great moments of World War II.

In India, Slim rallied his forces, counter-attacked in the Chin and Naga Hills, and caught the Japanese overextended. The carnage ended with the British in command and the Japanese fleeing back into central Burma. (Slim's *Defeat Into Victory* is a brilliant account of the campaign.)

The Burmese, recognizing the writing on the wall, contacted Lord Louis Mountbatten, the supreme Allied commander for the China-Burma-India Theater, and offered to collaborate against Japan — in return for guarantees of independence after the war. The British reluctantly agreed.

During the three years of Japanese occupation, the Karens had been totally subjugated. But hope reappeared in the form of Force 136, the British commando operation staged from Kandy, Ceylon (renamed Sri Lanka in 1948). This infusion of British support gave the Karens heart, and they wreaked havoc on the Japanese in ambushes and sapper operations up and down Burma's spiny tail. This was the region of the Bridge on the River Kwai — part of a Japanese railway from Bangkok to Rangoon that was repeatedly cut by Karen sappers. The famous bridge site can still be visited easily from Bangkok, and there is a strong Karen rebel base nearby at Three Pagodas Pass.

War's end brought demands on Britain to



ABOVE: Karen elders from throughout Burma met together in historic 1968 meeting, the first time in over a decade that all rebel factions had met together. From this meeting emerged united front of all revolutionary groups in Burma. Defense Minister Bo Mya, who still holds that position, is in uniform. Photo: Sterling Seagrave **LEFT:** Karen armorers proudly display shop-made rocket launcher (no technical data available). Photo: Karen National Liberation Front **BELOW LEFT:** Nurses and women's auxiliary corps join troops in evening formation. Photo: Karen National Liberation Front



grant independence to Burma as promised. By then Britain had a Labour government that was quick to compromise. England had its hands full with internal rebuilding, and no resources left to fend off independence movements in its colonies.

The Burmese leader, Gen. Aung San, who had led the Thirty Comrades from the beginning, was a tough, determined liberator. He kept pressure on Britain until resistance collapsed in Whitehall.

Britain recognized that independence could not be granted to the Burmans without also granting it to the other ethnic peoples of Burma. Otherwise, they would simply be turning over rule to one faction, while the others were left to fend for themselves.

The Shans already had a state government of their own, so they felt no immediate pressure to escape from Burmese clutches. The Kachins in the far north were so far away that they had little contact with the lower Burmans. So they did not demand a separate settlement either.

The Karens had no separate state government, and if Burma were turned over to the lower Burmans, it was clear to the Karens

what would follow. They initially pressed the British not to leave. Then they asked for guarantees of internal self-rule.

The best that Britain could offer was a plan that gave the Burmans control of the central government, and made vague promises to the Karens and other ethnic minorities. They were assured that they could sue for divorce after 10 years if the Burmans did not treat them fairly. Theoretically, they could then become independent or establish a federation on equal footing with the Burmans. Unfortunately, the Karens and other minorities believed these promises. Burma became fully independent of Britain in January 1948.

Tragedy followed. Whether the Burmese leader, Aung San, ever intended to live up to his promises became a moot point when a rival politician had him assassinated. Almost the entire independence cabinet died in the same hail of machine-gun fire.

U Nu, a Buddhist teacher, became the new Burmese leader. But he was indecisive and vulnerable to pressure from unscrupulous generals and politicians. The Communist Party took advantage of the chaos, and staged a widespread uprising. Only a few months after gaining its independence, Burma was plunged into civil war.

At first, the Karens thought they should support the central government. The Burmese Army had many Karen officers, and the defense ministry was filled with Karen generals.



HEART OF DARKNESS

by Robert K. Brown

Rain showers hit us intermittently as Ralph Edens, myself and a few Karen chugged up the muddy Thaungyin River that serves as the border between eastern Burma and western Thailand. The Thaungyin laboriously wound through steep jungle-covered granite peaks sheathed in gray cotton-candy clouds. Ominous silence was broken only by the steady throb of the inboard engines of our slim long-tail boats. Occasionally we passed groups of sullen, staring natives.

The further we progressed the more our sense of foreboding grew: One could equate it with that experienced by Marlow as he made his way into darkest Africa seeking the mysterious Kurtz in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* or by Martin Sheen while seeking out Marlon Brando in *Apocalypse Now*. Something evil was out there . . . perhaps it was the sanctuary of King Kong.

Several hours after leaving the Thai side of the river, we nosed our craft into the muddy river bank on the Burmese side, climbed up and found ourselves in the headquarters of an isolated nation-state like one of those that Kipling's 19th-century soldiers of fortune stumbled across in their adventures in the then-uncharted wilds of mid-Asia.

The Republic of Kawthoolei (Kipling, of course, would have labeled it "Kingdom"): No map or encyclopedias outline its borders. Its boundaries exist only in the minds of its inhabitants and in

But the Burmese were nervous. Now that they had gained power over all of Burma for the first time in 150 years, they did not want to risk losing it to the communists or to any minority group that might take advantage. Craftily, the Burmans in the general staff engineered the firing of a score of top Karen officers, purging the defense ministry of Karens.

Brown examines General Bo Mya's stainless steel S&W .38 Special. Such handguns are the only perks available to high-ranking Karen officers. Photo: Ralph Edens

a few Karen pamphlets. The names of the Karen people — Ba Thin, Bo Mya, Ba U Gyi, Saw Law Eh — are as arcane as the names of their villages: Mesari, Manerplaw, Ler Bar Lu Khe, Maw-pokey, Pwe Taw Roh, Taleka.

But instead of the bizarre swords, pikes and bows that Kipling's adventurers might have encountered, the Karens are armed with M16s, AK-47s, .303 Enfields and 81mm mortars; instead of medieval siege machines, they use a homemade rocket system.

Upon pushing through the vegetation lining the river, we found a soccer/drill field surrounded by thatch-covered, open-sided long houses on stilts. We had arrived at Manerplaw — the Karen military headquarters and location of their national government, which housed the ministries of defense, education, finance, foreign affairs, mines, agriculture, and health and relief.

After being introduced to several of the heads of the ministries, brigade commanders and the president of the Karens, Gen. Bo Mya, who is also their minister of defense, we settled down to some serious conversation over a dinner of — you guessed it — rice with a few shreds of meat and hot sauce to discuss the military situation.

Needless to say, I was taken aback when asked by the headquarters commandant to say grace. Not having done so in 20 years, I extemporized some-

Burmese newspapers, controlled by politicians, fanned the frenzy against the Karens. Karen property was seized on trumped-up charges, and Karen villagers and shopkeepers were arrested and beaten, while their homes and shops were looted.

In the field, Burmese military units went berserk and massacred many Karen families, who were in church observing the

thing about requesting the good Lord to assist us all in the fight against tyranny and for liberty. Amen. Then I remembered that, prior to our departure, our briefing officer noted that the leadership of the Karen — both military and civil — were Southern Baptists or Seventh Day Adventists.

As we dropped the mosquito netting (yes, Virginia, they have some weird strains of malaria in Karen country) around our thin reed mats that lay on the rough board floor of the long house, Edens and I observed that this was one, if not the only, area of the world where a 20th-century adventurer could assist in the good fight without having someone from the KGB or CIA mucking about. Ignored by the rest of the world, the Karens have struggled and fought for independence and freedom for 3½ decades.

But there's no merc situation here. Not that the Karens don't want help — they do — but their bare-bones treasury has no funds for wages — for mercs or anyone else. Even the defense minister receives only food, clothes and roof — and bullets. And even if you're willing to put up with no pay, don't think you'll make up for it with unlimited quantities of rice wine or lithesome Karen ladies. Because of their religious beliefs, sex and sin are out — way out.

To prove my point, let me quote from the pamphlet, *Karens and Communism*: "Non-compliance with . . . moral rules and conceptions usually brings calamity to the locality. When there are cases of immorality, unusual happenings take place, such as outbreak of epidemics; failure of crops and garden fruits; occurrences of accidents, such as doing cultivation work; depredations by tigers, leopards and bears on cattle, pigs and domestic animals and so on. Sometimes, even human beings are attacked."

The remaining time spent in this little bit of Shangri-la passed with our interviewing additional Karen leaders, observing the troops "square-bashing" in the British fashion and reviewing the Headquarters Security Company.

What does the future hold for the dauntless Karens? Gen. Bo Mya sums it up quite simply: "We are determined to fight till victory is achieved. Surrender is out of the question. The only thing we will accept is independence!"

How does SOF fit into that future? We'll be back in Karen country.

Christmas Eve religious service. The Karens reacted to this brutality by launching their successful 10-day blitz across Burma. Then they made their fatal mistake of trusting the Burmese offer of truce talks.

A fascinating aside to the Karen liberation efforts was the attempts by British secret agents to persuade the Karens to secede from Burma and set up an independent state



called Kawthoolei. Although a Labour government was in power in the United Kingdom, the British secret service and defense establishment were still the provinces of Conservatives. The loss of Burma by the Labour government galled these traditionalists, who were determined to regain a portion of what was lost.

According to the British plan, Kawthoolei would encompass the southern tail of Burma, all the way up to Moulmein and the Salween River estuary. The western boundary of the new state would be the Sittang River, just east of Rangoon; it then would range north to include both the Salween District and Karenni.

This proposal would give the Karens and the Mons (who have always coexisted peacefully) a significant independent nation, with its capital at Moulmein, Burma's third-largest city and second-largest seaport after Rangoon. Britain would immediately recognize the independent state, and provide it a lifeline by sea with her merchant navy and gunboats.

It was a workable idea. The new state would be roughly the size of Panama. It would answer the urgent need of the Karens and Mons, and give Britain a foothold again for trade and transit in the East.

Unfortunately, the Burmese got wind of the plot (which helps explain their pathological fear of the Karens at the time), and the British were not especially effective in carrying it out — partly because the plot was never approved by the Labour government. For example, the British Special Operations Executive was to land arms and ammunition at Rangoon airport to support the Karen forces fighting around the city. But the British got cold feet at the last minute when their military mission decided that the Karens could not hold out more than 10 days. The British arms shipment failed to show, but the Karens fought on for 112 days, until their betrayal.

Licking their wounds after the Burmese treachery, the Karens did not give up. Soon they had trained 10,000 soldiers and 10,000 paramilitary troops. Karen military strength is roughly equivalent to that today, 30 years later.

The Karen forces are organized on a com-

ABOVE: Karen recruits carry wooden replicas of Enfields while they learn British-style close-order drill. DI lost left hand fighting Japanese in WWII. Photo: Ralph Edens

RIGHT: Karen troops train with light weapons. Here, HQ Security Company drills with old U.S. 81mm mortar. Photo: Ralph Edens

mand chain extending from supreme headquarters to command headquarters, divisions, brigades, battalions, companies, platoons and sections. The Karen military chief, Maj. Gen. Bo Mya, is a tough, experienced field commander.

The Karen civilian government is a parallel organization with Prime Minister Than Aung at the helm, and a central committee of able Karen elders, including ministers of finance, justice, education, mining, health and welfare. The annual budget of the Karen state, or Kawthoolei, is about \$2 million U.S., although this is an operating budget and does not represent the total revenue by any means.

The area controlled by the Karens is nearly as large as the British-proposed state. The cities and large towns are still garrisoned by Burmese Army units, but this area is still primarily a Karen and Mon stronghold. The Burmese Army does not operate outside the garrisoned towns without risking ambush and occasional massacre.

Out of their stronghold, the Karens and their Mon allies export tin, antimony and other minerals, and large quantities of Burma teak — all on an industrial scale. Traders move large quantities of Burma gems, including the world's finest rubies and sapphires, to markets in Thailand.

Reciprocally, traders take into Burma large quantities of dry goods, medicines and commodities to be sold on Burma's nationwide black market. In a socialist economy that resembles Bulgaria's at its worst, Burma has little to sell in state stores, so most residents depend entirely on the black market for food and goods.

From 1962 until 1982, when he stepped down in favor of his hand-picked successor,

Continued on page 101



USSR'S M75 GRENADE

Copycat Technology at Its Best

Text & Photos by Peter G. Kokalis



THE Soviets take what they want from the rest of the world without permission, be it territory or military technology. The relatively new Soviet M75 grenade is an exact duplicate of the Austrian Type 73 made by Arges Armaturen-Gesellschaft mbH. The Type 73 grenade is also manufactured by Elviemek SA in Athens for the Greek armed forces.

The Soviet M75 grenade was first fielded in Rhodesia in 1979 and substantial quantities have turned up in Angola. But distribution seems to be limited to Africa since none have been reported in the Middle East, Afghanistan or Central America.

Grenades have traditionally been

With the M75 Soviets improve the ideal hand grenade... by stealing it and avoiding R&D cost.

grouped into two categories. The purpose of the offensive grenade is to stun a defender and assault his position while he is still dazed. Its thin walls produce little shrapnel, but contain large amounts of explosive filler that cause considerable blast effect. They can be safely used by the assaulting infantryman without injury from his own grenade.

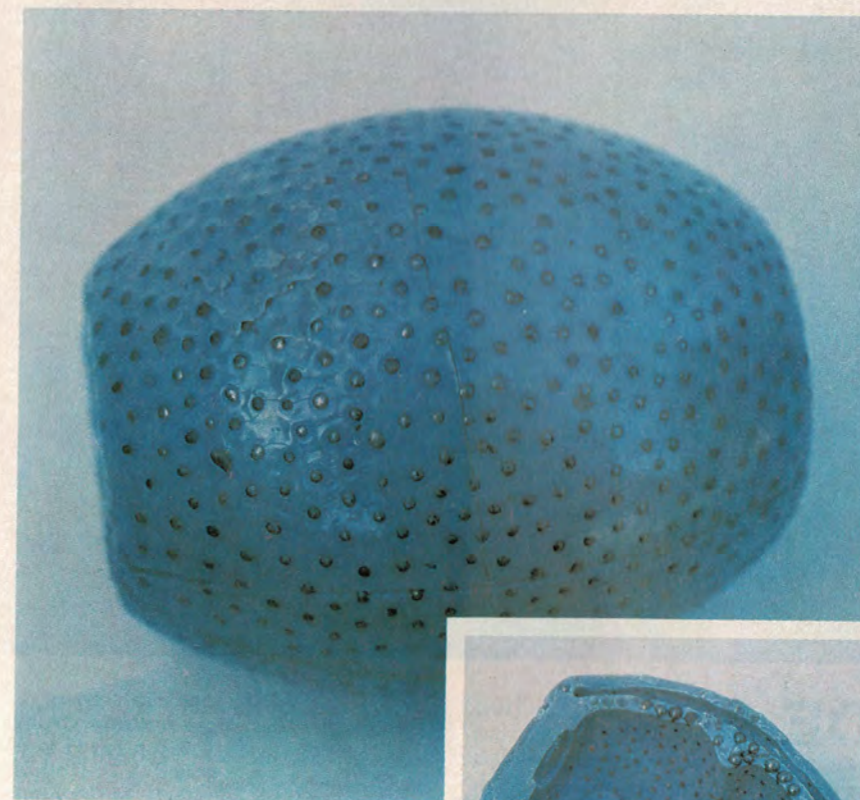
The defensive grenade was originally intended for use by those in defensive positions, under protective cover, to repel enemy assaults. It is designed to produce a large number

of fragments effective over a considerable distance from the point of detonation.

In recent times the distinction between the two types has blurred. Logistics would, of course, be better served if one grenade could meet both offensive and defensive requirements. The problem has always been with the fragments. Early cast-iron grenades, such as the U.S. Mk2 "pineapple" and Soviet F1, broke into dust particles and large fragments, which offered poor coverage and precluded safe use except from protective cover because fragments were propelled great distances.



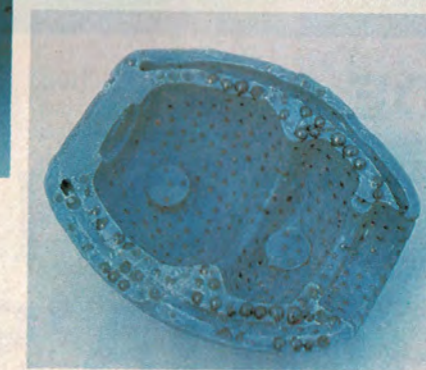
Side by side, USSR's M75 (left) and F1 represent one of the most advanced and one of the most primitive current-issue hand grenades.



ABOVE: Skin removed reveals plastic matrix holding 2,600 steel balls, giving M75 terrific killing power from point of impact to 10 meters away.

RIGHT: Longitudinally cross-sectioned M75 shows cavity for PETN high-velocity explosive and fuse assembly.

An ideal grenade would produce 100-percent casualties within a five- to 10-meter radius and no casualties past 20 meters. No cover would be required and the arbitrary offensive-defensive distinction would no longer exist.



Recent emphasis has been placed on designs which employ thin steel outer castings lined with square-notched wire, closely wound. The fragments produced are uniform, travel with uniform initial velocity and have a predictable lethal radius. The

U.S. M61 and M57 grenades are examples of this type.

In juxtaposition to this trend, the Soviet M75 grenade makes use of 2,600 steel-ball pellets, varying in size from .086 to .109 inch, set in a plastic matrix. Upon detonation, the plastic matrix vaporizes and the pellets are driven outward at almost 6,000 fps. However, because of their shape, the balls lose velocity rapidly. Although 100-percent lethality is assured within five meters, by 20 meters velocity has fallen so low that the casualty capacity is virtually zero: the precise performance spread everyone has wanted in a hand grenade.

The outer skin of the M75 is a sprayed thermoplastic synthetic with a waffle pattern. Overall length with fuse is 3.5 inches. Width is 2.2 inches. Weight is 12.5 ounces.

The explosive charge weighs 1.3 ounces and consists of granular PETN (pentaerythritol tetranitrate) blended in a small amount of light grease sufficient to make it putty-like and moldable. PETN is a high-velocity explosive of considerable *brisance* (shattering effect) and has a detonation rate on the order of 20,000 fps. It is a white crystalline material which melts at 140 degrees Celsius. Stable under typical ambient conditions, PETN is more easily detonated than TNT, requiring only 0.01 gram of lead azide to initiate detonation. The most common use of PETN in the United States is in Primacord.

The head of the time-delay fuse assembly is plastic to inhibit its travel any significant distance from the point of detonation. Screwed into the plastic head is a metal tube containing the igniter cap, delay compound and explosive detonator capsule. Time delay averages three to four seconds. Only one fuse tested so far has gone to eight seconds. The spring-loaded striker is held clear of the igniter cap by the safety spoon. When the spoon is released it is thrown clear by the striker spring. The spoon is not irrevocably detached from the mechanism until it has moved through more than 45 degrees. It is still possible to return it to the safe position and reinsert the safety pin at any lesser angle. The M75 fuse assembly can also be threaded into the Soviet F1, RGD-5 and RG-42 grenades.

The state-of-the-art Soviet M75/Austrian Type 73 is an excellent grenade and others will follow in this genre (the West German M-DN series is more than a little similar). Ivan will also continue to take what he wants, whenever and wherever he wants. After all, he's got the balls — we don't. ☒



SOF Joins ARDE Attack

ASSAULT ON NICARAGUA'S EL CASTILLO

Text & Photos by Steve Salisbury

ARDE guerrillas prepare to move out from Costa Rican-based safe house as Operation Death to the King begins. They carry FN FAL and AKs.

September 1983 was a good month for Eden Pastora's Democratic Revolutionary Alliance (ARDE) guerrillas. They successfully launched their long-awaited offensive inside Nicaragua. Steve Salisbury detailed two of the September victories, rustling cows from the communist Sandinistas and the bombing of Managua's Augusto Cesar Sandino Airport, in SOF's February '84 issue (see "Contra Communist Cow Roundup" and "ARDE Air Ops"). About a week after their last commie steak had sizzled on the grill, 120 ARDE guerrillas, accompanied by Salisbury, mobilized for the final leg of Operation Death to the King, the assault on the Castillo, a Sandinista-occupied fortification five clicks over the San Juan River border in Nicaragua.

On the morning of 15 September, Central American Independence Day, Opera-

tion Death to the King socked the Castillo with a two-hour recoilless gun and mortar bombardment of at least 70 projectiles — the first offensive of its kind inside Nicaragua. But a missed rendezvous with an advance party almost turned this symbolic victory into unmitigated disaster. Operation Death to the King and the author were on the brink, literally, of being blown out of the water. — The Eds.

ON 13 September, the most delicate phase of Operation Death to the King was under way: creeping up on the enemy undetected. Everything was going as planned — so far — but the most dangerous task remained: floating the cream of the artillery five kilometers up the San Juan River to a secured point two or three clicks from the fortress. (Project

Chief Tadeo, who was in command of the 700 guerrillas in the operational zone, had wanted to move overland — which was slower, but less dangerous — and he had serious reservations about going by river. However, since the operation was planned for Independence Day — just two days away — he had no choice.)

Just after 1830 hours, six guerrillas and I slowly motored upstream in a boat packed with two dismantled Russian 82mm recoilless guns and 39 rounds. The trip was an eerie one. The pitch-black jungle occasionally opened up into stretches of rolling grassland, which looked desolate in the faded-blue light of the half moon. Thin patches of fog drifted aimlessly and gloomy black clouds loomed overhead like huge phantoms.

The night was still. There was no wind and no one talked. The only noise was the

soft sputter of the motor and the turned-down static of Israel's walkie-talkie. (Israel, as those who read "Contra Communist Cow Roundup" will recall, was the chief of *peleton*, platoon chief, who had conducted the successful cattle snatching.) We were acutely conscious of the walkie-talkie, which was our only connection to the rest of the party. We were also very conscious of the streak of moonlight that seemed to follow us no matter how we tried to evade it. Just one tracer bullet could turn our boat into a spectacular floating funeral pyre.

We sat spaced apart on the gunwales and the guerrillas trained their AKs (except Israel, who had a Galil) on the river bank. Their perverse sense of *machismo* was served by exposing themselves to enemy fire, but that didn't erase the apprehension from their faces. Israel's valet, who was mute, was petrified and breathing heavily. Just 45 days before, the Sandinistas had obligated him to pilot their boats and he knew very well that they operated in the area. He mustered a tremulous smile when I looked at him, but that changed to a look of horror as a badly bloated corpse floated by.

Cruuunch! We lodged on a sand bar. Muttering under his breath, Israel and another guerrilla jumped into the waist-deep water and, after a few uncomfortable minutes, pushed us free. But this soon happened again. "*Put!*" said Israel under his breath as he jumped back into the water. This time he shoved us loose through sheer disgust.

Even without these delays, our journey was taking too long. The Castillo loomed ever closer like a glacier of dry ice studded with a few Christmas lights. Israel whispered over his walkie-talkie, but nobody answered. Any moment now the receiving team would flash us in — or so we thought. What we didn't know was that we had long passed the napping party and were advancing through unsecured territory.

The ominous calm bewitched me into a placid state of fatalism. A string of shacks appeared on the southern bank. An orange glow emanated from the window of one. We coasted into a sandy niche and disembarked. The fog had shifted and we could clearly see the Castillo — a foreboding, big obstacle 800 or so meters inland on high ground. We were at the periphery of the sprawling town named after the fort. From the plaza, music reverberated from a juke box like a tattoo from a tribal drum. But we knew that those men dancing weren't out patrolling.

Sampson, one of the three Panamanians with the guerrilla party, brought a frightened *campesino* from the nearby shack. He probably thought the big, black Panamanian was Cuban. He certainly

Guerrilla platoon that author traveled with en route to the Castillo. They carry AK rifles.



Some ARDE guerrillas made their way to the Castillo by horseback rather than river. They are armed with AK-47s.

thought we were Sandinistas.

"Oh, please don't take my animals," he begged. "You said I could keep them."

"No, no," said Israel in a soothing voice. "We belong to ARDE, the Democratic Revolutionary Alliance. Eden Pastora is our leader. We are fighting for democracy and against communist injustice."

"Oh, brothers, you must leave," the peasant implored. "The Sandinistas passed this afternoon. They're all around. There's a post only 200 meters from here." He pointed upriver.

"Do we have time for coffee?" Israel asked.

"No, please go. They might catch you."

Israel told him ARDE was going to attack the Castillo soon, and asked him to advise his neighbors to flee. We re-entered the boat and headed back to find our missed receiving party.

The ARDE guerrillas who had stationed themselves along the river's banks had orders to shoot *anything* coming downstream, so Israel urgently got on the walkie-talkie. There was only static. Things looked grim. The men shifted nervously. Someone farted. After a couple of kilometers or so (time and distance were warped) we saw shadows lurking in the mist on the southern bank. We leveled our guns at them and steered closer. A light blinked. Next to a thick tree, there were the silhouettes of three crouching men pointing AKs and an RPG at us. Everyone froze.

"Who lives?!" Israel cried out with restraint.

There was an excruciatingly long pause, then a quavering voice replied, "Is that you, Israel?"

"*Si!* Speak with decision! *Put!* Now who lives?"

The guerrilla gave the password and whistled. A handful of men popped out of their alert positions in the high grass, clicked their gun safeties back on and helped us disembark.

"Oh, Boss, please forgive us. We almost blasted you," said the regretful squad leader.

"My God!" Israel threw his arms in the air and shook his head. "Where's Tadeo?" he asked, his voice trembling.

"I know!" A guerrilla eagerly volunteered to lead us to him, but he promptly got us lost in the jungle, where at any moment we could stumble into an ambush. After recrossing the same stream several times and backtracking a bit, we tramped into Tadeo's camp, tripping over sleeping insurgents, who awoke and cursed us miserably.

Israel complained to Tadeo, "I've never been so vulnerable," he said, then recounted what happened. Tadeo reassured him, decided to use only one 82mm recoilless gun and sent us back to where we had almost been blown away by our own men.

BROTHERS-IN-ARMS

by Steve Salisbury

While waiting to mobilize for Operation Death to the King at an encampment six kilometers north of the border, we shared our shelter with 56 Nicaraguan refugees on their way to Costa Rica. They had been tipped off eight days earlier that the Sandinistas were going to relocate them to a concentration camp and fled via the guerrillas' underground railroad.

"The *piricoacos* said it was for our own security against the Contras, but we want the Contras!" said one middle-aged woman.

The men enthusiastically said they would join ARDE's ranks and fight the *piricoacos* — but a couple of hours later, they left with the women and children for Costa Rica. It underscored what Beto, the Panamanian, had told me: "Everyone hates the communists — even more than Somoza — and wants to get rid of them, but when the moment arrives to pick up the gun . . . many leave for Costa Rica. Of course, many stay too. But in the war against Somoza, it seemed like everyone grabbed whatever he could find with gusto."

Curious, I asked why. "Is it because the Sandinistas are too ruthless? Or is guerrilla life too hard? Or is it too early yet. . . are people waiting until the insurgents advance, like in the last war, the old bandwagon effect?"

"I don't know," Beto said, shrugging his slim shoulders.

An ARDE guerrilla overheard us and took issue with what he perceived as our questioning of the will of Nicara-

guans to fight both rightist-authoritarian and Marxist-totalitarian dictatorships.

"I don't doubt that Nics are valiant," Beto responded. "I'm only telling you what I've seen. If all the people who have come through here stayed and fought, we'd be in the cities."

The refugees' exuberant support intoxicated the guerrillas, but the refugees' tragic, uncertain existence was a disturbing, palpable reminder of where the guerrillas themselves came from and what they'd be without their guns. This melancholy showed through the festiveness with which they drank some recently discovered *chicha* (fermented cider). It was wicked, at least 100-proof and a year old, and had to be sugared down to be stomachable. One-half cup and I was wobbly. But it was a rare treat for the troops, and they took advantage of it.

Soon they were juking to rock music over the local Sandinista radio station and boisterously rolling dice for cigarettes, which they were smoking like whores on a slow night. But they were all ears when the clandestine Democratic Nicaraguan Force (FDN) 15th of September Radio broadcast came on later that afternoon. Despite the difference between the leadership of ARDE and FDN, ARDE's rank-and-file members consider everyone who fights against the communists as their brothers, and they heartily cheered the news that their brothers to the north had waged intense, effective combat around Matagalpa.

In fact, they felt upstaged and wanted to do one better themselves. They'd soon get the chance; all lights were green to hit the Castillo.

It began to rain. I took off my wet clothes and boots and lay down in the loft of a barn, crowded with my companions. Only then did the magnitude of what had almost occurred hit me. I thanked the good Lord for still being around and intact. I remembered the anxious week we had spent waiting for this operation to begin. The only action then had been diving for the fish killed when Israel had thrown a grenade into a school of shad in the river, or kicking a deflated soccer ball. And we had complained about being bored.

Now, we still had to take that damned recoilless upriver again, and we were pushing our luck.

To escape the unrelenting rain, we spent the next day under the raised, stilted farmhouse. The squad that nearly bushwhacked us had left and the seven of us from Israel's boat were alone. We slept and joked around. At the end of July, when the mute had been forced to work with the Sandinistas, an ARDE squad led by Segundo, a 16-year-old, had attacked a farmhouse in which the mute and four other Sandinistas were sleeping. The Sandinistas fled. The mute stayed. The Sandinistas had treated him badly and he was glad to join ARDE. Segundo joked we were returning him. The mute didn't think that was funny.

At about 1300 we heard faint explosions in the distance. One group of guerrillas, led by Antonio, had captured two Sandinista boats upriver from the Castillo. An American farmer was with the ambushers.

"We had been there a good while and a couple of small boats passed, but we wanted one of those big pontoons of 40 or 50 Sandinistas," he said in his Illinois twang. "Well, then, this boat came by. It only had two men, but some honcho was all high and mighty on its bow. That just tickled us. Damn, we had waited long enough. One of our guys with an FAL and telescopic sight drilled that fucker and he just flew into the water. The other dude thought he was smart, and ducked and steered blindly. Well, you know what an FAL bullet can do against that much aluminum." He pinched his ring finger and thumb close together. "The boat swerved into the bank and his body flopped out on the ground.

"Just at this time," he continued, "a boat with about 10 Sandinistas had rounded the corner and was going for the far side. We fired an RPG that landed just in front. It must have hurt 'em. Anyway, the second shot hit the bow and surely screwed 'em up. We then machine-gunned it to make certain no one survived."

That evening we tensely crossed the river with the recoilless gun and rounds. I was glad to see Don Domingo awaiting us on the northern side. He was small and looked every bit the part of the accordion grinder he used to be, but there was no



sleep. We stirred awake at about 0445. I was damp from the mist and *acoloradillas* (chiggers) were chewing my balls. It was finally 15 September, Independence Day — time to celebrate.

"This is going to be dick!" said a greasy insurgent, standing an encased 82mm round on his crotch as if it were an enormous erection. The Spanish woman journalist, the only other reporter with the guerrillas, ignored him and sipped the coffee Tadeo had heated with his lighter.

Oscar formed the forward point of our attack triangle with 12 men 400 meters downhill. We were putting together the recoilless gun when he radioed that they saw groups of Sandinista regulars (olive-and-green camouflage), border guards (dark-green fatigues) and militiamen (brown shirts) bathing in a creek 50 meters ahead (there was an encampment of 60 troops on the other side, according to the *campesino*), and asked permission to attack. Tadeo granted it.

LEFT: Rebels fire B-10 recoilless gun at Sandinistas.



ABOVE: Part of overland platoon that was to rendezvous with group of guerrillas traveling up the San Juan near the Castillo.

one else I would have along if we were to have trouble. He knew the area and its inhabitants well, was courageous and — above all — was quick-witted. He had already made several hairy recon missions over the last few days.

Just after I greeted him, he left, reappearing 20 minutes later with a family en route to Costa Rica and several insurgents. Oscar's Sebastian Mueller *peleton* (the platoon named for a pilot killed on the Managua air raid) had barged in the *campesino's* home, warned of the impending attack and asked for information about the Sandinistas. The father ruefully told him his pregnant daughter was in the town. Oscar replied he couldn't make any guarantees, but they'd do their best to avoid civilian casualties. The man then volunteered crucial information on the Sandinistas' whereabouts.

Tadeo came and the 15 of us carried the ordnance up a nearby hill, about two clicks from the Castillo. There we posted sentries and had a restless four-hour



BELOW: ARDE guerrillas display some of the 70 "casualties" that Israel's grenade left in San Juan River.



LEFT: Chief of *peleton* Tadeo (left), Segundo, Chester and Israel try to unjam B-10 recoilless gun.

At 0532 Papi looked at his watch, then fired a round from his U.S. M79 grenade launcher into a group of four border guards. His comrades immediately blazed away with their AKs and FALs from prone positions (with the exception of Oscar, who was standing behind a tree) in a staggered firing line. Buffalo, on a flank, rapidly jerked the trigger of his Soviet-made RPK machine gun: *da-da, da-da, da-da-da-da-da*. Sandinistas screamed and ran in panic. Moises and Santiago pounded the area with a U.S. 60mm mortar and a Taiwanese 57mm recoilless rifle respectively from the other point of the triangle 300 meters away on a hill 400 meters from ours, then fired furiously at the fortress.

Scores of Sandinistas fell in the water or on the bank. The wounded groaned. Thirteen-year-old Pitufo's M1 jammed after one shot and he was pissed. A Sandinista machine gun raked the hillside, mowing grass and shredding leaves. It was do or die for Oscar's men. Papi rose to the occasion. He followed the tracer rounds to a clump of bushes and fired his M79 again. Foliage flew; the machine gun was silenced. He then engaged tents, or anywhere shots came from, 19 grenades in all.

But the Sandinistas had just begun to retaliate. A heavy mortar coughed up the hill. Three or four rounds landed close. The blast of one temporarily paralyzed Papi. ("It felt like Alexis Arguello [Nicaraguan junior-welterweight boxing contender and ARDE soldier who had just lost the world championship to Aaron Pryor on 9 September '83] slugged me in the belly," he later said.) He would have probably been killed had it not landed in mud. An RPG exploded near Oscar and his men thought he was killed until he popped up to call a change in position. His lisped voice crackled over Tadeo's radio: "Brothers, a rocket almost hit me, yet we stay fighting. Free Country or Death!"

By this time, Israel's men had commenced to fire the 82mm recoilless gun. Ernesto (the *nom de guerre* of Pastora's 18-year-old son — virtually all the rebels use pseudonyms) loaded the first shot. I got up close with a 50mm lens on my camera (the light was too dim for my telephoto). Israel aimed the cannon through the thick fog at where he thought the fortress should be and squeezed hard on the stubborn trigger.

Boom! The impact of discharge knocked me on my ass and I took an eight count, momentarily deaf and seeing stars. A faint *bummm* registered in the distance. Too long. A .50-caliber machine gun chattered back, but it was too far away to seriously threaten us. Israel honed in on it. This time the *bummm* was louder and the *troc-troc-troc* stopped.

Segundo glimpsed the fortress through a brief crack in the fog. "Allow

Continued on page 95

Text & Photos by Steve Ketcham

IPSC Champ Smiths Guns As Well As He Shoots Them PLAXCO COMPENSATORS

IN the world of IPSC competition, gadgetry abounds. Many ideas first used by the practical pistol crowd have become standard for anyone contemplating a combat handgun, whether for everyday carry or for matches.

The latest craze to hit with pistoleros is a compensator on the end of the barrel to hold down muzzle jump for those fast double taps. The idea of a compensator isn't new, but practically every one on the market requires radical modification of either slide or barrel: changes which interfere with the way John M. Browning intended the pistol to work. J. Michael Plaxco's compensator doesn't work that way.

Sponsored by *Soldier of Fortune*, Mike was 1982 IPSC National Champion, winner of 1982's Steel Challenge, and member of the IPSC Gold Team that swept the 1982 and 1983 IPSC World Shoots. In addition to his shooting ability, he also happens to be one of the hottest young gunsmiths on the scene today. The success with his Plaxco Compensator-equipped .45 is no fluke. Studying the methods other gunsmiths used to fasten their compensator devices to the muzzle of the .45, Mike found them wanting in several respects. Some compensators were fixed with threads that weakened the barrel, while others were silver-soldered in place and sometimes left the barrel at undesirable times. Unreliability and modifications that weren't included in the standard weapon encouraged Plaxco to make his own compensator.

The Plaxco Compensator is about 1.2 inches long. Except for large vents machined in the top, it looks much like the front portion of the standard slide. Not only has he come up with a special attachment that doesn't weaken the barrel, the Plaxco Compensator mounts in front of the standard barrel bushing.

As Mike put it: "The gun was made to function with the barrel bushing in place. It's worked well this way for many years, and I couldn't see messing with success."

The weapon used in the testing is my own pistol. I did not identify myself as a writer when I phoned Mike to ask him about his work, I simply questioned him as a prospective customer. I was treated courteously, and all my questions were answered patiently. When I asked him how long for a full-blown "Buck Rogers" match pistol, I was told 16 to 20 weeks. Plaxco delivered on time.

To make a long story short, I ordered the kitchen sink installed, and I have never been

SMOKEY

Steve Ketcham served four years in the Air Force as a sergeant. Twelve years with a state police force has prepared him for a second career as a weapons writer. A lethal arms instructor (he trains municipal police in firearms use, riot control and the law of application of force), his work has appeared in *Guns*, *American Handgunner*, *Combat Shooters Report*, *Police Product News*, *Law and Order* and *Survive*.

happier with the work of a pistolsmith. Does all this work? Read on.

The work is top-notch, at least to the eye, and since the proof of the claims of a 15- to 20-percent reduction in muzzle flip could only be determined by shooting, I grabbed 100 rounds of Government IPSC loads of 5.6 gr. of W-W 231 and the H&G 68 200-gr. SWC, and headed for the nearest patch of woods. Using magazines that I had given up on with my other custom .45, I was surprised to find that any magazine I used in the Plaxco .45 fed superbly.

As for the compensator, I can only say, "Whoopee!" While felt recoil is not reduced significantly, the muzzle rise appeared to be almost eliminated. Keep in mind that this is my observation, and what seems to work for one shooter won't work for another. For me, it works . . . boy, does it ever!

As for the rest of the weapon, the metal checkering is deep and sharp. I checked the throating, and was surprised to see that very little metal had been removed in the polishing. Some custom guns I've seen have a terrific amount of metal hogged out in the throat, and still won't feed anything but ball. Bullet shape made no difference in the Plaxco gun, and any load I put in it got shucked like Iowa corn. Reliability is the name of the game, and with close to 1,000 rounds through my weapon, there has not been a single malfunction.

The compensator can also be fitted to the Commander model: The result is a weapon no longer than the Government .45, but with a significant reduction in muzzle jump. Were I to carry the shorter weapon for duty use, I would certainly want one of these installed. It will fit in a standard .45 holster, although when you purchase the standard .45 with compensator installed, you will have to wear a holster for a long slide, or a standard model with open bottom. If you're into IPSC shooting, Rogers Holsters Company (Dept. SOF, 1736 St. Johns Bluff Rd., Jacksonville, FL 32216) has designed a competition holster especially for the Plaxco-equipped .45.

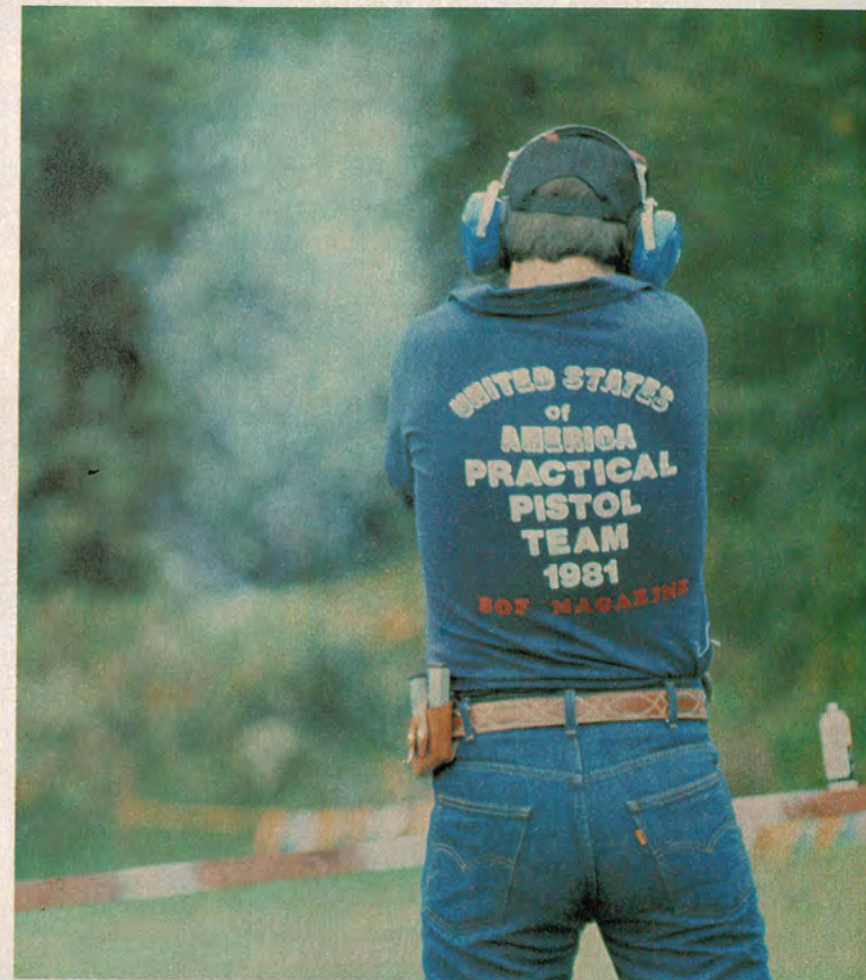
The compensator comes with a five-inch barrel for the Commander and a six-inch barrel for the Government Model, and you can have it with or without sights installed. You can remove the compensator from the weapon and plug in your old barrel and bushing if you like. You can have the barrel fitted and installed by Plaxco for a present cost of \$300 or you can obtain one of his drop-in kits. Although I haven't had any experience with the drop-in model, a friend who is also a cop/gunwriter has been using one with great success. Cost of the drop-in unit is a shade under \$200.

If you're looking for someone to work on a .45, I recommend J. Michael Plaxco. I've never dealt with a more affable person, and I've never used a smoother-firing .45. You can write him direct at: Dept. SOF, Route L, Box 203, Roland Cut-off, Roland, AR 72135. ✕



ABOVE: At full recoil, compensator holds .45 near target.

BELOW: Fine finish and balanced design distinguish Plaxco's work.



ABOVE: Plaxco — sponsored by SOF — shot 'em up in Milan as he won '82 IPSC National Championship. Photo: W.B. Guthrie



ABOVE: Bushing is visible between Plaxco Compensator and slide. Otherwise, compensator looks like slide extension.

BELOW: Rogers' holster for Plaxco-modified .45s shows popularity of this modification.



LEFT: Small groups in rapid fire are a hallmark of Plaxco-modified .45s: author's burst at 25 yards.



ARE NAVY PILOTS WORTH SAVING?

Navy Dept. Shortchanges Combat Rescue Capability



Text & Photos
by Barrett Tillman



LEFT: Navy C/SAR considers Sikorsky UH-60 Blackhawk — like this Army chopper shown in October Grenada invasion — best bird for their mission, but can't convince Navy Dept. Photo: Jim Graves

ABOVE: SAR H-3s carry two aircrew/gunners/flight technicians. These two have just installed M60 on swivel mount.

YOU are in deep serious. Your Vought A-7 took several 23mm hits inbound to the target and you had to eject. There wasn't time to completely clear the target area, even after salvoing your load of Rockeyes. The opposition is looking for you.

The odds are against you. Either you're too far inland for current combat search-and-rescue (C/SAR) helicopters to reach you, or the only available helos are specialized anti-submarine birds unsuited for C/SAR, or the enemy's air defense is too tough for existing choppers to tackle.

Even if you evade for a couple of days, the prospects of a rescue helo getting to you are near zero.

Higher success-rate nocturnal SAR missions are regularly practiced by pilots wearing AN/PVS-5 night vision devices.



It doesn't have to end that way. Today, this moment, the Navy possesses an organization devoted to C/SAR. The men, the tactics and the equipment all exist. They lack one ingredient: money.

Helicopter Combat Support Squadron Nine (HC-9) is the only unit in the U.S. Navy dedicated to C/SAR. It is an enthusiastic, hard-working outfit staffed with exceptionally dedicated reservists. The hitch is that HC-9 flies nine aging, outmoded HH-3As to meet the combat search-and-rescue needs of the entire Navy.

Nine choppers are supposed to cover the planet.

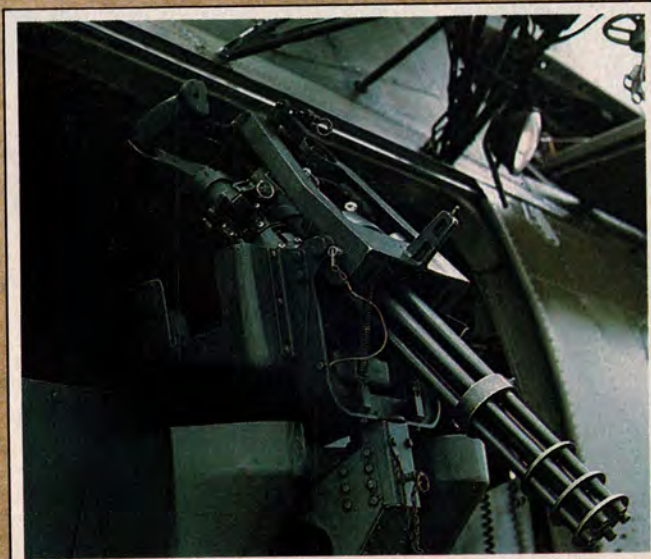
HC-9 is one of seven squadrons under ComHelWingRes. That's Navy shorthand for Commander Helicopter Wing Reserve. The wing commander is Capt. Stephen T. Millikin, who has four west-coast and three east-coast reserve squadrons. ComHelWingRes runs his show from Naval Air Station (NAS) North Island at San Diego, but travels afield to keep in touch with the troops. His squadrons perform a variety of chores, the most prominent being anti-submarine warfare (ASW). Defense of carrier battle groups depends in large part upon SH-3 Sea Kings and the new SH-60s with sophisticated multi-purpose avionics working in concert with ship-based Lockheed S-3 Vikings.

However, the wing commander (CAG, for Commander of Air Group in WWII parlance) has a C/SAR background. Steve Millikin was a lieutenant in 1967 when he pulled off one of the most spectacular combat rescues of the Vietnam War. An A-4 Skyhawk pilot had been shot down over Haiphong and ejected safely into the water. That was the good news. The bad news was that he landed within 300 yards of an island in Haiphong Harbor.

The race was on. Working under a Res-



ABOVE: "Survivors" await pickup as H-3 settles down to complete rescue. LOWER RIGHT: HC-9 Sea King homeward bound. Dark-green tactical paint minimizes IR reflection. LOWER LEFT: H-3A's GAU-2 7.62mm minigun in starboard mount.



Cap of A-1 Skyraiders, Steve chugged into Haiphong Harbor at full power — just about 140 knots. Combat SAR wasn't very sophisticated in those days; the main ingredients for success were a gutsy chopper crew and a healthy portion of luck. With his doorgunners firing steadily and changing barrels, Steve hovered over the Skyhawk pilot as the A-1s tried to suppress anti-aircraft fire. The helo co-pilot chipped in, firing his Thompson out the port window. That's how close they were to land.

The H-3 miraculously escaped damage while the crew watched bright orange tracers curling around the Sikorsky. As soon as the downed flier squirmed into the cable-suspended seat, Steve about-turned and, in his own words, "Got the hell out of there."

Steve Millikin received the Silver Star for that rescue; his crew got DFCs and Air Medals. It was noteworthy enough for Walter Cronkite to cover the episode on the CBS Evening News, and that's how Steve's family learned of the event.

AVIATION EXPERT

Author Barret Tillman has written more than 80 magazine articles, including several for SOF. See "Down But Not Out," July '80, "Sharpshooting with Chairman Jeff," May '81 and "Top Gun of the Pacific," June '83.

A 1971 graduate from the University of Oregon with a bachelor's degree in journalism, Tillman's writing has appeared in magazines published in North America and Europe. He has also written four books on the operational histories of WWII naval aircraft.

When he's not writing articles, Tillman, a military and aviation historian, works at the Champlin Fighter Museum in Mesa, Ariz., which is devoted to the preservation of airworthy fighters of WWI and WWII.

CAG Millikin and his crew spared that A-4 driver five years in captivity, and returned a combat-experienced aviator to his squadron. But not all C/SAR attempts ended so happily. In fact, the Navy rescued only one-sixth of its downed fliers.

Post-war data showed that half of all U.S. airmen bagged over North Vietnam survived the shutdown and ejection. But once on the ground, 84 percent of the Naval aviators were captured. Among Air Force fliers "only" 69 percent became POWs. In other words, the Air Force rescued proportionately twice as many men as the Navy. How to account for the difference?

Cmdr. Dan Hartley, the outspoken executive officer of HC-9, addressed that question recently. His advocacy article in the prestigious Naval Institute *Proceedings* was aptly titled "Keeping Faith With Our People." It has stirred a much-needed awareness of current C/SAR limitations.

Hartley noted two factors that complicate Navy air rescue ops. Most important, few of the players — helo crews, ResCap pilots

ARMED HELICOPTERS: AERIAL MONGOOSES

by Barrett Tillman

People have been hanging weapons on helicopters for more than 20 years. But the phrase "armed helo" inevitably conjures up visions of gunships with MGs and rocket pods. Since the early days in Vietnam, attack helicopters have been concerned with supporting the infantry or otherwise hitting ground targets.

But no more. Since the helo's air-surface repertoire is expanding, the chopper pilot in the next war is going to be concerned with hunting or evading other helos.

The U.S. armed forces will have to deal with this new wrinkle in air tactics, like it or not. Around NAS North Island the conventional wisdom holds that the first ace in a NATO war is likely to be a helicopter driver — probably a Hind pilot. The ubiquitous Soviet Mi-24 is acknowledged as the premier combat chopper in the world. Big, fast and well-armed, the Hind owes much of its configuration to the original Sikorsky Blackhawk layout, predecessor of the current H-60. Over 2,000 Hinds have been built since the type first flew in 1970, and current production runs about 30 per month. And while the Hind is best known to the public for its nefarious work in Afghanistan, its real threat lies in another direction.

Equipped with guns, rockets and air-to-air missiles, the Hind D poses a formidable threat to NATO helicopters. In fact, the Soviets are said to have transferred two fighter squadrons to helos — not because they're short of chopper pilots, but because they want air-to-air expertise in Hind cockpits.

The conventional war scenario in Western Europe revolves around Warsaw Pact armored formations. Outnumbered and outgunned on the ground, NATO must stem a communist advance with tactical airpower: airplanes and helos equipped to kill tanks. In the midst of a continuing battle for general air superiority, tactical aircraft will fight at low level, drawn to battle by the approach of enemy armor. Toss in mobile flak and SAM batteries, plus shoulder-mounted anti-aircraft weapons and you're in for a real slugfest: high intensity, short duration, extremely lethal.

Therefore, it seems inevitable that helicopters will not only stalk tanks, but one another. Guns are useful, of course, but the expanded acquisition and firing ranges afforded by heat-seeking missiles open a whole new dimension — the most innovative change in the 70-year history of aerial combat.

But helos will operate in the same airspace as tactical jets, and the Navy and Marines have already developed

procedures for fighting fixed-wing adversaries with helicopters. Navy evaluations show the survival ratio for an unarmed C/SAR helo in an air-opposed environment leaping from just about zero to at least 50-50 for an armed chopper. The Air Force is even more optimistic, believing that a Sidewinder-armed helicopter will win 70 percent or more of its engagements and survive most of the others.

Current SAR aircraft don't allow the Navy a missile option, as the old HH-3 has no hardpoints for packing a Sidewinder. Even so, it can evade destruction long enough to force a jet to break off due to low fuel in some cases. But against a Hind... no dice.

Curiously, the speed disparity between helos and jets — nearly a factor of ten — works in the helo's favor. Down under 100 feet where helicopters thrive, fixed-wing jets are seriously handicapped. Not only must they keep their target in sight while flying over 400 knots, they must be very careful about pointing their noses at the ground. Most jet jockeys are extremely uncomfortable about getting nose-down below 600 feet.

Additionally, the helo's hovering ability can spoil a jet's tracking. In several mock engagements, A-4s and other nimble jets have gone 15 minutes or more on a chopper with inconclusive results. Due to the jet pilot's high closing speed, he's only in range for a second or two. V/STOL aircraft such as the Harrier are more of a problem, but still it seems that only the "super sticks" can work a gun solution on an agile helo.

Now, hang Sidewinders on that chopper and suddenly he turns from chameleon — from a camouflaged run-and-hide critter — into an aerial mongoose. The jets can't shoot heat-seekers or even radar-guided missiles at a helicopter flitting through the weeds with much success. There's too much ground clutter and interference. But when the fast-movers pull up from their firing pass they present a good-to-excellent heat source for the 'winder. The chopper's ability to turn on a dime and give six cents change means it can be on-target almost instantly, regardless of the jet's direction.

Put two jets on one helo and things don't seem to change much. And if you mix in three or four jets, it's difficult for them to coordinate their runs and keep out of one another's way. They may finally bag the chopper, but they'll probably lose somebody in the process. And swapping a \$20-million jet for a \$6-million helo is no victory.

Therefore, the air-to-air helicopter is here to stay. Chopper development is going to be a fascinating process to watch over the next several years. For C/SAR, the advantages are obvious; the rescue vehicle can provide its own escort, freeing valuable fighter-bombers for other work. And that's a bargain in anybody's book.

or downed airmen — were fully trained or educated for such work. Second, naval aviators exhibited an almost instinctive urge to head for the sea. But in Vietnam, as in most maritime nations, the shoreline is often heavily populated. This demographic fact worked against a successful rescue. In contrast, Air Force pilots usually headed their damaged planes westward, toward Thailand. When they ejected they were often in remote mountainous areas where the terrain, which aided evasion, hampered ground search and gave aerial SAR the edge.

The extra time afforded by rough terrain was often crucial: Over three-quarters of all airmen captured were nabbed within 30 minutes of hitting the ground.

Now, over 10 years after U.S. involvement ended in Vietnam, relatively little has changed. Helicopter SAR units have all but disappeared in the peacetime Navy, since they were wholly a product of wartime necessity. The first and only dedicated C/SAR squadron, HC-7, was commissioned in 1967, composed of modified ASW and logistic helicopters dating back to 1964. When Hanoi completed its conquest of Vietnam in 1975 the C/SAR mission was handed to the newly-established HC-9, and since 1978 the "Eveready" boys with their nine-lives insignia have been the Navy's only combat SAR squadron.

HC-9 flies nine of the original dozen HH-3As modified for C/SAR duty. Some of them still bear battle-damage patches from 'Nam. The design is, quite simply, outmoded. With 1950s technology and 1960s construction, it registers over maximum gross weight with a full combat load and internal fuel.

Understandably concerned about their equipment, the squadron's personnel are uniformly dedicated to their mission, and as enthusiastic as any aviators around. Composed of 20 to 30 reservists with three regular officers, HC-9 is run by Cmdr. Roy R. Collins with Dan Hartley as exec and Cmdr. Ron Kurth as O-in-C.

Up and down the line, HC-9 pilots resemble nothing so much as street-corner evangelists. They'll talk to anybody, anywhere at any time in order to spread the C/SAR gospel. Two officers have even spoken in Washington at Congressional request — an unusual situation which usually doesn't sit well with some upper-echelon planners.

And there's the hitch. Congress can direct the Navy to allocate funds for specific projects if the appropriate committee thinks the service is neglecting an important area in budget requests. So far, it seems there's more support in Congress for new C/SAR equipment than in the Navy.

The reasons are varied and complex. But basically it has to do with sex appeal. (And what doesn't?)

The services — being composed in part of uniformed managers — don't always request what's needed. Careerists oriented toward the Big Picture can spend six years or

more in isolation from tactical units. Consequently, they lose touch with evolving operational requirements. In that situation, it's easy to become enamored of glamorous high-tech (i.e., high-budget) items.

And let's face it; helicopters aren't considered to be very sexy. Chopper drivers will dissent, of course, but they're a minority. What chance does an H-3 replacement have against an F/A-18 strike-fighter? About the same odds as beating the house in roulette.

I posed the obvious question to Cmdr. Bryan Lucas, one of HC-9's leading evangelists: "Obviously, fleet tactical aviators are the beneficiaries of the service you provide. Don't they exert pressure on budget allocators for a new SAR bird?"

Brother Lucas had a disturbing reply. "The trouble is education. Most fleet pilots regard helicopters as general-purpose machines; a helo is a helo is a helo. They don't realize that for any chance to succeed in C/SAR, you need people who train specifically for that job, and you need an aircraft capable of surviving the threat."

And the threat is increasing. Cmdr. Tim Wright of CAG Millikin's staff is a much-decorated chopper veteran of Vietnam vintage. He points out that Soviet Bloc armies equip their troops with shoulder-mounted SA-7 anti-aircraft missiles down to the squad level. "It's no longer like Vietnam," Wright says. "The people allocating funds still think of SAR operations in 1968 terms, where you fly in at 6,000 feet, spiral down to make the rescue, and climb back out. Well, sometimes it worked back when there were no SA-7s and you could get above most of the small-arms fire. But try that today and you'd last just about 10 seconds before some gomer shoots your tail off."

The road to survival in the 1980s is the low road — the lower the better. U.S. Army pilots are credited with developing what is now termed nap-of-the-earth (NOE) flying in which optimum use is made of every dune, depression, shrub and tree. In SAR terms, low-level ends at about 20 feet, NOE is anything lower, including below mean ground level.

During our visit, HC-9 demonstrated what is possible by combining NOE flight with interim modifications to existing equipment. Innovation is the key word, for the H-3 doesn't have much stretch in its aging frame. But what the reservists have done is remarkable.

They've made eight equipment additions: armor plate, a long cable with high-speed hoist, the 7.62mm NATO GAU-2 minigun, radar warning gear, flare and chaff dispensers, additional fuel, non-infrared reflective paint, and night-vision devices.

When these modifications are integrated into the training syllabus, expanded capability emerges. HC-9 crews regularly practice flying with their nocturnal goggles, performing maneuvers at NOE altitudes, mating airspeed to terrain — sometimes under 40 knots.

Says Bryan Lucas, "If we do our job right, we're in and out before the bad guys



Green smoke marks the location of two survivors during SAREX (Search and Rescue Exercise).

even know we're around. Our miniguns are strictly for emergencies, since we're not really equipped to shoot it out."

Instead, HC-9 relies upon NOE and deception. Hence the radar warning, flare and chaff dispensers. If there's indication of radar tracking, they can drop aluminum flakes which cloud a radar scope. And if a heat-seeking missile is fired, there's the last-minute chance of decoying the brute with a flare.

But for every advantage there's a price to be paid. And in low-level flying, the biggest problem is navigation. Picking one's way through familiar terrain can be difficult, for landmarks are usually obscure. Flying in unfamiliar, hostile territory compounds the situation by orders of magnitude.

Fortunately, nav aids are forthcoming. HC-9 will receive the Omega navigation

system before long, which gives not only position, but time and heading to the next checkpoint. Omega is a passive receiver and is therefore undetectable, relying upon eight worldwide transmitters.

Another upcoming gadget is the next-generation night-vision device. The current AN/PVS-5 was originally developed for tank crews, but has been adopted by HC-9 as the best unit available. Although relatively light (about two pounds) and compact, wearing the device on long low-level flights is still fatiguing.

Furthermore, PVS-5 is only useful about 50 percent of the time at night. It requires partial moonlight or strong reflection from the surface in order to allow pilots to see far enough ahead. The follow-on system is roughly half the weight and will permit flying more than 90 percent of nocturnal hours.

Getting into the target area is only half the job. Day or night, the object of the search

still has to be located. In the last years of Vietnam, the hand-held PRC-90 radio was standard issue, and it was not wholly satisfactory. Now its 30-year-old technology is simply unacceptable; its short range, brief battery life and low output compound the communications problem.

However, the PRC-112 is on the way. With automatic interrogation and response, it allows a downed flier to signal his location to orbiting aircraft without saying a word. That's a huge advantage if you're hunkered under a bush while people toting AKMs look for you.

The 112's other improvement is range. E-2 Hawkeye or other Elint (electronic intelligence) aircraft can pinpoint the unit's location from terrific distances with extreme accuracy — within yards. The drawback: there's no way of telling who's holding the radio.

That's why the final phase of a C/SAR operation requires voice contact. Each tac-

air crewman has a personal card on file with specific information: his place of birth, his favorite color, his first car. Anything which would only be known by that person. Then, before making the final run-in to the rescue, the helo crew queries the man on the radio. Anything but a series of correct responses will send the chopper home.

But with all the improved gadgetry, the best locators are the simplest. Signal mirrors are the most-used items for attracting a SAR bird in daylight; the flash is visible from tremendous distances. At night, HC-9 has discovered that a flashlight held upright and partially shaded with one hand also works well. Since an ADF homer is no good way down low and the Mark 13 smoke grenade is barely visible at half a mile, mirrors and flashlights will remain standard gear.

To demonstrate how all these factors fit together, HC-9 arranged a C/SAR exercise. It was a two-ship mission, with the primary crew under Cmdr. Paul Huish and the simulated E-2 control bird with CAG Millikin and Bryan Lucas. I rode with Paul Huish, a husky, easy-going aviator whose demeanor is something between relaxed and laid back.

"This kind of flying is like anything else," he volunteered. "We do it day after day until it gets to be routine, almost like taking the bus to work." If that sounds nonchalant, don't be deceived. These reserve aviators work at their trade because they love it.

Paul explained that most C/SAR missions are single-ship affairs. Only rarely would a support helo be dispatched; probably a gunship if trouble were expected. Otherwise, HC-9 figures that one chopper runs less than half the risk of being spotted than two birds.

Bryan Lucas briefed us on the scenario, though it was mostly for my benefit. It ran something like this:

Close to midnight the previous evening an EA-6B with pilot and three electronic warfare operators was shot down to the northeast. Two EW men were known to have ejected. Because of their exceptional intelligence value, these airmen were being hunted by the locals with more than usual zest. Since their rapid retrieval was so important, their pre-mission briefing had included a rendezvous area the next morning. The time frame can be extended for days in advance to suit the situation, but quicker is better.

Every SAR mission is run in five parts: identify, locate, authenticate, sanitize and recover. Sanitation didn't apply here, since the known threats were an SA-6 battery to the northwest of the survivors' location and a hostile unit known to be equipped with SA-7s was out of range. Otherwise we'd have had A-7s or other tacair to suppress opposition.

CAG and Lucas would take off before Paul Huish's crew in order to plant the "survivors." Then Steve and Bryan would orbit

Continued on page 98

DETONICS SCORE MASTER .45

Out-of-the-Box Winner

Text & Photos by Ken Hackathorn



SOF contributing editor Ken Hackathorn puts Detonics Score Master through its paces.

Award-winning pistol: These honors were earned by Hackathorn with Score Master.



Perhaps a little more accurate, but not much. Full-house custom Nastoff barely beats out-of-the-box Detonics.

DETONICS has long been the big name in little blasters. Their line of chopped auto pistols is famous for giving professionals full-power .45s in a pocket-sized package. But now they may get famous all over again with an out-of-the-box, full-size .45 auto for competition: the Score Master.

Detonics introduced the Score Master at the 1983 SHOT (Shooting, Hunting and Outdoor Trade) Show in Dallas. Already familiar with the top performance of Detonics hardware, I asked if a test sample were available. The rep said he would be delighted to provide one for an SOF T&E, and shortly I received a Detonics Score Master, serial number M-2034. M-2034 has since been severely tested at the range and in competition.

For all its unusual features, the Score Master follows John Browning's automatic-pistol patent pretty closely. It not only looks a lot like a Colt Government Model, it's another .45-caliber, blowback-operated, single-action automatic pistol with a barrel that swings on a link and a pin, and locks into the slide by means of ribs on top of the barrel chamber. Detonics' competition pistol is a development, not an invention.

But count on Detonics to do a competent job of upgrading something as good as the 1911 Colt. Nearly all the 1911's carbon-steel parts have been replaced with stainless in the Detonics. Now, I'm still suspicious of stainless steel in springs and lock parts, but my suspicion doesn't seem to inhibit the smooth working of the Score Master. Detonics has done a fine job of selecting stainless alloys, especially for the springs, and I've had no trouble at all on the test-sample Score Master.

Maybe this is less important than alloys and design, but I was very impressed with the finish. The Score Master is finished right, unlike some other high-priced guns that are delivered with burrs, grinder marks, loosely-joined parts and finish flaws. The flat sides of the slide and frame are finely ground to a satin sheen. The pistol's top and bottom surfaces are professionally blasted to functional, nonreflective finish. When you open the box to get your Score Master, I don't think you'll be disappointed.

Just about all the required equipment for a competition piece is included in the purchase price of a Score Master. Millet ramp front sight, Bo-Mar adjustable rear sight, enlarged ejection port, special Detonics extractor, rounded Commander hammer, Colt ambidextrous safety, extended grip safety, National Match trigger with over-travel stop, Pachmayr stocks and neoprene flat mainspring housing, and beveled magazine well are all there.

This is not just a dressed-up Colt. The Score Master is mechanically different from the Browning design. The most important and most noticeable change is the missing bushing. The Detonics has a heavy match barrel that hangs out the end of the slide with nothing visibly holding it there. Leaving the bushing out reduces the number of parts, and probably makes the Detonics more reli-

able than the Government Model because it gives the action one less place to hang up. The bushing holds the end of the barrel in one place for better accuracy, but Detonics has largely overcome that problem with a novel barrel-alignment system incorporating a long link that forces the barrel into a V in the front of the slide. The result is an accurate pistol of exceptional reliability.

Everybody knows what the Colt recoil spring is. It flies off into space whenever you're careless with the bushing wrench.

Since the Score Master doesn't have a bushing to hold the spring in place, the usually after-purchase addition of the Detonics recoil spring and guide system is standard. This unit replaces the recoil spring and plug in an ordinary Colt .45.

Testing was carried out over a period of some months at practice ranges and in combat competition. The Score Master performed beyond expectation in the reliability category. I kept careful count for 2,000 rounds, and had seven failures. Four of

these were caused by faulty ammunition. Of the three failures generated by the pistol, one was an extraction failure with GI hardball, and two were failures to eject with Winchester 185-gr. Silvertips. These last were certainly caused by the stiff Detonics spring, which requires high-recoil ammo. This reliability does not surprise me, because I imagine Detonics would not have sent a gun writer a sample that hadn't been checked out carefully. Still, the design seems inherently reliable, and I expect the private buyer's experience will be similar to mine.

Accuracy was never a problem. I have fired the Score Master in a number of IPSC matches, including one first-place A-class finish. In range testing, it did not prove quite as accurate as my Nastoff competition pistol, but the Nastoff barrel is bushed, the whole gun is more tightly fitted, and it is an excellent example of a competition pistol from a custom shop. Firing 200-gr. SWC Atlanta Arms & Ammo reloads the Nastoff was consistently more accurate, but not by much.

I have few reservations about the Detonics Score Master. Although I would have preferred a Swenson ambidextrous safety, and I do not believe the Detonics spring assembly is a necessary addition, these are matters of taste. More substantially, the Bo-Mar rear sight has its sharp edges intact, just waiting to get hung up on something. Triggers are entirely a matter of taste, but it is well known that the average IPSC shooter prefers the long 1911 trigger to the National Match. One is not inherently better than the other, but considering that this pistol is aimed at the IPSC market, it is questionable marketing to provide the National Match trigger as original equipment. The extended grip safety forces the hand relatively low on the grip, and this accentuates muzzle flip and perceived recoil.

Still, the pleasant features outweigh the disadvantages. Aside from accuracy, reliability and a fine finish, the gripping grooves on the slide are deep and sharp-edged, making a really secure grip. The front sight is easily changed, and the three Randall magazines (included in a wooden presentation case) worked flawlessly.

In spite of my reservations, the Detonics Score Master is simply the best over-the-counter IPSC competition pistol you can buy. The bad news is that it costs \$985. That is about what the average custom pistol costs, including the price of the original gun, plus the pistolsmith's fees. Still, there is a great advantage in not having to fool with FFLs, shipping, waiting periods, the punctuality of your gunsmith and worrying if your pet blaster is lost in the mails or not.

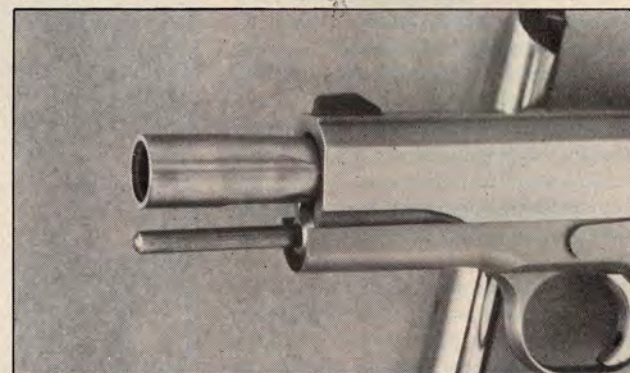
With minor touches the Score Master could be as good as any custom pistol. It is as good as most of them, already. If you want a really competitive pistol without any of the hassle associated with custom work, contact Detonics .45 Associates, Dept. SOF, 2500 Seattle Tower, 3rd & University, Seattle, WA 98101. ☒



ABOVE: Clean and simple, stripped Score Master shows fewer parts, more stainless than ordinary .45.

RIGHT: Most everything a competitor could want: Commander hammer, ambidextrous safety, extended grip safety, flat mainspring housing and Pachmayr stocks.

LOWER RIGHT: Bull barrel and guide rod distinguish Detonics competition pistol.



WHEN the General Counsel of Yale University and a graduate of Harvard Law School get together at a preppy spot like Providence, R.I., it's usually not over something that makes the pages of *Soldier of Fortune* Magazine.

In this case, however, Lindsey C.Y. Kiang, Esq., General Counsel for Yale University, also happens to be a Force Recon-type major in the USMC Reserve, an ardent parachutist attached as assistant S3 to Headquarters Troop Command (Special Forces), Rhode Island Army National Guard. The "Harvard," of course, is the author, whose credentials include 2½ tours in 'Nam (including six months with OP-35 of MACV-SOG) and a 1983 tally of three trips to Central America that included five parachute jumps, and one combat operation with the Salvadoran Airborne Battalion.

The event, held 24-25 September 1983, was officially billed as the Second Annual Rhode Island Army National Guard Military Parachute Competition — less formally known as "the Leapfest" — sponsored by Troop Command (Special Forces) and A Company, 2nd Battalion, 19th SF Group (Abn.). Troop D, 1st Squadron, 26th Cavalry, provided the helicopters, and the 243rd Engineer Battalion and 111th MP Company rallied around to help the maniacs who like to jump out of perfectly good airplanes.

The list of participating teams looked like a roster of active Army, National Guard and Marine Corps airborne units. One team was a scratch force composed of two Force Recon Marines and two Brazilian SF exchange officers stationed at Ft. Bragg, so one can legitimately (almost) use the term "international" to strike the appropriately prestigious note.

I flew in Friday night, was met by Maj. Kiang — looking very un-Yaleish in Marine camouflage utilities and eight-sided cap — who took me to Camp Fogarty. The collected contestants and other members of the cast were assembled for a preliminary MACO briefing, followed by a moderate (by SF standards, anyway) evening of beer and war stories. We had a lot to do in the morning. That night I was billeted with most of the troops at the Davisville Seabee Base.

Saturday morning dawned bright, clear and distinctly chilly — as befits late September in New England. I caught a ride to Camp Fogarty with 1st Lt. Pat McDavid, captain of the team from the 1136th Infantry Detachment (Airborne Pathfinder), Texas National Guard. After breakfast and the usual milling around, another ride, this time in big OD busses, to the drop zone: a sod farm next to a school. Most of the sod had been taken off, leaving bare ground, which can make for a very hard landing.

Opening ceremonies at about 0830 at the DZ included eight HALO jumpers with bright-colored ram-air parachutes, the National Anthem and opening remarks by Maj. Gen. John W. Kiely, adjutant general and commanding general of the Rhode Island National Guard, and Col. Norman

LEAPFEST II

Airborne Units Compete in Unique Contest

by Alex McColl

Photos by Sp.5 Dawn Rogge, U.S. Army



"Andy" Trudeau, commander of the Troop Command (Special Forces) and mastermind of the whole enterprise.

I spent most of the day out on the DZ watching and taking pictures. For some reason, not one but two lieutenants had been detailed to keep me out of trouble: 1st Lt. Michael Babula and 2nd Lt. Anthony Torchia. Also on the DZ, of course, were Master Sgt. Jay Tucker and the other judges. Their job was to run around with stop watches and time each jumper from the moment of impact to contact with the center of the target.

Sp/5 Dawn Rogge, of the XVIII Corps PAO shop, was also taking pictures and trying (like me) not to get harvested by jumpers running for the target with billowing canopies in tow. With four choppers (UH-1Hs) and a medevac bird working out of a loading zone about three miles away, it was surprising how fast and smoothly things went, especially toward the end of the day when they had the drill sorted out.

There were a lot of jumps: a preliminary jump by the jumpmasters to get the feel of the DZ, the HALO jumpers, 20 teams of four jumpers making three jumps each, plus assorted strap-hanger jumps, including one by me.

Without going into the minutiae of the rules, the contest was scored by the time it took the jumper to get from where he made his PLF (parachute landing fall) to the

MC1-1B parachutes descend into Leapfest DZ. Jumper's time to target started at moment of impact.

After cutting away from 'chute, contestant sprints and dives for center of target to stop time.



Leapfest competitors strap down into UH-1H. Chopper will leave loading zone and deposit jumpers in DZ three miles away.



Spirit of airborne brotherhood ran high as festivities culminated with old-fashioned New England outdoor clambake and awards ceremony.



Jumper's time stops as he touches DZ target. Some competitors took the time to cut away from 'chutes, others avoided this, but wrestled with inflated canopies in race to the X.

target. This is a function of (1) a good spot by the jumpmaster, (2) good canopy control and (3) how fast you run when you get to the ground.

As usual with such things, it was something of a family event. At a guess, 300 people assembled along the DZ's edge to watch, about half of them friends and families of the participants.

It was ideal weather for jumping: bright, warm, not much breeze, but frustrating for the specifics of this contest. The breeze, such as it was, was extremely variable, both in velocity and direction, making spotting by the jumpmasters very much a matter of guesswork and luck. The angle of descent of an MC1-1B (which is what they were jumping) means that if you get a bad spot, you just can't get there from here. Requiring three jumps per team and scoring on the team total minimized the element of luck.

Running upwind with a partially inflated canopy billowing out behind you is slow work; the obvious trick is to either pop a Capewell or get hold of the apex or skirt of the canopy to spill the air. Unless you're almost on top of the target and being blown into it, the time required to do this is well spent.

The last jump of the day was a nostalgic event, since Col. Trudeau would turn over Troop Command to Col. George Dupont in October. There wasn't a dry eye in the

house as Trudeau and his sergeant major made a farewell jump at the end of the day. Trudeau will become commander of the R.I. State Area Command (STARC), making him number three man in the R.I. Guard. Dupont is 50 years old and not a jumper, but he's planning to go to jump school. Anyone as crazy as that should get along fine with the Rhode Island SF.

Saturday night combined a grand, old-fashioned New England outdoor clambake with the awards ceremony. The two Brazilian officers, Capt. Cid and 1st Lt. Helcio, weren't the only ones in for culture shock; some of the Mississippi and Texas contingents were definitely widening their horizons. And the spirit of airborne brotherhood ran high, wide and joyous.

Col. Trudeau and Gen. Kiely made appropriate remarks to the accompaniment of much good-hearted cheering, and presented the awards: Co. F, 425th Infantry (Ranger) Michigan National Guard of Fraser, Mich., led by Capt. Wayne R. McKalpin, took first place with a total time of one minute, 49 seconds. Co. C, 2nd Bn., 20th SF Group (Abn.), Mississippi National Guard, led by 2nd Lt. Paul D. Caulfield, came in second, time two minutes, 42 seconds, and 2nd Force Recon Company, USMC, Camp Lejeune, N.C., led by Maj. K.A. Conroy, took third with a total time of two minutes, 50 seconds.

The team prize for last place went to the host-unit team from A/2/19 SFG(A), which at least eliminated any murmuring about what went on while the scores were being added up.

Individual honors: First Place — a tie at 17 seconds total time between Sgt. 1st Class Jimmy D. Hale, C Co., 2nd Bn., 20th SFG, MSANG, and SSgt. David R. Lincome, F Co., 425th Infantry (Ranger) MIANG; Second Place (with a total of 19 seconds) — Sgt. 1st Class George T. Arnold, HHB, 82nd Abn. Div. Artillery, Ft. Bragg, N.C.; Third Place — 1st Lt. Helcio Bruno Almeida, of the Brazilian SF, stationed as an exchange officer at Fort Bragg, N.C.

Col. Trudeau also had a plaque for SOF Magazine since we had assisted with the logistics of the thing. SOF awarded 1983 SOF Convention belt buckles to the members of the winning team.

Sunday morning I finally got a quiet moment with Maj. Larry Scott, S3 of Troop Command and OIC of the Leapfest. The preparatory work began in May or June '83, and they really started getting organized for the Leapfest in July. He said that from the military standpoint it required about the same planning and organizational effort as a brigade-level Field Training Exercise (FTX), requiring all the staff sections to work together, the whole thing being a logistical nightmare with part-time soldiers. Maj. Scott had been working full time on it for the whole two weeks before the event. This year's Leapfest wasn't as much fun as an SOF Convention, but damn close.

Yes, Larry, we'll definitely be back next year. ☼



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seldom shared by those responsible for the mistakes. Nor could I comprehend the ever-decreasing sensitivity to that "price" when reviewed by each succeeding echelon of hierarchical authority.

As we moved into the high technology era, I could not accept the misplaced emphasis on machine over man as the final decider in war. Nor could I cease to challenge the countless mythical "Pac Man" scenarios that have moved us so far from the realities of combat. And I stood briefly, with thumb in dike, as a torrent of articulate amateurs, both in and out of uniform, boggled our minds with simplistic theories totally devoid of real-world complexity. But how do you tell yesterday's veterans these things? For many had held their ideals, values and trust in the system constant in a changing world.

The opportunity came when they asked whether today's bazooka could kill a Russian tank. They were shocked when I answered, "No." Thus, the basis for a dialogue was established. What followed was an exchange between those trusting veterans who hoped we would never have to pay the "price" again and a cynical ex-squad leader who felt that, unless we change, we will continue to pay over and over again.

Veterans: At the end of WWII, we were told that a new bazooka was on the way. What happened?

Author: It entered the inventory just before the Korean War. It was much bigger, 3.5-inches in diameter, and had better range and accuracy. But it arrived in Korea after the enemy had almost run out of tanks. It would have clobbered the T-34, but it just never had the chance. **Veterans: If the current bazooka can't kill a tank, what does the infantryman have to do the job?**

Author: There are various vehicle-mounted and several crew-served weapons.

Veterans: Vehicles can't go where doughfeet can. And you can't ignore the horrendous fire that supports a tank attack. You don't have much freedom to move. Therefore, if a crew-served weapon must displace forward to shoot, there's no assurance it will be able to do so. Furthermore, if it takes more than one man to operate, odds on its getting into action are pretty slim. How long would it be before the crew is reduced to one or none? What else does he have?

Author: There are the tanks.

Veterans: If the tanks can't get there on time, he's still a dead duck. Remember what the ice, snow, refugee traffic and our own traffic did to our tank mobility? They had to claw their way up to us. And when they got



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there, good firing positions were hard to come by. What else is available?
Author: There are Army and Air Force aircraft armed with the latest antitank weapons.

Veterans: We had aircraft, too. What makes them think the weather and the enemy will be any nicer to them? During the Bulge, our planes couldn't fly many times because of the weather. And when they did, the German anti-aircraft capability kept them at arm's length. Isn't there anyone left who remembers?

Author: No. In fact, there are few left in the Army who ever saw an opposing vehicle on the battlefield, much less one armed, armored and loaded for bear.

Veterans: It seems that the infantryman today is no better off than we were. Can the current bazooka penetrate any of the Russian armored vehicles?

Author: They can penetrate the thin-skinned personnel carriers and some of the oldest tanks. Against the newer ones, though, they must obtain hits on the sides or rear.

Veterans: Tanks don't attack with their sides and rears. They attack with their heavily-armored fronts, with main gun and bow guns blazing. And besides, trained tankers, supported by infantrymen, make sure their flanks and rears don't become exposed. Can't they see that if the gunner has to wait for such a shot, his position is already untenable?

Author: They claim that such is possible. And they use statistical data from the Arab-Israeli wars to prove their case.

Veterans: We have statistics to prove they're wrong. Most are buried in Arlington or Europe. Have they carried their scenarios to the point where the gunner shoots — and misses?

Author: I doubt it. Most scenarios today start with a tank in the role of a sitting duck. And they end when the tank is killed. The Americans always have the high ground, and the Russian is given the pool table. You seldom see dismounted infantrymen preceding the tanks as we, the Germans and the Russians had in WWII.

Veterans: Why not?

Author: The purpose of most scenarios today is to show the weapon in its best light. This could change, however. Recently they held some exercises out in California which introduced a degree of realism into the tank-antitank equation. The unfavorable results were rather shocking.

Veterans: I hear there's a new bazooka on the way. Will it kill a Russian tank?

Author: I doubt it.

Veterans: If we're as technologically advanced as the reunion speaker claimed, why can't we build one to do the job?

Author: The military has set certain

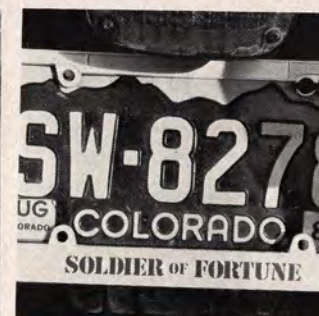
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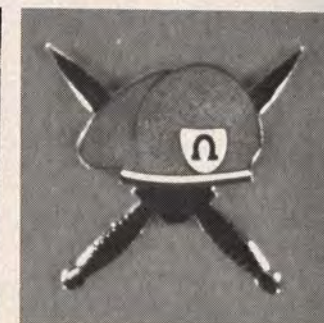
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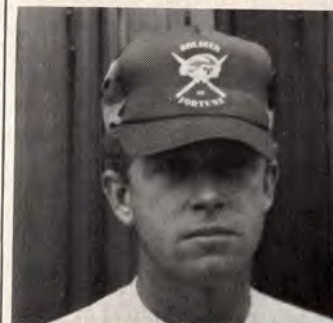
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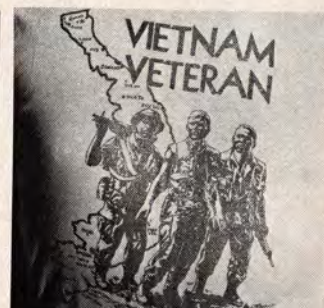


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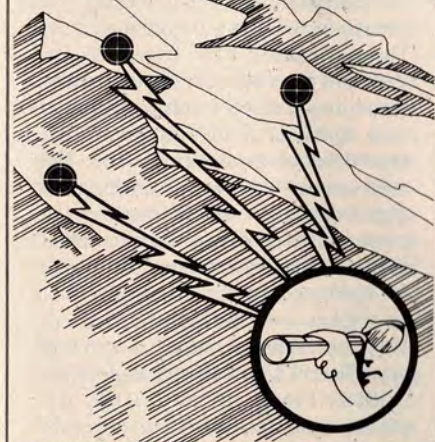
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Author: I said before, there's hardly anyone left who's ever faced an enemy tank in combat. So the threat is not fully appreciated. Then, too, the weapon's length limit comes into play — 40 inches.

Veterans: The first bazookas were 54 inches and the RPG-7 was 53 inches with a round in the tube. What's so magic about 40 inches? Can't they see the dangers of such arbitrary criteria?

Author: To an extent, it's a problem of semantics. The weapon has been designated as "light," and so the needed terminal effect is no longer the governing factor.

Veterans: "Light" is a relative term. The weapon has to kill a tank or the infantryman won't carry it — even if it weighs a pound. How did they get so far out into left field?

Author: That's the way we do business today. We select a weapon, and then create scenarios and generate computer printouts to prove it's enough. Those who challenge the decision are overwhelmed with "bedtime stories" and worthless statistical data.

Veterans: Do our allies have a bazooka that will kill a Russian tank?

Author: There are several that appear able to do the job.

Veterans: Why don't we get them for our infantrymen?

Author: For several reasons. First, the weapons exceed the limits set by our military. Second, it's the same old problem we had. It had to have "us," not them on it. Remember the Sherman tanks we gave to the British? We couldn't kill a German tank with our 75mm guns. They put a 17-pounder on theirs, developed a special round to go with it, and tore the Germans apart. Despite the fact that our tankers cried for that British gun, you never saw a single one on any of our tanks.

Veterans: You were in combat developments and R&D. What do you think is responsible for the sad shape we're in?

Author: It started back in 1954 when we set up a new system called "combat developments." Each of the combat arms schools had a small "think tank" with the mission of determining to what extent science and technology could improve our capability. They made great strides almost overnight. This was possible because they were staffed with guys who had been through the mill. The armed helicopter and the airmobile concept were two of the many new ideas that came out of that first group.

In 1956, it was decided to set up a field laboratory to test some of the concepts. Experienced combat officers were assigned to do the qualitative evaluations. Civilian analysts were hired to do the quantitative side. One of the first experiments involved the problems of tank-antitank warfare. The military was charged with developing scenarios which would isolate the two critical fac-

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tors within the framework of rational two-sided actions.

Almost immediately, some serious problems arose. While the military felt they could do a reasonable job of assessing the qualitative aspects, the analysts couldn't figure out ways to obtain their data. Little by little, the combat scenarios were compromised to let the analyst do some analysis. I remember how one supergrade civilian analyst in the office of the Secretary of Defense almost got fired in 1967 when he wrote a memo to Robert McNamara to the effect that no one had yet invented a way to dissect the mechanism and dynamics of small-unit combat on a piece of paper or in a computer. In the end, the military officers were left holding the bag. They couldn't come up with many qualitative results, because much of the combat reality they had cranked in at the start had been eliminated.

One of the first things to go was the 3.5-inch rocket launcher. Since data collectors were required to accompany each tank and antitank weapon, there wasn't much realism to infantrymen hiding behind trees or in ditches when the data collectors were standing in plain sight beside them. Needless to say, the 3.5s achieved very few successes. In fact, the data base was so small after the first runs that they were pulled out of the action. And with that, they seemed to have disappeared from our military thinking as well.

My next assignment took me out of the country for three years. Upon my return, I found that the analysts — whom we nicknamed "bean counters" — were now called *scientists*. And the analytical community had expanded by leaps and bounds. So fast, as a matter of fact, that the military couldn't come up with enough factual tasks to keep them busy. The "scientists" took over then, and started to generate tasks for themselves. Since they had no combat experience, they minimized its importance and argued that weapons were the key. They even went so far as to start creating their own scenarios as well. As one of my old combat buddies told me when I went into R&D: "Your experiences don't count for anything here; the analytical inmates have taken over the asylum."

Veterans: What about the active military officers? Can't they change things?
Author: I'm afraid not. Today, if an officer were to say that the world is round, and didn't have studies blessed by the analytical community to back him up, the system would shoot him out of the saddle.

Veterans: You said that some of our allies have effective bazookas. How did they develop them?

Author: Most of our allies feel that excessive analysis can lead to paralysis. And they keep amateurs away So do the Russians. Thus, while we spend 15 years developing a weapon, they do it in half the time. Usually it's an improved version of our own.

Veterans: Has the system changed that much since WWII?

Author: I'm afraid so. Our first bazooka was designed in February of 1942, approved in May, and over 5,000 were in the hands of troops by mid-June. That's the way we used to do things when qualified people were running the show and the threat was on us. Today, we couldn't even come up with a name for the weapon in that same time frame. **Veterans: I can see now why the bazooka problem has not been taken care of. Is it the only weapon in trouble?**

Author: I would like to say yes, but I have a gut feeling that it is just the tip of the iceberg. ☒

EL CASTILLO ASSAULT

Continued from page 75

me, Boss," he said, and the teenager, playing war just as much as fighting one, fiddled with the elevation crank and blasted away. The *bumms* turned into sharp *pokks*, as the rounds exploded against the stone walls of the fortress.

Faint shrieks and yelps rose from afar. The mute, who refused to carry a gun for religious reasons, eagerly fed shells to his buddy. A 75mm cannon boomed back. Its rounds fizzled overhead like giant firecrackers. I opened my mouth (to reduce the risk of ear damage) and lay flat on my belly, painfully aware of my lack of cover. But no rounds landed closer than 75 meters behind us. Nevertheless, the explosions were frightening, and the pallid faces grimaced with each incoming round.

"Destroy it!" a wide-eyed Tadeo shouted, referring to the enemy artillery, his face framed in the grass. But the recoilless jammed; Segundo hadn't closed the breech properly. The poor boy scowled when he couldn't fix it, and Tadeo and Israel rushed over to assist. The three guerrilla positions on the southern side of the river, 60 to 75 men, did nothing to take the heat off. (They had earlier fired a few 60mm mortar and M79 rounds, but after receiving intense return fire, they searched for new positions.)

Sandinistas some 500 meters away opened up on us. Oscar's men returned the fire and then retreated up our hill, shooting triumphantly in the air. Walter almost let them have it with his RPK, thinking they were enemy. Santiago and Moises had run out of recoilless rifle rounds and withdrawn long ago. We waited until everyone was accounted for, fired a few more rounds (for a total of 20), then booked at 0710.

I followed a couple of insurgents downhill to the river. The Sandinistas were shooting up the countryside like mad. We awkwardly zigzagged to a thick tree along the bank where boat pilot John (many rebels have adopted English names) crouched. He had been machine-gunned while motoring upstream and was still shuddering. There was a pause in the shooting. Several slowpokes trudged down the slope and milled about as if there hadn't been any shooting at all.

Suddenly, a flurry of bullets whizzed by from across the river. Everyone scrambled for cover. Yours truly went headlong into a bullshit-studded furrow. The woman journalist tightly curled herself around a guerrilla as if engaged in some strange sex act, but her crucified look belied that impression. The last of our people came lumbering down, hunched under recoilless gun parts. Tadeo waved them in like a third-base coach.

They frantically passed their burden to John and another guerrilla, now in the boat, then plowed a big fishhook for a fast getaway downriver. The fog was lifting



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and we were worried about enemy aircraft. But they never came. Over the next hour-and-a-half we traversed jungle, streams and hills to an abandoned ranch, from which launches motored us to camp. We heard some of our ARDE comrades on the other side resuming their mortar fire. Most of them, though, were escorting dozens of refugees to Costa Rica.

Death to the King was a big success. There were no casualties among the more than 120 insurgents involved, even more remarkable considering most were novices. On the other hand, the Sandinistas evidently suffered terribly. Oscar's ambush alone must have inflicted numerous casualties, but so did our artillery and mortar fire, according to the rebels on the southern side.

"Ah, yes, you were hitting well!" said Yunya, emphatically. "We were perhaps 200 meters from their lines and heard them crying under the blasts: 'Aaay! Aaay! Hijos de puta desgraciados! Aaay!' Yeah, it was great. . . . The campesinos told us they passed many dead and wounded piricoacos."

Reports of damage to the fortress itself varied from slight to total. The former is more credible. The slanting granite walls, 10-feet thick at the base, would have probably stood up to the recoilless fire. And the 60mm mortars, operating near their maximum range, would have difficulty lobbing one inside. The Russian 82mm mortar behind Santiago and Moises was the ideal weapon; however, it stuck on the second round (the operator panicked and abandoned his greenhorn assistant to disarm and bring it back alone).

Nevertheless, all reports indicated smoke was rising from the fortress and at least one observation tower was destroyed. Rumor even had it that the Sandinistas gathered villagers in the plaza and were ready to surrender. The junta's press releases estimated we had around 1,000 men.

Comandante Zero, Eden Pastora, congratulated us effusively over the radio. September had been a black month for the communists. Zero had fulfilled his vow. However, the guerrillas would soon see tragedy, too; ironically enough, it would befall Oscar's Sebastian Mueller peleton, which had distinguished itself in the ambush.

Every day for the following week the insurgents shelled the Castillo. I joined Oscar's group on the 16th for one of these *hostigamientos*. We boomed 12 57mm recoilless rifle rounds and three light mortar rounds without any problems (the Sandinista counterfire was way off), but what happened en route was portentous.

As we were cruising up the San Juan and about to approach the Bartola River, some of the guerrillas anxiously pointed to a house on the bank and said they saw people lurking. I thought I saw someone looking out a window myself.

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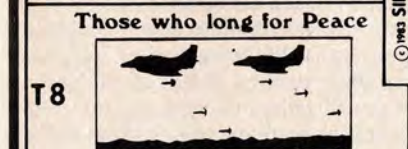


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We pulled over to the southern side and fanned out in a thicket. Oscar and John fired a few RPK bursts into the shack. Nobody responded, but Oscar thought he saw someone in camouflage running into the bush. Five of us got in the boat and sped for the house. We grinded to a halt on the opposite bank and a couple of rebels charged up it like gangbusters. There was nothing.

Two days later, however, Oscar and 10 men were ambushed just upstream. They were disembarking when Papin heard a rustling in the vegetation. Eagle stood on a stump and shouted, "Who lives?!" The Sandinistas opened up with automatic weapons and RPGs. Eagle was instantly killed. Papin's M60 jammed and he dove into the river.

The guerrillas floundered in the water in terror, ditching knapsacks, rifles, the M60 MG and M79. Six held onto the boat as a shield and swam to safety on the other side. Four others weren't so fortunate.

Yunya, who ironically had joined ARDE to escape a Panamanian jail sentence, caught a bullet in the temple. The genial Chi Chi, an urban guerrilla from the 1979 war who could score you dope anywhere in Managua, drowned. So did the coward, Golden Balls, who had deserted his machine gun under fire on the 15th and was later tracked down by Israel on a dusty Costa Rican road. In another guerrilla army, he might have been shot on sight, but ARDE gave him another chance. He didn't want to go on the mission — pretended to be sick — but he went and redeemed himself. And then there was Papi. I felt the death of this humble young hero most — although it wasn't unexpected. He had survived vicious fighting against Somoza's National Guard, but obsessively doubted he'd make it through this time. I had envisioned him floating in the river with a bullet hole in his forehead. It wasn't that clean. His torso and face were burned horribly.

I dedicate this article to ARDE's fallen. Just like our own countrymen who recently died in Grenada and Lebanon, they gave the ultimate sacrifice for something we take so much for granted in the States: *Freedom*. The fight goes on. ☸

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NAVY PILOTS
 Continued from page 83

the general area, trying to spot Paul during his run-in. Paul and his co-pilot, Acie Davis, decided to swing wide to the south-east, avoiding the potential SAM threat in the opposite quadrant. With that, we loaded up and launched.

We flew outbound on top of the cloud deck as the two aircrewmembers readied their weapons. They had a minimum load on board, 100 rounds of blanks. I noted the ring sight was folded down on the minigun and asked one of the gunners if they used their sights. "We load one in three tracers, and if we have to shoot we're going to be in close, anyway. After awhile you get the hang of it and just naturally point so you're on target first time."

Nearing the target area, Paul descended to about 100 feet. The pink "gripe sheet" for this H-3 contained previous mention of a malfunctioning friction lock on the collective. Now it was acting up again. "This was supposed to be fixed," Paul told Davis.

"We need new airplanes," Acie replied. "Roger that." Acie placed a topographical map on the radio console between the seats. It's the same scale as an infantry platoon leader might use—that's how much HC-9 relates to its terrain flying.

Acie looked ahead as we continued north-east. "Look at that water falling over them rocks." He checked his map.

"That's called a waterfall," said Paul. "You can see all the wonders of nature from right up here. Fersure."

Dipping into a ravine, Paul hopped over the next ridge and banked hard left to negotiate a turn in the gully. Moments later we were out in open desert, heading up a dry wash. The ground immediately below was sparkling white sand. In our big, dark-green Sikorsky we seemed about as inconspicuous as a stripper in a spotlight.

A gunner called, "Traffic nine o'clock high." Looking up to port, we saw the stark silhouette of the CAG's H-3. Its noise came around in our direction. "Damn, they've made us," Paul muttered. He'd hoped to sneak in unseen and tiptoe up behind Bryan. Now he bent on more power and moved ever lower. We were making 120 knots indicated, perhaps 20 feet off the deck. It was exhilarating, to understate things.

Nearing a 40-foot hillock, Paul lowered the collective, easing back the stick. "Come on, you pig, slow down." He had to crayfish sideways to bleed off excess speed. In a near-hover he moved into the shadow of the humped terrain, hoping to elude further detection.

Now close enough to call our E-2, we asked bearings to the survivors. Bryan told us to look at the base of the mountains. We headed out again, watching for mirror flashes. Acie got out the ID cards with their personalized info.

Paul was sneaking a glance at his instru-

ments, slowing to 60 knots, when I caught a glint ahead and slightly to starboard. I pointed in that direction, fumbling for the mike switch. "Whatcha got?" Paul asked just as I managed, "Flash at one o'clock."

Moments later we were close enough to make out two green-suited survivors atop a small hill. With ID confirmed via radio, Paul told them to pop their smoke and we saw the green. Both men dashed downhill, barely arriving in time to scramble aboard as we hovered in a swirling dust cloud. We were gone in 30 seconds.

At debrief we learned that Steve Millikin had spotted our shadow. One of his crew then noticed our helo, which looked like "a fast-moving green bush." There had been no glass reflection, no rotor flash. The two survivors never heard us, but finally saw us between three and four miles out. They'd previously noted some dust in the direction of our approach but weren't sure if it was a helo or a whirlwind.

The main lesson was how well even a big bird like an H-3 can hide in seemingly flat terrain. Looking back where we'd been, the topography from 1,500 feet at three miles was featureless and indistinct. Even small depressions shielded our Sikorsky from alerted eyes until almost the last minute. That's mighty encouraging.

What's more encouraging, yet frustrating, is that another chopper would be smaller and faster. For the next-generation C/SAR helo already exists. The Sikorsky UH-60 Blackhawk is now flying with the Army and, as noted, an ASW version is entering service with some Navy squadrons. Everybody I talked to at ComHelWingRes, from mechanics to CAG, considers the H-60 a near-perfect choice to replace the H-3.

The Blackhawk's advantages are considerable: vastly greater range (with option of in-flight refueling), more speed, as much as 10 times less maintenance and a variety of ordnance options on the External Stores Support System.

The ESSS is particularly attractive for C/SAR. It affords not only mission-oriented equipment such as additional fuel, but considerable self-defense capability. The Marines have experimented with Sidewinder air-to-air missiles in Cobra gunships, and preliminary evaluation is extremely optimistic. Basically, the missile option turns the SAR helo from a sitting duck to a rattlesnake, more than able to defend itself against fighter aircraft and enemy helicopters.

Additionally, the H-60 is simply a more powerful, better-built aircraft. With more power for high density-altitude operations, it can perform its job in a variety of global areas. And it's far more agile than the H-3, with twice the G-loading. Currently, C/SAR pilots are limited to 1.5-G maneuvers, since their birds were built as ASW choppers, which never have to yank and bank. But given the age of HC-9's current airframes, 1.5 G could pull an H-3 apart anyway. That's not much leeway to start with, and precious little if you're trying to outfly a Hind D.

The Air Force has already sprung for the H-60DS as a specific C/SAR bird. With strong funding support, the D model will have extremely advanced avionics—much more than the Navy wants or needs for the job.

What, then, is the problem? Why not buy the 24 H-60s which HelWingRes asks? Two dozen would be good; 30 would be plenty. That would equip two squadrons—one on each coast—and maybe a back-up cadre elsewhere. HC-9 figures the Navy could completely re-equip and expand the C/SAR community for under a quarter-billion dollars; petty cash in the till of government spending. It equates to three H-60 squadrons for the price of 10 F/A-18s. And that's a bargain.

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But Sikorsky has numerous H-60As sitting on the ramp right now, awaiting Army payment. It's usually cheaper to build now and sell later in order to keep costs down, and that's what the good folks at Stratford have done. Meanwhile, the Navy could be leasing those birds until they're needed elsewhere.

But that's unlikely, left to the Navy. Snorts one helo driver, "It makes too damn much sense."

There are other considerations favoring the Blackhawk. Aside from a relatively low unit cost (between five and seven million) is the ability to self-deploy almost anywhere. Bryan Lucas says, "With H-3s, we're limited to about 500 miles and splash. The H-60 has the capability to fly 1,200 miles, which leaves few areas of the globe inaccessible to us." In an era of crowded strategic airlift schedules and uncertain sea-lift, that's a huge factor.

The H-60 is also extremely adaptable to other uses. The same qualities which make a successful C/SAR bird are identical to those for naval special warfare. This largely includes insertion and extraction of SEAL teams, where stealth is the key to success in covert operations.

Add in the ESSS and you have a dandy low-level platform which can launch ship-killer missiles similar to the Exocet. Replace the anti-ship missiles with Sidewinders and you automatically produce an inner air-defense ring for the carrier battle group. The same ESSS hardpoints can take up to 16 Hellfire antitank missiles, with internal storage for two reloads. This feature alone would make the H-60 a godsend to the Marine Corps and the Rapid Deployment Force.

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At rock-bottom, the difference between the H-3 and the H-60 is summarized by Bryan Lucas: "The H-60 is meant to go in harm's way," he says. "And since that's our business in C/SAR, we think we have a very strong case for both the machine and the money required. What we need now is the support of the power-brokers in the Pentagon."

Whatever happens, it needs to be done fast. The next war may be tomorrow or next year, but the Navy can't wait much longer. As Tim Wright says, "We're running out of helicopters."

After Vietnam, the Navy retained a C/SAR unit from an obligation to retrieve downed fliers. The motive is not wholly humanitarian. Aircraft can be replaced, but a combat-experienced aviator, current on local situations and tactics, is priceless.

Or is he? Some cost-analysis freaks, left-overs from the McNamara days, have implied that aviators may not be worth the risk. It costs roughly one million dollars to train a carrier pilot today. Some of the aircraft involved in a rescue operation would cost over 20 million.

But if in fact the Navy's goal is "no more POWs," if it is serious about bringing 'em back alive, the service will act now — to keep faith with its people.

In short, Navy Air is challenged to put its money where its mouth is. ☞

KAREN REBELS

Continued from page 66

U San Yu, Gen. Ne Win ruled Burma as a military dictator. He is a frog-like man, with a lizard's grin, who has been known to beat to death aides or colleagues who crossed him at the wrong moment. He once became angry when an American Embassy car was blocking the entrance to a charity ball in Rangoon. The acting American ambassador was causing the delay as he stood by the car giving instructions to his chauffeur. Ne Win jumped out of his car and gave the American ambassador a mighty, bone-crunching kick in the pants.

Nearly crippled by the kick, the humiliated U.S. diplomat was rushed home to the States and soon retired.

For years, the Karens have managed to retain majority control of their section of Burma, but they have not been able to gain total control. One reason is the sheer size of the Burmese Army which, at 200,000 men, keeps a sizable force in the center of the country to protect Rangoon, Mandalay and Moulmein, its three largest cities.

Other large forces are spread along the Sittang front, facing the Karens. The rest of the Burmese Army is on picket duty in the Shan and Kachin regions to the northeast and far north, or directly engaging Shan and Kachin rebel armies in running combat.

Thanks to years of training and experience in this protracted, brutal civil war, the Burmese Army has become extremely proficient. It has performed well against crack units of China's People's Liberation Army during Chinese forays along their common frontier.

The Karens have proven to be just as skillful, but they have neither an air force nor adequate air defenses. Consequently, the tiny Burmese Air Force has been able to win many battles by using napalm and rockets.

If the Karens were to cut off the tail of Burma at any of the many narrow points south of Moulmein (which could be done easily at any time), they would have to contend with Burmese jets. The Burmese Army would use their planes to chew up the Karen line, and then move in with supporting armor.

To correct this deficiency, the Karens must either develop an anti-aircraft capability with surface-to-air missiles and ground fire, or cripple the Burmese planes on the ground with sappers.

The Karens have been reluctant to strike deep within Rangoon, or ambush the air force because they do not approve of treachery, and refuse to practice it themselves.

Nevertheless, changes are taking place. On 30 September 1982, heavily armed Karen sappers attacked Rangoon's main radio transmitter and a nearby police station. Rocket launchers and Chinese AK-47s were used in the attack; the Kalashnikovs were purchased on the black market in Thai-

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land. This may signal a quickening in the tempo of this long civil war.

Indeed, at Karen headquarters near the Thai border, delegations from the Shan rebel forces, the Kachins and other ethnic groups have discussed forming a joint military command. Proposed is a plan that would attach Karen advisers to all other ethnic forces' headquarters to coordinate operations. Units of tough mountain guerrillas from the Kachin and Shan regions (including the Wa, Lahu and other hill tribes) would join the Karen operations in the south, targeted on Rangoon.

The objective should not be considered as a contest between communist and non-communist elements in Burma. That struggle exists, too, but the ethnic rebels are struggling for statehood, not political ideology. They want a significant say in their affairs, control of their finances without Burmese interference and a measure of self-rule under a federal form of government.

Since the Karens have suffered brutality for decades under a military dictator as ruthless as Idi Amin or Papa Doc Duvalier (who despite his retirement, failing health and age still retains power in Burma), they deserve all the help they can get. The good people who gave sanctuary to Lord Jim are still there, getting trashed by fate. ☒

SUPPORT NICARAGUAN FREEDOM FIGHTERS

BULLETIN BOARD

Continued from page 17

Nicaragua, the USMC's amphibious landing brought fear to the hearts of the *comandantes*.

Just three weeks after the liberation of Grenada by U.S. Marines, Army Rangers and 82nd Airborne paratroops, the Honduran exercise had the Sandinistas digging their bunkers just a little bit deeper.

The Marines had some success in solving Nicaragua's bandit problem back in the 1930s and, as a consequence, the Sandinistas quake a bit when they hear the word Marine.

With the Marines playing in the surf just north of Nicaragua, the Sandys were in a tizzy and made some statements which, on the surface, indicated they had a sudden resurgence of interest in things like human rights, freedom of the press and national elections.

Although their interest in giving the Nicaraguan people a fair shake will likely be short-lived, another action the Sandinistas took in November will probably last awhile. Reportedly, the Sandys passed the word to the United States that U.S. civilians in Nicaragua would come to no harm.

One U.S. diplomatic type in Honduras is reported to have said that the Grenada invasion and the MAU practice landing in Honduras had the Sandys so shook up that Nicaragua just might be the safest place in the world for Americans.

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After four years of ruthless Soviet occupation, indiscriminate slaughter of civilians, gassing of villages, destruction of crops and farm animals and other brutal acts of repression, the brave Afghan people are still fighting back. They are fighting for the right to run their own country, to be secure within their own country and to worship as their fathers did.

The Afghans are not asking for foreign volunteers — indeed they don't want foreigners fighting their Holy War — and they are not afraid to die in their battle against the Russians. But faith and courage are not enough to win a war against the modern Soviet Army. They also need rifles, ammunition, medical supplies, blankets and food to carry on the struggle.

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Allah Akbar. Death to Tyrants.

BOO ON THE BDU...

On Grenada, the U.S. Army troops came ashore wearing the new camouflage battle-dress uniform, or BDU. Objections by the troops about the BDU — the cloth doesn't breathe and thus is hot and heavy — persuaded the Army to bring in some of the older field uniforms for the troops.

A survey earlier this year produced universally unfavorable reports from the field on the BDU.

Despite all that, in December the U.S. Army announced it was going ahead with the purchase of more than \$400 million worth of BDUs. The Army also announced it has plans for a lightweight version of the BDU for use in warmer climates.

While it is true that the Democratic-controlled Congress lies awake at night out of fear that President Reagan might invade Antarctica, it is far more likely that the United States may be drawn into a war in Lebanon or El Salvador in the immediate future. Last we heard, those places tend to run to hot temperatures.

The U.S. Army should spend more time listening to the troops, and Congress should spend less time worrying about problems that don't exist. Maybe then the troops would get a fairer deal.

WINNING ONE FOR THE TIMES...

To say that some of the mainstream media was upset by the refusal of the U.S. government to allow press in on the Grenada operation is a bit of an understatement. Even more upsetting to some of the press was American public reaction to the temper tantrum of the press: overwhelming support for the military.

Thus, the stage was set in Honduras. Ground rules for covering the Marine Amphibious Landing at Puerto Castillo included a proviso that photographers confine themselves inside a

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staked-off area, just to the right of where the LVTs would hit the beach.

Once ashore, the LVTs executed a sharp right turn and moved away from the press area. With its usual decorum — everything is fair except biting — about 50 photographers and TV crews jostled for space on the left barrier and begged the guards, mostly Honduran, for permission to cross the line.

When one of the enlisted guards charged with restraining the journalists waved his arm to signal an officer to come forward and tell the crazy gringos to stay back, the press mistook his gesture for a signal to advance and swarmed over the poor guards.

As PIO types scrambled to get in front of the herd and bring it to a halt, one wit standing nearby said, with more than a little sarcasm, "Ah, the press strikes back for Grenada."

SOF GOES TO WASHINGTON...

SOF received word recently that Bob Poos, former executive editor, has been promoted from copy desk to the national desk at the *Washington Times* newspaper. Poos left SOF for the *Times* in October '83.

SOF has quite a contingency at the alternate Washington daily. Poos joined SOFers Fred Reed, who went to the *Times* in 1982, and Jay Mallin, SOF's Central American Editor. Executive Editor of the *Washington Times* is Smith Hempstone, a nationally syndicated columnist and occasional SOF contributor.

SWING LOW...

Some people believe the ARDE pilot who cratered into the Managua airport tower last September was a Nicaraguan kamikaze, but according to SOF sources in Managua, he was brought down by his own weapons.

The former National Guard pilot had never dropped real bombs before that day. He could have learned something from pilots of Stukas or SBDs about the hazards of low-level bombing. The ARDE raider made a good low-altitude approach to avoid detection, but he made the bombing run at the approach altitude. Flying under 100 feet at 90 knots, the plane's horizontal velocity was almost identical to the bomb's just before the bomb hit.

Aircraft and payload were probably within 100 feet of each other at detonation, and a witness said a distinct, smaller secondary blast was heard from the plane. Immediately, the craft dived into the control tower, accidentally inflicting more damage than the bomb had done to the runway.

FULL AUTO

Continued from page 12

As less than one percent of the propellant's energy is translated into recoil, rifle-caliber cartridges barely produce sufficient power to cycle recoil-operated guns. Three systems have been employed to provide the extra power. Gas can be deflected back at the muzzle to increase the rearward force on the barrel. Examples of gas-assisted short-recoil-operated weapons are the Vickers, MG34, MG42 and Browning 1919A6 machine guns. The MG42 also used blow-back to push the bolt rearward by unlocking the bolt and barrel while there was still considerable residual pressure left in the bore.

Finally, some of the barrel's momentum can be transferred to the bolt immediately after the two have separated by a mechanical device known as an accelerator. The most efficient accelerator is on John Browning's machine guns.

By the mid-1930s, gas-operated machine guns started their run for the money. Today, this method of operation, especially as applied to the assault rifle, is clearly dominant. Unlike the other systems, gas-operated weapons have bolts which are locked in battery to the receiver body. Bore pressure alone cannot directly force the bolt assembly rearward. Instead the propellant gases are tapped off through a port in the barrel to operate a mechanism which not only thrusts the bolt rearward but unlocks it as well. As much energy as required is available and gas-operated weapons usually provide an ample power reserve to meet the most adverse battlefield environments.

Gas ports are usually located near the muzzle end to retard erosion of the gas block, slow the rate of fire and reduce the hazard of premature unlocking. This location, however, increases fouling throughout the system. Gas-operated machine guns always present greater maintenance and cleaning conundrums than those operated by recoil. While you're still transferring soot and crap from the M60 to your body, my Ma Deuce will be safely packed away and I'll be on my second pitcher at the NCO slop chute.

Once it has passed through the port, the gas can either operate a piston through a long stroke, the piston always remaining attached to the bolt carrier (as with the Kalashnikov), or deliver only a short, impulsive blow with the piston to the bolt carrier (as with the FN FAL). An alternative method uses no piston at all but a tube through which the gases travel to impinge directly upon the bolt carrier and drive it backward. This latter system is employed in the Swedish Ljungman AG42, French MAS 49 and M16 rifles.

As the amount of gas required varies with increased fouling and according to battlefield conditions, regulators are often fitted to gas-operated machine guns. First, the diameter of the track along which the gas passes through the gas block can be varied.

This scheme is used on the Bren and Com-Bloc RPD. Alternatively, we can change the size of the hole which allows gas to escape to the atmosphere. This has been most efficiently executed in the FN FAL, MAG and MINIMI series. Finally, there is the self-compensating system used on the M60 GPMG. Gas enters a hollow piston and expands into the gas cylinder, driving the piston against the operating rod. As the hollow piston moves rearward, its gas supply is cut off. The amount of gas which enters the piston depends on the resistance to motion placed upon the piston and operating rod. In theory, as resistance increases more gas enters the piston and is made available to operate the weapon.

And there you have it. Most automatic weapons use one of the above arrangements to function. But machine-gun development has moved in a circle. External power is once more getting a roll, since the Hughes Chain Gun is driven by an electric motor (which sure beats a hand crank).

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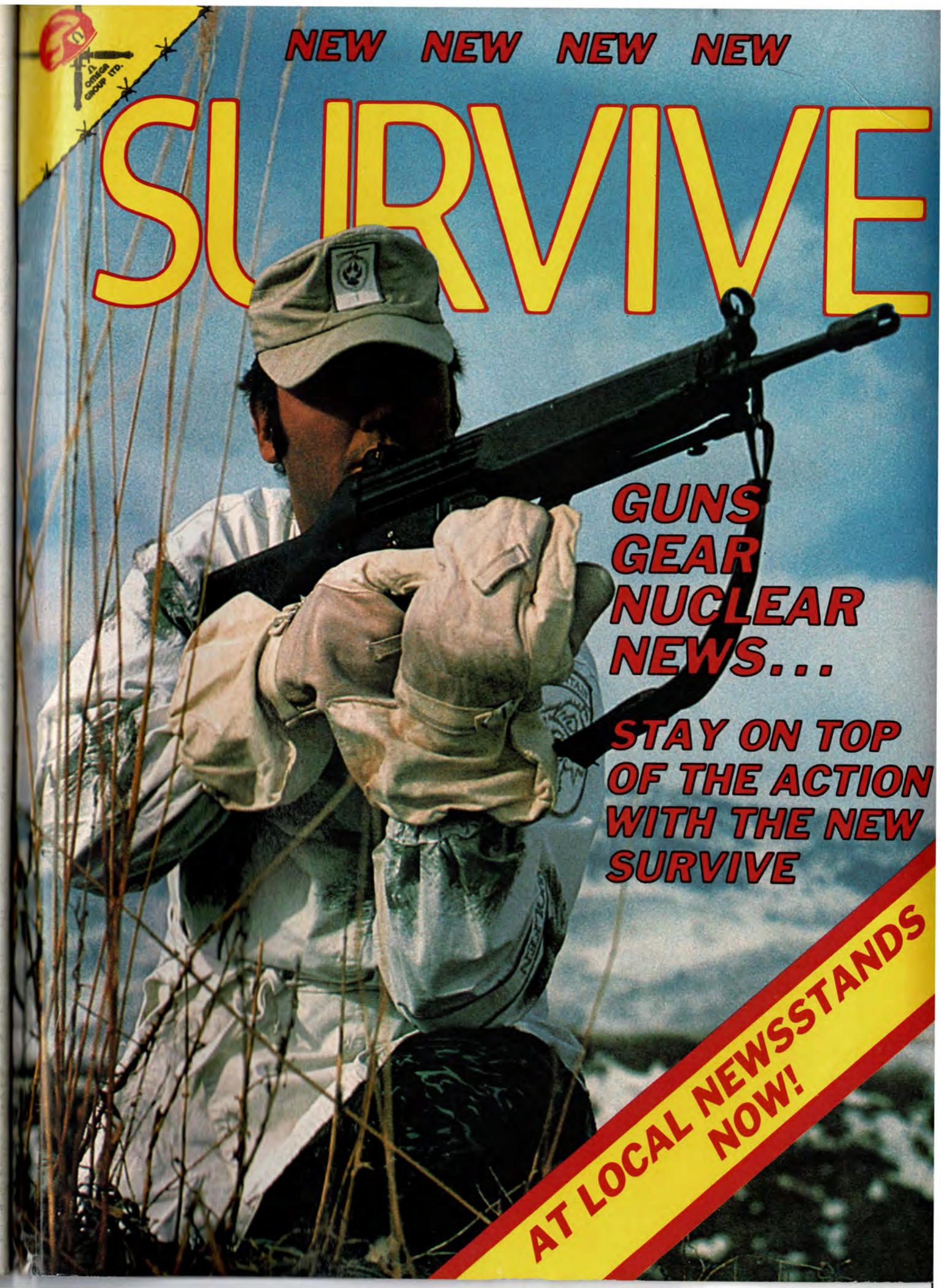
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