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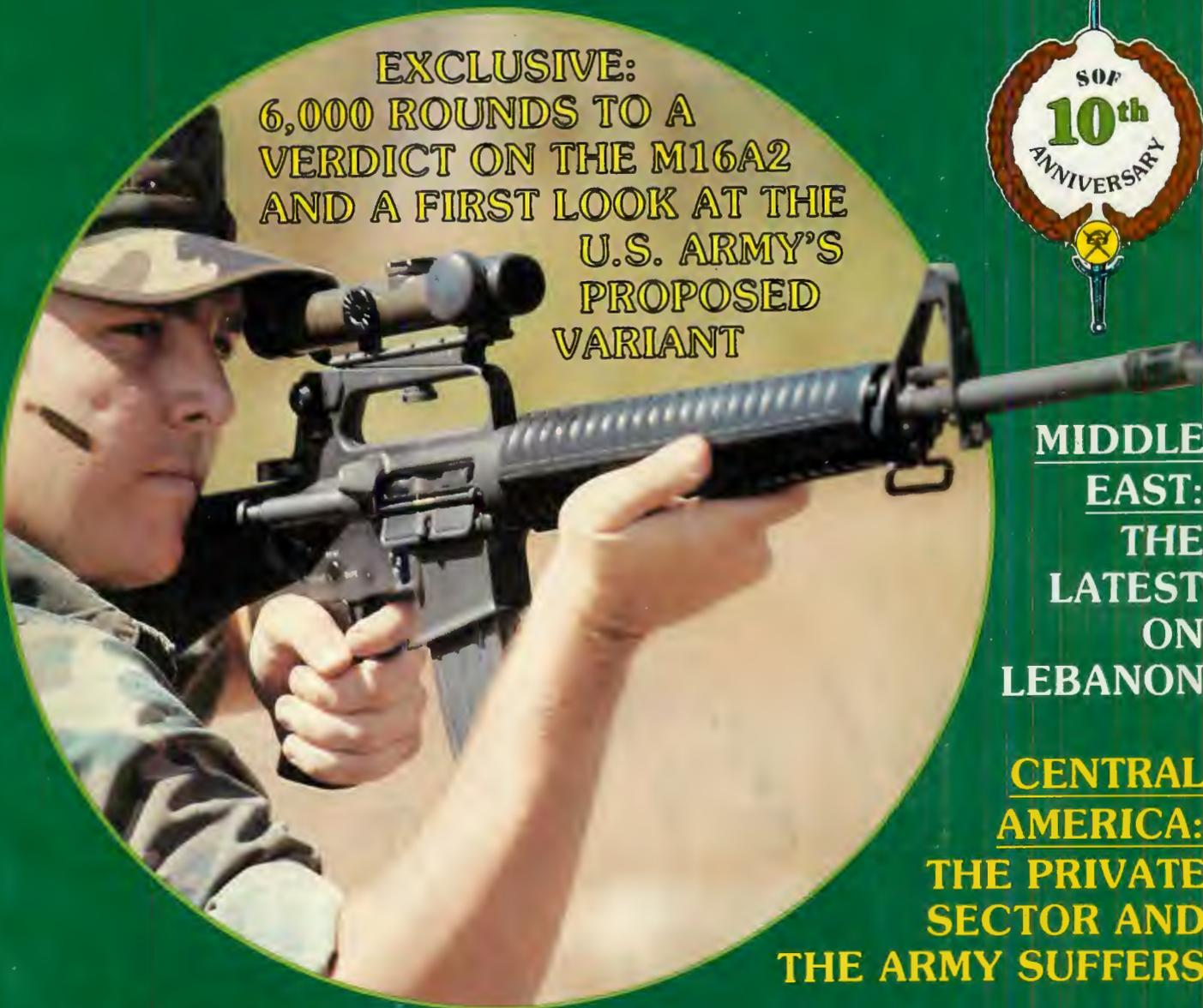
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The Journal of Professional Adventurers

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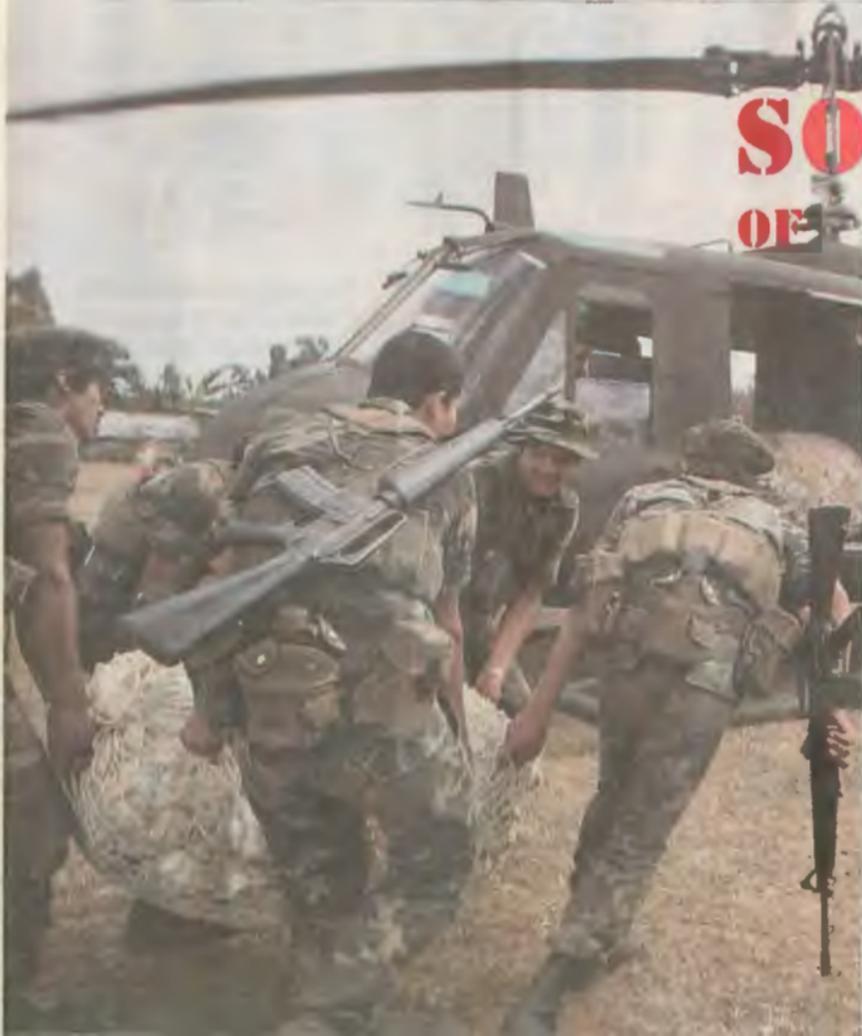
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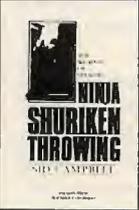
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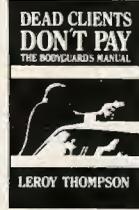
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DE-BRIEF

by Dale A. Dye, Executive Editor

IT came as no surprise to anyone who has served time in the turbulent Middle East, but the latest bombing in Beirut grabbed middle Americans by the stacking swivel again and raised fearful questions about our ability to prevent terrorist attacks. Maybe this time — in the echo of Taps for two more U.S. military men killed in the attack on our temporary Embassy — the fog of fuzzy thinking and bureaucratic hand-wringing will lift.

Perhaps now Americans will begin to understand how unprepared to combat terrorism their military is and demand action. If that happens — and if the politicians allow our military leaders to take the necessary steps — then the lives of all the military men and civilians killed by terrorists in Lebanon and elsewhere around the world will not have been given in vain.

Action is certainly what's required. Virtually everyone in the military and in Congress is aware of that. The bottom line of the report issued by the commission investigating the terrorist attack on the U.S. Marine Battalion Landing Team headquarters in Beirut which took the lives of 241 men was clear and unequivocal. "Combating terrorism requires an active policy," the commission headed by retired Navy Adm. Robert L. J. Long concluded. "A reactive policy only forfeits the initiative to the terrorists." That should constitute loud, clear orders for our military formations but the exact direction of march remains unclear for a lot of good reasons.

Do we simply locate the cells of cold-blooded killers, fix bayonets and feed 'em steel? Certainly revenge would be sweet, especially for the families and buddies of those who have been killed, but such strikes would not do much to prevent further terrorist attacks. Fanatics who wound up wiggling on the

pointy end of an American bayonet would simply be turned into inspirational martyrs for some radical cause. Their beady-eyed buddies would not hesitate to retaliate. Terrorists who are shot-through with blind, uncompromising zeal don't mind dying. In fact, some of them revel in it and their leaders certainly don't consider potential casualties when they plan an attack.

Do we beef-up physical security at all government installations around the world and turn them into impregnable fortresses? We could but we'd get little important military or civilian work or training done in the wake of such precautions. More importantly, such reaction would show the bended knee to terrorists whose



objective is to bring the operation of American government to a halt. Cowering behind thick brick walls or security fences is the same as surrender in the terrorist handbook.

Certainly we must vastly improve our intelligence gathering and dissemination procedures but that alone will not prevent attacks or keep us from over-

reacting to intentional disinformation or false alarms from the relatively harmless radical fringe elements. There is a potential for becoming so wrapped around the intelligence axle that our military wheels cannot roll.

Sadly, there is really no fool-proof way a civilized nation can totally prevent terrorist attacks. We can, however, rob these devious dirt-bags of their victories. The sole object of terrorism is terror. Americans — in uniform and out — can flatly refuse to be intimidated by such sneak attacks. We refused to crumble and cry after a single, devastating sneak attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. We need to show similar fortitude in the face of international terrorism.

Continued on page 136

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<i>Military Small Arms</i> Peter G. Kokalis <i>Small Arms</i> Ken Hackathorn Jake Jatras <i>Aviation</i> Walt Darran Dana Drenkowski <i>Sniping/Countersniping</i> Jim Leatherwood <i>Law Enforcement</i> Evan Marshall <i>Vietnam Veterans Affairs</i> Col. Chuck Allen <i>Soviet Analyst</i> David C. Isby	<i>Paramedic Operations</i> Dr. John Peters <i>Explosives/Demolitions</i> John Donovan <i>Military Affairs</i> Alexander McColl <i>Military History</i> William Brooks <i>Southeast Asia</i> Lian <i>Unconventional Operations</i> Brig. Gen. Heine Aderholt James P. Monaghan <i>Handgun Hunting</i> Lee Jurras <i>Central America</i> Jay Mallin
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**SOF
CONVENTION
'84**

Bill Guthrie
Vegas rocks while SOF
rolls. **26**

**MARTYRS IN
MORAZAN**

James L. Pate
El Salvador mourns
fallen leaders. **32**

**PITY THE
PERISHER**

Frank Durham
British submariners pass
the port. **36**

**BACK TO THE
BUSH**

John W. Coleman
All's not quiet in
Zimbabwe's battle zones.
40

**EVERY MAN A
TIGER**

John B. Dwyer
SACO socks it to 'em in
China. **45**

**MIDEAST
UPDATE**

Ed Rasen
From crying towels to
Kalashnikovs in
Lebanon. **50**

**M16A2: THE
FINAL VERDICT**

Peter G. Kokalis
SOF field test resolves
the dilemma. **60**

**THE BATTLE OF
THE GOLDEN
TEMPLE**

Singh
The story behind the
storming of the Sikh
shrine. **70**

**CMA IN
CENTRAL
AMERICA**

James L. Pate
Civilian courage counters
Congressional reluctance.
75

**COMBAT IN
KUNAR**

Mark Warman
Mujahideen hit Chowki
in midnight
bombardment. **83**

**RESISTING
RANGOON**

Mark Johnson
Burmese rebels from A
to Z. **90**

**DIVE ON THE
ANDREA
DORIA**

Gary Gentile
Vietnam vet finds
treasure beneath the
Atlantic. **96**

**"HELL'S
BELLES!"**

CPT James M. Perry
Pathet Lao potshots
cause *cathouse*
interruptus. **102**



Page 50

COVER: M16A2: Small arms scandal or military masterpiece? America's battle rifle for the end of the 20th century must be the biggest firearms story of the '80s. Read the results of the first civilian endurance test of the son of the '16, beginning on p. 60. Photo: Peter G. Kokalis

Bulletin Board 8
FLAK 12
Combat Weaponcraft 14
Battle Blades 16
In Review 20
I Was There 21
Full Auto 22
Adventure Quartermaster 24
Catalog 138
Classified 143
Advertisers Index 142

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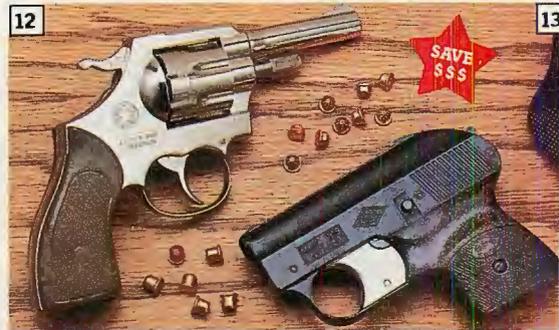
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SALVADORAN/NICARAGUAN DEFENSE FUND...

These are September '84's contributors to the fight against communist tyranny in Central America.

Terry Luce: boot socks. Jonathan Paxton: bandages. Thaddeus P. Wojcek III. Phil Crettol: field gear, med supplies, Donald Giles: \$50. G. Wright: bandoliers. Wm. Graziano: insect repellent, Breakfree. Harry Bird: \$25. field gear. Mike McPike: med supplies, 200 pr. boot socks. Gary Olivieri: field gear, rifle scope. Albert Walter: field gear. L. Wenzel: field gear. Raymond Fischer: field gear. Daniel Shaw: clothing. Fenton Hughes: \$25. Ron Hemenway: \$25. PVT Darryl Maurer: \$10. Stephen Sczurek: clothing, field gear. Terrence Rohrer. James M. Horvath: field gear. Phillip W.W. Herzenberg: field gear. 40mm grenade vest, air panels. Jim Waterstrat: boots. SSGT Frank Irons: med supplies. WO1 Richard Smiley: medical supplies. Robert G. Wheaton: \$100. Wm. M. Barlow: \$10. Stuart Barbano: \$20. clothes. Gary Franklin: metal detectors, scuba gear. Pete Sherrill: C-rats, field gear.

Salvadoran soldier inventories boxes of medical supplies donated by SOF readers through Salvadoran/Nicaraguan Defense Fund.

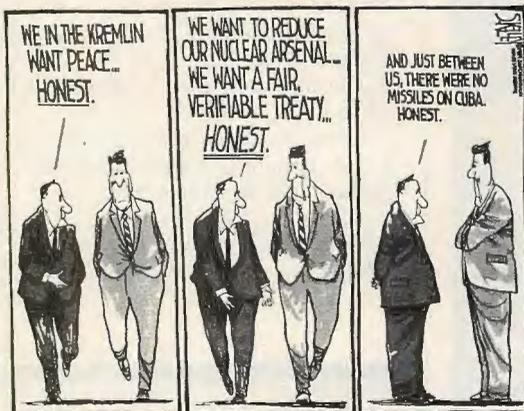




HK MP5 is now available to civilian Class-3 dealers, along with the rest of H&K's line of full-auto firearms. Photo: Peter G. Kokalis

GERMAN ROCK 'N' ROLL...

Heckler & Koch will now sell full-auto firearms to civilian Class-3 dealers. Previously, H&K automatic weapons were available *only* to police and military. Auto-arms inquiries should be addressed to Heckler & Koch, Dept. SOF, 14601 Lee Road, Chantilly, VA 22021. ATTN: John Bressen.



COLLECTOR BAGS SOV ADMIRAL...

'Fess up, medal collectors: the USSR newspaper *Izvestia* says one of you killed Vice Admiral Grigori N. Kholostyakov for his rare and unusual medals. Murdered 21 July 1983, the death was reported in *Izvestia* in December of that year, but no explanation was made until a year later, when Prosecutor Sergei Emelyanov mentioned it as his most memorable recent case, claiming its solution helped unearth 40 similar crimes in 10 Soviet cities.

SOF has a hint for the Collector, though: If he *really* wants to collect some medals he should check out the crowd on top of Lenin's tomb on May Day.

BE KIND TO GOOT...

SOF's favorite contract artist, Jim Guttenberg, has been chastised by the Humane Society for making "a joke of questionable taste" by printing recipes using dogs and cats. God only knows what the Society would have thought of Parisians eating zoo animals during the Franco-Prussian War.

But then again, the Parisians probably wouldn't have cared. Order your copy of the *The Green Beret Gourmet*, already described — and recommended — in SOF, from Jim Guttenberg, Dept. SOF, 1225-C S. Florida Ave., Rockledge, FL 32955. It's yours for \$9.95.

MACV CADRE...

Earl Bleacher's MACV Recondo School article of September '84 excited lots of mail, both from the curious and from those who were there. We're glad to please.

For those who taught at the School, James W. Alexander (1627 Osage Unit 4 Apt. 2, Box 5103, Dalhart, TX 79022) would like to hear from his former colleagues.

TERRORIST LOGISTICS...

The U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency charges that the USSR has become the world's greatest arms dealer. Some 37 percent of known arms transfers to developing countries in 1982 were made by the Soviet Union, with most of those sales going to the Middle East.

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.

TRICK OR TREAT...

UNICEF (United Nations Childrens Fund, the acronym comes from the old United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund) medical kits have been found on dead Vietnamese troops in Kampuchea, according to an SOF source in Paris. At best, these valuable medical supplies were diverted from legitimate United Nations shipments to the Vietnamese invasion force.

Don't send UNICEF donations until they develop a better system of accounting *and* accountability.

AID FOR VICTORY IN CENTRAL AMERICA...

Even the *New York Times* has admitted the Salvos have turned the guerrilla tide... although we'd been telling you that for months before they figured it out. But the battle isn't over. When you've thrown back the assault, it's time to commit reserves.

If you have even \$10 to help Refugee Relief International, Inc., (RRII) field more medical teams in combat zones, this is the time to send it. Your dollars in Central America can support the fight against guerrilla terrorism in Central America, and alleviate the suffering of civilian victims.

September contributors who consented to be recognized are: Frank Carpenter, Emery Worldwide of Albany, N.Y., \$307, Robert G. Wheaton, \$50.

RRII, 1105 Balmora Drive, Lafayette, CO 80026.

VIETNAM FICTION...

A major New York publisher wants to print an SOF series of novels on the Vietnam War. If you have a novel up to SOF standards in the works or done — except for finding a publisher — contact Kevin Steele, SOF, P.O. Box 693, Boulder, CO 80306. Phone: (303) 449-3750.

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE KILLERS...

Dr. Park Elliott Dietz, University of Virginia professor of Law and Psychiatry, has discovered that unemployed San Diego McDonalds mass-murderer James Oliver Huberty fits the "Soldier of Fortune Killer" profile... whatever that is.

Although no word is yet available whether Huberty had any SOFs or not, buying SOF is one of the symptoms. Soldier of Fortune Killers are obsessed with nuclear war, survivalism, guns and own German shepherds. They are military service rejects *who act like* "shell-shocked Vietnam veterans."

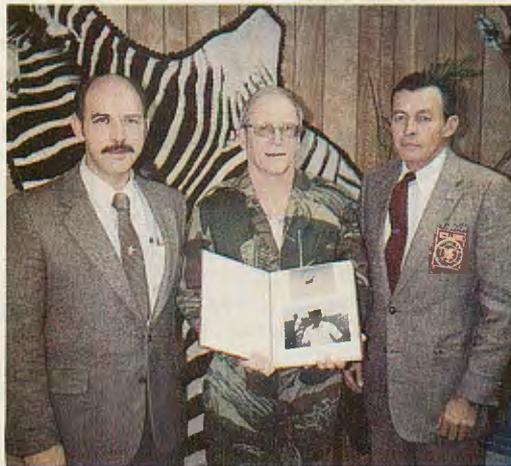
SOFers will be surprised to hear this implicit comparison with our readership. According to Starch INRA Hooper, Inc., the average SOF reader is twice as likely to have attended college and 64-percent more likely to make over \$25,000 per year than the average American. Also, over half of our readers have served honorably in the U.S. armed forces and about 10 percent are law enforcement officers.

It's a good thing Dr. Dietz doesn't teach logic or statistics. And he's *damned* lucky nobody's asked him to prove his undocumented contentions in court.

SOF EXPOSED AGAIN!...

It's too bad that few of SOF's readers — outside of the Soviet Embassy — subscribe to communist periodicals. Take, for instance, Berkeley, Calif.'s, *People's World* and its account of SOF's possible "violation of the Neutrality Act" by our missions to El Salvador.

We are always happy to irritate traitors in our midst, but *People's World* should try to get their facts straight. Aiding a non-hostile nation with clothing and medical equipment is not illegal in any interpretation of the law. Even if Walter Mondale were to become president — note the conditional-contrary-to-fact construction — our support of the Salvadoran Army would not be illegal without changing the Neutrality Act to specifically forbid giving aid and comfort to our friends.



SOF editor/publisher Robert K. Brown receives commemorative scrapbook from Colorado Rifle and Pistol Association Junior High Power Rifle Executive Officer Jim Starr (left). NRA field rep George Nyfeler (right) had presented Brown's donation of \$2,000 to help send the junior team to the National Rifle and Pistol Championships at Camp Perry in August 1984.

WILD GEESE FLY AGAIN...

Wild Geese II will feature the plot to spring former Nazi Rudolf Hess from Spandau Prison.

Shot on location in Berlin, London and Geneva, Euan Lloyd's production will be released in March 1985. Script writer Reginald Rose promises technical accuracy and acting quality is guaranteed by Sir Lawrence Olivier, Edward Fox, Scott Glenn and Barbara Carrera.

DRIP STOPPED?...

Gonorrhea has been *the* military VD of the last 50 years. But the Navy may have found a cure.

Norfloxacin (a new antibiotic) has proved 100-percent effective with a single dose of two capsules given to infected sailors at experimental stations in the Philippines. Even Vietnam Rose and other penicillin-resistant strains disappeared with the new drug.

Don't ask your doctor for it: It's still being tested. If you're really in trouble, join the Navy.

ANGOLAN HOLIDAY...

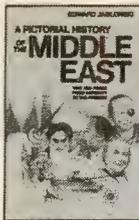
Castro has long lagged behind his Russian models in ideas of how to treat citizens who disappoint him. The release of thousands of political prisoners, mental patients and criminals to U.S. immigration authorities somehow doesn't stack up against Siberia. Promise of parole in the United States must be multiplying dissidence, psychosis and crime rates in Cuba.

Castro finally seems to be figuring it out, though: Col. Pedro Tortolo, formerly CO of Cuban forces in Grenada, has been demoted to private, and reassigned to fight UNITA and the SADF in Angola.

AFGHAN COLLECTION...

SOF's Afghan Freedom Fighters Fund is the straightest way for you to get your aid to the front. We don't take any expenses, and every penny goes to Afghans who fight Russian aggression. Last month's donors are: Louis Di Giandomenico \$115, Rob Pollack \$10, Ronald Hemenway \$25, Stephen Henderson \$200, James and Mary Malinowski \$10, and Wm. M. Barlow \$10.

Thanks again: It helps more than you know.



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0521 \$19.95



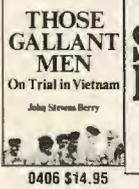
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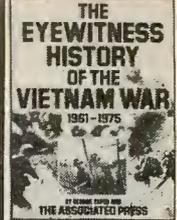
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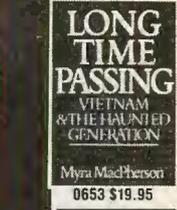
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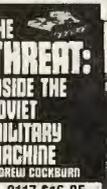
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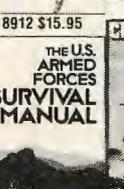
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FLAK ZEROES ON 'A2 PAN...

Sirs:

Though I usually find myself in agreement with Ken Hackathorn's column, we [*International Defense Review* staff] were surprised to find ourselves taking exception to his criticism of the M16A2 in the September edition of SOF.

We feel that SOF is doing our fighting men a disservice by publishing uninformed and unsubstantiated opinions as to the lethality of our new service rifle. Ken is apparently unaware that the Commandant of the Marine Corps directed MCDEC to compare SS109/M855, M193 and M80 7.62 NATO ammunition for lethality prior to adopting the M16A2. Though the report is classified, reliable sources and my own independent testing indicate that SS109 ammunition "tumbles" just as quickly as M193 (usually breaking in two at the cannelure within four inches of gelatin.) SS109 ammunition should produce explosive type wounds out to nearly 200 meters.

We felt the M16A2's sights to be the best metallic sights ever put on a battle-rifle. The rifle is capable of 2 MOA accuracy out to nearly 800 meters and deserves target-quality sights.

Finally, we would like to remind you readers that the 'A2 has a vastly improved night sight compared to the 'A1. It has two apertures, one 0.070 inch in diameter for use at 300 meters and over and another measuring 0.197 inches in diameter for use within 200 meters and/or in reduced light. We agree with Ken that tritium dots would be a worthwhile addition, but he did not do the rifle justice by ignoring the 'A2's large, 200-meter aperture.

The USMC and Army RDF units who receive the 'A2 will be equipped with one of the best battle rifles ever adopted by an armed force. The lethality, accuracy and penetration of the A2 firing SS109/M855 ammunition has been well documented. SOF owes its readers better reporting than this.

Andy Tillman
Athena, Oregon



FLAK

... I was a little dismayed by the petulance of "Dim View."

The same argument was heard when the Krag was first issued in 1894. Incidentally, the U.S. was very nearly the last nation on Earth to adopt a reduced-caliber, smokeless-powder magazine rifle.

The fact is, every change and modification in the basic tool of battle in the last 100 years has given the rifleman a little more firepower with a little less weight in basic combat load. And each time the change has met with bitter resentment. But every time a new weapon actually went into battle, that increased firepower justified itself with what we today call "survivability," the ability to come out on top of an encounter with hostile forces.

SP/5 William M. Zwiker
Ft. Leonard Wood

... First let us clear away the haze of ballistics and statistics and take a look at the .22 vs .30-caliber controversy. As the days of the .58 and

.45-caliber rifles have gone by us, so are the days of the .30-caliber rifle waning. The big calibers are just not needed to destroy flesh or end a human life. It is a fact that the M193 5.56mm round is a highly lethal man-killer and has been doing its job rather well since its introduction to combat in the 1960s. Tests have indicated that the new SS109 5.56mm round is slightly more lethal than the current M193 round. The SS109 also has a much longer range at which accuracy (and death) can be obtained. It is my feeling that the untold numbers of people in South-east Asia, the Middle East and Central America killed by .22-caliber bullets make the "Bigger is Better" argument a dead one.

Scott Cooper
Kensington, Connecticut

It is difficult to see why any enlisted man, no matter how lame-brained, would fiddle with his sights except on the target range where his groups can be measured and compared. A soldier who monkeys with windage and elevation in the heat of battle will be of little use regardless of how his weapon is sighted.

Finally, I am sick and tired of the assumption that the military minds of the United States and half the planet are near-idiots. The ArmaLite AR-

Nicaraguan Order of Battle

When I wrote the article in the summer of 1983, the Sandinistas did in fact have about 25,000 men on active duty and about 50,000 in the reserves and militia. By mid-1984, however, their active duty force had virtually doubled to more than 47,000, with the inactive force being approximately 55,000.

In 1983, the Sandinistas had about 50 T-54/T-55 tanks and a handful of armored personnel carriers; by 1984 the armored force had grown to about 240, including about 100 T-54/55 tanks, more than 20 PT-76 light amphibious tanks, and about 120 other armored vehicles. In 1983, they had a few Soviet-made 152mm howitzers; today there are about 50 152mm and 122mm howitzers in the Sandinista army, as well as at least 24 122mm multiple rocket launchers.

The Sandinistas have thus developed firepower and mobility un-

DIPLOMATIC CORRECTION...

Sirs:

Surprise was having a friend call to tell me that an article written by me was in the November issue of *Soldier of Fortune Magazine* ("Is Central America Really Important?"). The reason for my surprise is that I never submitted said article to your magazine.

As we have already discussed this issue by phone, I am writing this letter to clarify the issue publicly, and to provide your readers information that updates that contained in the article. The fact that you printed in the fall of 1984 an article I wrote in the summer of 1983, without checking with me for permission and updating, has resulted in the publication of outdated information on the extent of the Sandinista military buildup. Consequently, the Sandinista military threat to Nicaragua's neighbors, and to regional stability, is not accurately portrayed. In addition, I found some problems with the way you edited the piece. Following are specific complaints.

18s, the Colt M16s, the Israeli Galils, the Soviet AKS-74s are not the products of morons.

Eric J. Skagen
Stockton, California

SINGLE PLUS ON 'A2 PAN...

Sirs:

Thanks for finally denouncing the M16.

The M16 may have been a fine weapon for spraying through elephant grass, but as a battle rifle for clearing woods and city streets in North America or Central Europe it would be practically useless. A tiny .223 that tumbles through flesh may be fine and dandy, but it simply isn't powerful enough to punch holes through layered sandbags or soft-skinned vehicles.

Frank MacKay
Toronto, Canada

Perhaps no single technical article ever published in SOF has drawn as much flak as Contributing Editor Hackathorn's dim review of the M16A2. We were flooded with letters from those who disagreed. In his defense, we should note that SOF edited Ken's copy rather extensively and may have made him sound much more critical of the M16A2

than he really is. We feel a man of Hackathorn's distinguished reputation in weapons technology and competition shooting should be given a forum to express his opinion even if the majority of soldiers and shooters appear to hold a different one. Such controversy keeps the bureaucrats on their toes. Pete Kokalis closes the controversy this month with "M16A2: The Final Verdict" on p. 60. — Eds.



Bob Ogilvie, Tom Reisinger and Harry Claffin (left to right) pack boxes of field gear and medical supplies for the Airborne Battalion of the Salvadoran Army.

precedented in Central America. The air base being built at Punta Huete near Managua will have a runway longer than any in Central America, and in fact longer than that at Andrews Air Force Base near Washington. From this base, the Soviets could operate any aircraft in their inventory, including the TU-95 Bear-D reconnaissance aircraft. The USSR will thereby be able to cover U.S. bases in California, a capability they currently lack. Of course, their reconnaissance flights will continue to cover the East Coast of the United States from Cuba.

As you can see, the already formidable Sandinista military machine of 1983 has increased its fighting and political intimidation capabilities dramatically in just a year, and the potential for an expanded Soviet military presence in the region is likewise increased.

Finally, I want the author's fee for this article to be used to buy baseball equipment to be sent to the Tilaran Refugee camp in Costa Rica. In this camp there are approximately 2,000 Nicaraguans who have chosen to flee their native land rather than

live in the increasingly totalitarian environment that is Sandinista Nicaragua. When I visited this camp several months ago, I saw children and young men playing "beisbol" (virtually the national pastime of Nicaragua) with makeshift equipment such as rolled-up socks for balls and sticks for bats. Perhaps a few gloves, Louisville sluggers, and real baseballs will make this place a little more tolerable for these unfortunate people who have had their country stolen from them.

Col. Lawrence L. Tracy
Senior Defense Adviser
Office of the Coordinator for
Public Diplomacy for Latin
America
Department of State

Col. Tracy's piece was dated, but we stand by it as an accurate foundation for a broad overview of the conflict in Central America.

We also sincerely thank the colonel for his corrections and update. — Eds.

SALVADORAN SALUTE...

Sirs:

A most cordial and affectionate greeting.

I extend my infinite thanks for the 35 boxes of medicine and surgical supplies that *Soldier of Fortune* so generously sent us, which are sorely needed by this medical center.

Hoping to count again on such valiant collaboration, I am pleased to remain

Dr. Lisandro Rafael Lizama
A.
Hospital Director
El Salvador

De nada, Dr. Lizama. As long as our readers continue to care about the survival of your nation, the supplies will continue to flow through our warehouses and into your capable hands. Continue to care for those who carry on the good fight. — Eds.

MATCH PLAUDITS...

Sirs:

As a shooter I would like to thank you for the fine three-gun match that you sponsored. Ken Hackathorn and his staff did a super job of designing and running the match. I also believe that some of last year's shooters who didn't come this time will be back next year. Please try to get Ken and his staff back again. As a shooter I had a wonderful time and so did my wife.

Jonathan Marsh

Your compliments on SOF's Three-Gun Match held during the 1984 Convention in Las Vegas have been passed along to Ken and his crew. They truly did an outstanding job this year at the Desert Sportsman range. — Eds.

Continued on page 127



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COMBAT WEAPONCRAFT

by Andy Langley

Field Expedient Night Sights



You are Private Jose Gonzales of the Salvadoran Army and you've been assigned to help defend a small town in northern El Salvador. It's 0200. The moon is hidden by clouds. You are bored and tired.

Flame erupts in front of you and it takes you an instant to hear the report of gunfire that comes with it. You roll behind the tree you were leaning against, but you aren't safe. They are close. You must return fire or die.

Your G3 holds one full magazine, and there are four more in two belt pouches: 100 rounds total. Lying in cover you level your weapon toward the blinding muzzle flashes 150 meters to your front. No good. As soon as you look through the aperture, there's nothing to see. When you finally locate the front sight post, it appears as big and dark as the tree you're behind. That sight — so visible and reassuring in bright light — is completely useless at night.

You lift your head for a better view and the muzzle rises along with it. Your first few rounds tear harmlessly into

Israeli-made Galil has author's favorite issue night-sight. Sights are visible as hinged pin behind front sight hood, and hinged plate in front of rear sight's protective ears. Photo: Israeli Military Industries

trees. Muzzle flashes brighten and dance. They are only the length of a village soccer field from your position. Why can't you bring fire on them? Things are getting tense and you lift your head over the weeds and your weapon is invisible. You fumble. Full auto is what you want. More bullets... more noise... scare 'em away.

You burn through a magazine hoping for the best. Enemy fire continues from as close as 50 meters. They're advancing and you can't seem to stop them. Three more mags rattle empty fast on full rock & roll.

But the fourth box still hasn't had any effect. You've only got 20 rounds left and they're still shooting. Some of the flashes are now only 20 meters away. Why have four magazines of 7.62 ball had no effect? You begin to wish you'd been able to aim the last 80 shots.

Daybreak and help are a long way off.

You remember that the guerrillas have announced they won't kill you if you surrender with at least one full mag. More than a hundred of your buddies are thinking the same thing. Two thousand rounds already loaded in magazines may not be fired.

PVT. Gonzales — and others like him all over the world — has some training and a lot of desire. Why can't they return fire effectively at night? Because standard sights on most current

COMBAT PROFESSIONAL

Andy Langley: USMC in Vietnam, bodyguard, enlisted soldier and ranch security adviser in Africa, Personal Safety Inc. instructor, championship IPSC competitor, private security adviser in Central America. . . .

If anybody deserves a guest shot at Combat Weaponcraft, it's Andy.

Continuing SOF's tradition of user analysis of the techniques and hardware of combat, Langley is exclusively concerned with the combat infantryman's point of view. In this issue, he focuses on accurate fire at night.

Continued on page 137

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IN YOUR FIRST LESSON we reveal a secret of ballistics that can increase your hunting accuracy so dramatically...**ALL YOUR FRIENDS WILL BEG YOU TO SHOW THEM HOW TO DO IT!** The men you shoot with will scarcely believe their eyes when they witness your sensationally improved shooting accuracy. (You may even have trouble believing it yourself!) It seems like a miracle—yet, it's part of your training on the way to becoming a gun pro. The way you do it is the simple application of revealing new information concerning ballistics that is explained with a simple, easy-to-understand chart that accompanies your first lesson. And this is just one example of the dozens of inside tips and gun secrets that will be revealed to you as you progress through this exciting course.

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ORIGINAL issue, mint-condition bayonets for AK series weapons are relatively rare in this country, and when Executive Editor Dale Dye asked me to do an evaluation of one as a fighting knife, I had to confess that I had never seen the grisly weapon so familiar to Vietnam vets up close or held one in my hand. I simply had no idea where to get one for study. Dale responded by sending one from his own collection, with instructions to do anything I wanted with it, short of breaking it or losing it. Fair enough, I thought. Let's see what Ivan might pull out of his gear in a toe-to-toe confrontation when his AK has run dry.

The AK bayonet (the one I examined was of Russian manufacture and originally issued with an AKM) is a fascinating piece of equipment. So fascinating, in fact, that someone should probably write a lengthy study on what it is — and what it is not. There are a lot of implications about Soviet military thinking contained in this item.

If the AK bayonet is intended to be a fighting knife, the Soviet soldier, or the surrogate trooper who also carries this item of equipment, is in one hell of a fix when it comes to a hand-to-hand hack and slash. About the only way you could kill a man with an issue AK bayonet *not mounted on the business end of a shoulder weapon* would be to catch your victim asleep on his back and then stab him in the throat or the eye. The 5 $\frac{7}{8}$ -inch blade is a chillingly effective tool and a frightening psychological weapon, but it was not really designed to kill men. *It was designed to cut wire.* Specifically, it was designed to cut wire that will be typically encountered on the modern battlefield, even if it has high-voltage electricity coursing through it. *Ivan doesn't have a fighting knife, he has a wire-cutter.*

Think about it — particularly if you're familiar with this item of Soviet standard equipment. Before you are consumed by contempt or gales of laughter, think about the Soviet tactical considerations and consider the fact that they have exhibited a very high level of understanding of the ethnic and sociological origins of their troops in designing the AK bayonet. They have, in fact, shown an awareness of the behavior typical troopers demonstrate in combat and established a battlefield priority that virtually declares men armed only with a bayonet are expendable. Rationale coupled with psychology is vitally important in understanding how they can get away with such presumptions.

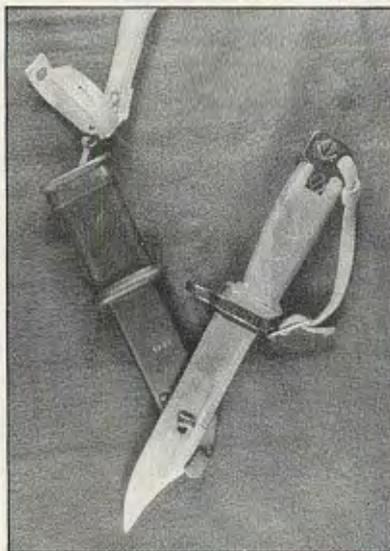
From the design of the AK bayonet (other than daggers or other rare models of issue edged weapons provided for special mission troops, it seems to be the only blade typically carried by



BATTLE BLADES

by Bill Bagwell

Dikes in Disguise



Soviet engineering ensures that AKM bayonet blade, when attached by a stud to its sheath, becomes a topnotch wire-cutter.

their infantry) Soviet planners obviously feel a wire-cutter is more important in their scheme of offensive combat than a fighting knife. Meanwhile, they also realize that if they were to issue every man a pair of dikes, most over-burdened grunts would pitch the tool at first opportunity as unnecessary extra weight. They also know that a fighting man will keep a knife when he will discard most other gear. It is an almost primordial instinct geared to simple survival. With this in mind, the Soviets issue a bayonet that looks like a knife, but is actually of much more combat utility as a wire-cutter. All bases are covered in a fascinating blend of first-rate materials, brilliant design, and clever — if not cunning — psychological application.

The AK bayonet and sheath combination is a damned good wire-cutter. Let's take a long, hard look at this item. Every aspect of every component has been examined and maximized to provide a high-quality wire cutting device that will function as a bayonet while disguised as a knife. The 5 $\frac{7}{8}$ -inch blade is not cheaply made. It has a clip

point with the point lying precisely on the centerline of the axis of thrust — exactly where it should be on a weapon designed for piercing. The point and cutting edge are both quite dull and can't be sharpened in the field. That's of no real consequence. In a bayonet fight, the weight of the AKM itself would ensure that anyone who was unlucky enough to be on the receiving end of the attack would get all 5 $\frac{7}{8}$ inches of blade before the barrel stopped the thrust. The point of the bayonet doesn't have to be sharp. The battering ram effect, or inertia of the rifle, will generally be sufficient to guarantee penetration.

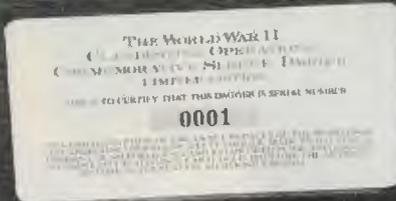
The blade is made from a high-grade tool-steel, probably with a high tungsten content. It is not stamped out with a die, but is made from precision-ground flat bar stock. The entire blade shows evidence of careful, precise grinding and machining. The blade has a cutting bevel placed only on the obverse side. This shows the Soviet awareness of the psychological nature of acceptance of the weapon by its troops, as most cutting implements in a peasant society such as scythes, sickles and even wood chisels are sharpened from only one side. This placement of the cutting bevel makes it damn near impossible to cut with the knife if you are left handed, *but*, and this is an important but, this bevel makes the reverse side of the blade flat. This flatness of the blade coupled with a near rectangular slot milled completely through the blade in a lengthways position about three inches back from the point form one half of a very efficient wire-cutter.

The other half of the wire-cutter is the sheath. The tip of the sheath is very solidly riveted to the metal sheath body. The tip is made out of hardened tool steel, and has a T-shaped stud riveted through it in such a way that when this stud is placed through the hole in the blade, a very effective scissor-type wire-cutter results. It will cut

Continued on page 134

"CLOAK AND DAGGER"

A rare opportunity to own a World War II Clandestine Operations Sleeve Dagger—reissued in a 24-karat gold and steel limited edition to honor the American and Allied secret warriors of World War II.



 Leather sheath, strap, mahogany case and two insignia, all shown above, accompany each knife. 



Their story reads like "James Bond." Since the end of World War II, many of the exploits of the "Shadow Warriors"—and the details of their special equipment—have remained classified.

Now, The American Historical Foundation announces a special commemorative tribute to honor these mystery men who often parachuted in behind enemy lines to fight the covert actions of World War II.

The Sleeve Dagger worn by Allied operatives epitomizes the spirit of clandestine warfare in World War II. For that reason, we selected it for this commemorative tribute to the men of the OSS and the SOE.

The OSS (Office of Strategic Services)—forerunner of both the U.S. Army's Special Forces and the CIA—and the British SOE (Special Operations Executive) trained and led guerrillas, blew up supplies, destroyed factories, derailed trains, ambushed convoys and provided intelligence information vital to the Allied cause. All Americans are indebted to this small group of fighting men, without whom the outcome of the war could have been entirely different.

Exotic Design

Their daring missions were often accomplished with strange and special equipment. This easily-concealed Sleeve Dagger was one of their more exotic pieces of gear. The knife is an exact recreation of the Sleeve Dagger originated by the OSS's British counterparts in SOE.

Not many were produced. It has been estimated that fewer than a dozen of the originals exist today in this country; they are so rare that they can bring prices of \$1,000 or more. As a result, this reissue should be of great interest, not only to veteran intelligence agents, but also to collectors of military knives worldwide.

Limited Edition

Like the wartime originals, this limited edition reissue is being made in Sheffield, England. H.G. Long & Co., established in 1846, has been commissioned by the Foundation to faithfully recreate these knives from a rare original. This is a limited edition of only 1,945—in remembrance of the year of Allied Victory.

This knife was designed to be easily concealed—yet as deadly as possible. The dagger is 7" long, with a blade of triangular cross section for strength and effectiveness. The

blade is precision ground to a razor edge on each of the three flats and the point, with deep fullers or "blood grooves" on each flat. The butt is sculpted to aid the user in withdrawing the knife from the scabbard when it is worn under a sleeve. The dagger is balanced to the hilt to achieve quick and sure handling characteristics.

Concealed by the shirt sleeve, the scabbard is strapped to the arm on the underside of the wrist, with the hilt toward the hand for quick access. Or, the strap is long enough to be strapped to the leg instead. In either location, it is unlikely to be found in a hurried frisk.

24-Karat Gold Plated

In honor of the bold exploits of our intelligence services, this limited edition World War II Clandestine Operations Commemorative Sleeve Dagger is plated entirely in 24-karat gold. Each knife is serially numbered and comes complete with case, sheath and strap.

The sheath and strap are recreated exactly from the original in brown calfskin leather. To match the knife, the strap buckle is also plated with 24-karat gold.

To store and display this set, you will also receive a solid mahogany case, designed to be an innocuous item that would not attract attention in an agent's personal belongings. The Certificate of Authenticity is mounted in the inner lid, with the knife, strap and sheath each fitted in separate compartments.

Free Collector Insignia

Those reserving this Sleeve Dagger will also receive two free custom-made, hand-embroidered collector insignia. These insignia were linked to the OSS in World War II and are unobtainable today. The Foundation commissioned the manufacture of these exclusively for this project. The shoulder patch was designed for wear by the OSS during the war but was disapproved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who reasoned that secret agents should never be identified. The "Special Force" jump wings were worn by airborne personnel of the OSS and British SOE. These are possibly the rarest insignia in existence as only some hundred men were trained in England and Scotland. Both of these insignia have been executed in the very highest quality standards and are collectibles in themselves.

Membership Benefits

As an added benefit, those reserving this World War II Commemorative will also be extended membership in

The American Historical Foundation. This will guarantee the opportunity to learn of all future Foundation military history projects prior to the public. As a member you will also receive, at no expense, hard-to-obtain information concerning American military history and the care, display and collecting of knives, firearms and other militaria.

How To Reserve

This unusual opportunity is available only through The American Historical Foundation. You may write, call, personally visit or use the reservation form below. Reservations will be honored on a first-come, first-served basis. Requests for special serial numbers will be honored, if possible. Early response will result in securing the lowest available serial number.

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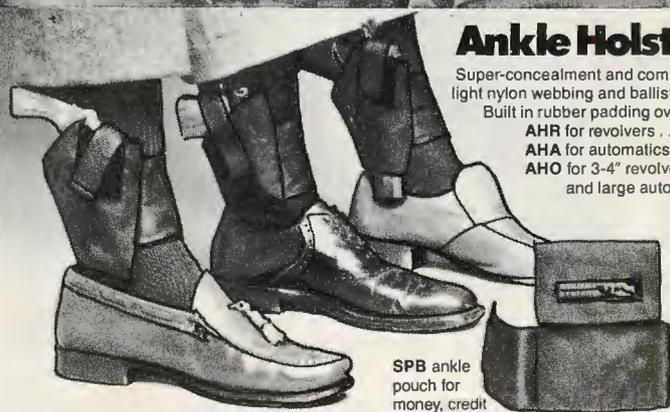
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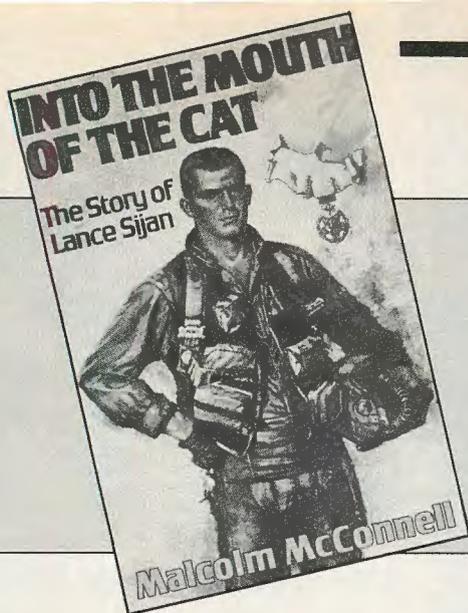


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IN REVIEW



INTO THE MOUTH OF THE CAT: The Story of an American Soldier in Vietnam. By Malcolm McConnell. W.W. Norton & Co., New York. 1984. \$13.95. Review by Dana K. Drenkowski

AMERICAN soldiers in Vietnam: the phrase brings to mind exhausted, hollow-eyed men in tattered uniforms, toting M16s and struggling through dense jungles or putrid rice paddies. Their adversary — the wily VC — keeps them on a constant razor's edge with ambush and booby-trap. That's the American stereotype for soldiers in Vietnam. And then there were the fighter pilots, those shit-hot jet jocks that flew so far above the typical soldier in Vietnam that they created their own stereotype. You can't convince most Americans that fighter pilots are "soldiers."

Into the Mouth of the Cat: The Story of an American Soldier in Vietnam, begs to differ. It is about an Air Force pilot. His war began where the stereotype would have it — in the crisp, cold skies over Vietnam. But circumstances and the fortunes of war forced 1st Lt. Lance Sijan to wind up fighting on the ground like the more common soldier of the infantry. Shot down over Laos in 1967, Sijan fought a lonely battle to evade, escape, and resist a persistent enemy over long, desperate months of physical and mental warfare as intense as any experienced by line grunts. Few who finish this book will find themselves able to deny that airmen such as Sijan are American soldiers in every respect.

Into the Mouth of the Cat is a tale of courage, devotion to duty and sacrifice; a tale of valor beyond the call of duty in a lonely, isolated arena. These qualities are common in books but not

in real life. Even rarer is a book that captures the essence of that uncommon valor.

Lance Sijan went to Vietnam as a backseater on an F-4 Phantom. Luck ran out on his 44th mission. His plane exploded in midair during a dive-bombing pass over the Ho Chi Minh Trail. A brutal landing following ejection broke his left leg. Sijan also suffered head injuries and a concussion. With a mangled and bloody hand, Sijan painfully turned on his survival radio, triggering a rescue effort that eventually involved 108 U.S. aircraft and four ground radar stations.

Between the battered crewman and freedom alternately lurked hundreds or thousands of North Vietnamese Army (NVA) troopers. A massive effort to save Sijan resulted in large numbers of NVA casualties and nine U.S. fixed wing or helicopter aircraft shot down or damaged. It was an incredible effort.

The throaty drone of a Jolly Green Giant helicopter filled the air. Hovering overhead, it lowered a cable with a penetrator/rescue seat through the triple canopy jungle to within 20 feet of Sijan's position. Because of the North Vietnamese in the area, Sijan refused the assistance of a pararescue man announcing that he did not want to expose the man to ground fire.

For the next 33 minutes, the helicopter hovered over his position taking small arms fire, while Sijan struggled to drag his crippled body the 20 feet to the seat. With painful slowness he lay on his back and squirmed inches at a time toward the seat. Like Tantalus, he saw the instrument of his rescue but was unable to grasp it. He lost consciousness from the pain a number of times. The rescue helicopter could hover no longer and drew up the jungle penetrator, returning to base.

Fighter planes, fighter-bombers, radio planes, tankers and helicopters

gathered over the Ho Chi Minh Trail at dawn the next day, but heard nothing from Sijan on the radio. Sadly, they gave up.

In a small limestone sinkhole Sijan drifted in and out of consciousness over the next several days. When he finally gathered his wits through the extreme pain, he found his radio drained of most of its power. He was on his own.

It took him 40 days to inch three miles through the jungle to a clear portion of the Ho Chi Minh Trail. He ate an occasional grub, but survived mostly on the blood-sucking leeches that clung to his body.

An NVA truck convoy found him, his face and body sliced by ribbons by thorns and vines, his numerous wounds infected and oozing pus. He was no longer capable of evading capture, but even in captivity Sijan continued to resist. After regaining consciousness, he managed to deceive and slug his NVA guard with his uninjured hand and crawl into the jungle bent on escape. It took hundreds of NVA soldiers and villagers more than a day to find him.

He was thrown into a bamboo prison near Vinh, North Vietnam, and tortured. The abuse was designed to elicit propaganda statements and complete obedience but the NVA had picked on the wrong man. They beat Sijan and deprived him of medical aid. They took special delight in pummeling and twisting his shattered leg. Sijan screamed but gave the enemy nothing more than his name, rank and serial number.

Sijan was dying by inches but he refused to make the ultimate leap to surrender. In hoarse whispers he told other POWs of his plans to escape. Sijan told them details of the failed SAR effort, his escape from captivity and his intent to continue resistance. Then he died.

Ironically, Sijan would probably not have been released even if he had lived through his incredible ordeal of evasion, escape and resistance. It is now apparent that the North Vietnamese government feared the impact on public opinion if they released maimed POWs.

In 1974, after the facts of this soldier's solitary fight for survival with honor came to light, Sijan was presented the Medal of Honor which his parents received in his name. ✕



I WAS THERE

Cheap Heart Charge

by John Riggs as told to M.L. Jones

John Riggs was an SP5 with the 4th Bn. (Mech.), 23rd Infantry, 25th Division, U.S. Army in the 'Nam in 1968. When he first arrived, he learned what heroes are all about:

I had been in Vietnam a couple of weeks and was between assignments. The recon platoon to which I'd been sent as a replacement Forward Observer didn't need me until they were brought back to strength with other replacements and got new Vipers. I'd received orders to go to jungle warfare school in the meantime — but that was still a few days away.

What does the Army do with a sergeant who finds himself with spare time? It depends on whether or not your battalion commander needs a gopher. Ours did.

We were in the process of completing a move from Cu Chi to Tay Ninh. I stayed with the rear detachment as assistant NCOIC. One of my jobs was

to take battalion reports to our wounded battalion executive officer in the 12th Evac. Hospital at 25th Inf. Div. HQ.

The XO was a major who had been seriously wounded. He had been ripped from the thigh to the groin and, for reasons unknown to me, still hadn't been sent to Camp Zama, Japan, or The World.

He kept demanding to know why he hadn't received his Purple Heart yet. Being new to the scene, I started phoning battalion HQ at Tay Ninh every day, asking what the holdup was. The only answers I got were "Are you kidding?" or "Get serious, Riggs!"

By the sixth day I was really getting tired of the major carrying on like a nut about it and the rotten VC who wounded him. Besides, one of the nurses, whom I had gotten close to, told me the major would be gone in a day or so. It was then that the Command Sergeant Major arrived back in Cu Chi and asked for me to report to

him ASAP

Again I was asked if I were kidding, stupid or just didn't know the facts. Facts? What facts? The major had been wounded, very badly — doesn't that bring a Purple Heart?

The resounding answer was "No!"

The CSM went on to relate *how* the major was wounded.

He was with one of the line companies on a sweep through some rice paddies outside Cu Chi. It was Tet 1968, and our world was on fire. A rather large water buffalo stood in one of the paddies in front of the major. It would not move, and the major wanted a clean sweep of the area to drive out all VC, man or beast.

He decided to waste the animal. Shots rang out. It didn't budge. Just a little dust rose from its side.

Then the beast turned on the major. It is surprising how fast a water buffalo runs in a rice paddy and how slow a GI moves. Before the insidious animal died, it managed to gore the major in the crotch and scatter an infantry company into the mud. That convinced the major it was VC water buffalo and, therefore, he wanted his Purple Heart.

He never got it, and I never went back to the 12th Evac. to see him. Visions of a hero gone from my mind, I was sent off to jungle warfare school by the CSM. ✕

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AMMO tested without a chronograph leaves nothing but holes in the target.

Groups won't tell much about ammo. Group size varies with wind, temperature, barrel heating, shooting platform stability, hold, shooter fatigue and experience. M.O.A. can indicate ammo quality control, but shoulder-fired accuracy is a rough index at best.

Quality control in ammunition means uniform bullet weight, uniform propellant measurement, and uniform seat and crimp. All this translates into uniform velocity. Cartridges that shoot at the same speed will give the best odds of good accuracy. Nearly identical velocities also indicate uniform energy levels: important in cycling automatic weapons.

Chronographs — once the luxury of professional analysts — have been affordable to all serious shooters for almost 20 years. Most gun writers use the Model 33 Chronotach manufactured by Oehler Research, Inc. (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 9135, Austin, Texas 78766). Powered by six standard D-cell batteries, the Model 33 is designed for field use. Pushing a summary button at the end of a statistically significant string (at least 10 shots) will display the lowest velocity, highest velocity, extreme spread, average velocity and the standard deviation. Slow to compute by hand, the standard deviation is the best sign of uniformity. Lower standard deviation means uniform ammunition.

My first Oehler chronograph used paper detector screens which had to be replaced after each shot — expensive and time consuming. The Skyscreen II detector was next in 1978. While any number of shots could be fired over the Skyscreen II detectors, their fan-shaped area of sensitivity was only 3 inches wide across the top and extended upward for only 6 inches. **Set up several feet** from the end of the barrel to avoid muzzle blast and with a 10 foot spacing between detectors, the Skyscreen II detectors seemed impossible to miss. Any gun writer who denies blowing away more than one Skyscreen II is lying.

Enter the Skyscreen III. No more hours spent with a bubble level and tape measure. No more shots which fail to register. No more pieces of shattered Skyscreens skipping along the dirt downrange. The new Skyscreen III detectors feature a two-lens optics system, a built-in light diffuser for improved performance under clear skies. You aim and shoot through a window extending 13 inches above the body of the skyscreen.

A kit consisting of two Skyscreen III detectors, two light stands and a four-foot bar costs \$100. The Oehler Model 33 Chronotach equipped with the Skyscreen III system costs \$380. Oehler instrumentation is used throughout the firearms industry. Their System 82 mainframe for ballistic testing can be equipped to measure machine gun cyclic rates (\$8,500 total).

Testing ammunition through automatic



FULL AUTO

by Peter G. Kokalis

Assessing Ammo Accuracy



Kokalis test fires Sterling L2A3 SMG from Ricman Portable Bench Rest at new Oehler Skyscreen III. Photo: Don Pendleton

weapons is not permitted at many public ranges, so you carry your own bench. Sheet-metal and aluminum portable bench rests shake like dime-store card tables. The Ricman Company (Dept. SOF, 2500 Samuels Road, Sandpoint, Idaho 82864) makes their portable shooting platform from square steel tubing with a black baked-enamel finish. It weighs 26 lbs. and fits easily into the back of a jeep. I use it to test-fire everything from sniper rifles to Bren guns. Available with either right or left hand platforms, it's the next best thing to a concrete bench rest. The price is only \$99.95 (F.O.B. Sandpoint, Idaho).

The Republic of South Africa and Israel have long shared military technology — from rifles (Gail/R4) to nuclear devices. They now compete for a share of the U.S. commercial ammunition market. Musgrave (affiliated with South Africa's Armscor) ammunition is now distributed in the U.S. by Paragon Sales & Services, Inc. (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 2022, Joliet, IL 60434). Samson ammunition, manufactured by Israel Military Industries, is marketed by Action Ammo, Ltd. (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 19630, Philadelphia, PA 19124).

Of particular interest is the so-called Samson 9mm Carbine +P ammunition. Using the standard military 115 gr. FMJ projectile (color coded with a black tip) this ammunition was specifically developed for use in the UZI submachine gun. It should not be used in pistols with alloy frames (such as the Beretta 92SB). To protect themselves in this era of product liability lawsuits, Action Ammo, Ltd., warns against its use in any pistol. I carry and shoot this ammunition in my steel-framed Czech CZ75 when on assignment in El Salvador.

I chronographed the Samson black-tipped and three other 115 gr. FMJ loadings — Musgrave, PMC and Portuguese FNM military ball — all fired through a Sterling L2A3 submachine gun. The PMC, so often the undeserved whipping boy of the armchair experts, gave the lowest standard deviation, an incredible nine fps. At 1,117 fps, the Musgrave ammunition had the lowest average velocity. The Samson had the highest average velocity at 1,347 fps — 230 fps faster than the Musgrave. Military surplus 9mm Parabellum ammo is fabled to be hot, since it was supposedly loaded specifically for use in submachine guns. This has not been my observation with any of the Czech, Yugoslav, German, Argentine, Finnish, U.S. or British 9mm military ammunition I have tested. Nor was it the case with the Portuguese FNM (lot 81-4) which averaged only 1,223 fps out of the Sterling's 7.8-inch tube. The PMC and the Musgrave ammo "doubled" consistently in the Sterling. The Samson and Portuguese FNM did not. The Musgrave's greatest virtue is its price, compared to all other factory fodder, it's cheap — real cheap... an important consideration for those of us who load magazines all week and shoot 'em up in a few minutes on the weekend. Buy the Musgrave for blasting balloons and the Samson for combat.

Musgrave .380 APC ammunition is loaded with the standard 95 gr. FMJ bullet. It was tested, along with West German GECO and Winchester/Western ammunition of the same configuration, through a pre-auction, five-inch-barrel MAC 11. The MAC 11, a bullet hose with its 1,200+ rpm cyclic rate, is not one of my favorites. But it is an excellent test medium for .380 ACP cartridges. Surprisingly, the Musgrave ammo cranked out the highest average velocity, 1,002 fps, with a very fine standard deviation of only 16 fps. The GECO was erratic, yielding a standard deviation of 82 fps, and not surprisingly, the domestic ammo had the lowest average velocity, 909 fps. Musgrave ammunition gets high grades in this caliber.

Paragon also imports South African Swartklip .22 LR standard velocity ammunition. It's inexpensive and just fine for its intended purpose — plinking. For suppressed use on clandestine operations I still prefer the even lower velocity Canadian Eley Pistol Match. ☒

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Commando Sweater— This is the famous British Commando Sweater (Woolly Pully) adopted by the US Military. The natural 100% wool fiber content makes the sweater super warm, the long cut and tight knit ribbed design makes it wind proof. Sleeve and shoulder patches provide protection at abrasion points. Specify size: 34, 36, 38, 40, 42, 44, 46, 48 \$39.75/each
Choose from:
 Olive Drab (OD) Green Crewneck (USMC Approved)
 Black V Neck with epaulets and name plate area on breast (US Army Approved)
 Black Crewneck (no epaulets or name plate area)
 Camouflage

Commando Sweater - Commercially made - patterned after the GI ones, these are commercially made in easy care 100% acrylic. Although they are copies, they are constructed surprisingly true to the all wool ones, complete with sleeve and shoulder patches. Choose between: Olive Drab (OD) Green or Black. Specify Size: S, M, L, XL \$21.75/each

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Special Forces Green Beret - Jaunty and daring and classy — like the professional's who wear them. These are official regulation berets of 100% vat dyed wool and meeting all military specs. Made expressly for us by the prime government contractor. Also available: Official headgear for:
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 Ranger Commandos (Black)
 Artillery & Guardian Angels (Red)
 Commando Dress (Camouflage)
Sizes—6 7/8 to 7 3/4
(Not sure of head size? Tell us how many inches around your head where you wear your hat. We'll send the right one.) \$13.75/each



Military Goods Catalog—Genuine military clothing, gear and equipment with an emphasis on camouflage. See details on these and many more related items \$1.00/each. Free with order.

Angle Head Flashlite— This is the heavy duty olive drab plastic flashlight issued to all military units. The flashlight is waterproof, non-glare and features 4 different lenses which can be easily installed or removed. It can clip onto the belt or suspender for hands free operation; operates on 2 standard D cell batteries and comes complete with a spare bulb. Brand new, sold in the GI box \$6.50/each; 2 for \$12.25.

We're America's Army & Navy Store!

Drill Instructor/Smokey the Bear Hat—Formally called the Campaign Hat, this is a really fine quality pressed felt headpiece. A hat with character. No one who wears it escapes a personality change. An uncontrollable urge to shout orders or heap abuses, pursue flammers or write traffic tickets. Let your true or wistful self be heard. Sizes: 6-7/8 to 7-3/4 \$19.75/each.
Genuine Leather Chin Strap \$2.00/each.
Acorn Hat Cord (as shown) \$6.00/each. (Specify color: silver, gold metallic, black/gold, metallic, yellow, red or light blue).

Distress Marker Rescue Strobe Light— This is a high intensity strobe beacon which penetrates rain and fog and is visible for distances up to 15 miles. Standard pilot survival gear, this light is about the size of a pack of cigarettes (1 1/2" x 2 1/2" x 4 1/2") yet it puts out a dazzling white flash (250,000 lumens) 50 times per minute for up to 9 hours. The unit is waterproof and shockproof. Sold complete with case and 1 battery. \$39.50/each.
 Replacement Batteries for Strobe Light \$5.00/each; 3 for \$12.00

Micro Precision 8x21 Binocular— fits in the palm of your hand!
It looks like a toy — but ours is a state of the art, micro binocular with sterling optical quality. Manufactured by Brunton (the firm that has supplied the precision M2 compass to the US military since the 1940's) our binocular weighs less than 9 ounces and measures a mere 2 3/4" x 4". Yet its 8 power magnification provides the clarity and detail found in much larger (and more expensive) binoculars. It's relatively narrow field allows the user to locate targets almost immediately.
Rubber coated armour makes the binocular water repellent and shockproof. Each binocular comes complete with a carrying case which can be worn on the belt and is warranted for 1 year by Brunton.
Kaufman's is certain you'll be both pleased and amazed at the quality and effectiveness of this binocular. If you're not completely satisfied return it to us for a full refund plus a \$5.00 credit which may be applied towards any of our merchandise at any time.
Choose: Camouflage rubber armoured or Black rubber armoured.
List price \$120.00/each.
Kaufman's price \$99.95/each.

THE CAMOUFLAGE TIE— The Basic Wardrobe Accessment for Every Well Dressed Merc. Donchathink?
GREAT GIFT IDEA! Two great things about our ties:
First, they're made especially for us in the USA from genuine GI woodland camo material of 50% cotton/50% nylon so they can be washed or dry cleaned.
Second, they go equally well with anything in your wardrobe, from your most formal blue pin stripe suit to your Hawaiian shirt with the funny looking fishes on it.
Choose from: Pointed end (traditional and conservative) or Straight End (punk and iconoclastic) \$9.95/each; 2 for \$18.95.

Ranger Combat Cap—Woodland Camouflage—latest Army issue.
This lightweight cap features lined flaps which can fold out to keep your ears warm and tuck into the hat when the weather's balmy. Sizes run small.
Also available in Olive Drab (OD) Green.
Sizes: 7, 7-1/4, 7-1/2, 7-3/4 \$9.00/each.

Watch Cap, 100% Wool— This is the genuine GI, tightly knit, and all-wool watch cap. Used by commandos and troops alike, this tightly knit cap fits snug on any size head for maximum warmth on extended cold weather operations. Sides can roll down to protect ears. Choose between dark blue/black (Navy Seal or Marine Recon teams) or OD (olive drab, army) \$6.00/each.

Black Commando Dog Tag Set— (A Kaufman's Exclusive): 2 GI stainless steel tags specially treated to be non-glare flat black plus 2 black (4" and 24") ball chains \$5.00/set

Regulation GI Dog Tags— set of 2 stainless steel tags and 2 stainless chains (4" and 24") \$3.00/each
Want us to print them? WE'LL PRINT ANYTHING up to 6 lines and 15 spaces per line.
 Printing only \$1.00 per tag (\$2.00 per set)
PLEASE, NO DOG TAG IMPRINTING ORDERS BY TELEPHONE.

Dog Tag Silencers - black, non-glare rubber bumpers for tags \$1.00/pair

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• Toll free telephone lines direct to our Customer Service Department. We'll not only be glad to take your orders (every firm with an 800 number will do that) but we'll also be happy to answer your questions. Whether you're calling to ask about our merchandise or the status of an order you placed, we guarantee friendly, courteous service.
No, we're not the cheapest. But you get what you pay for. If you order the cheapest you may wait a long time for delivery of something you may ultimately be unhappy with. If you order from Kaufman's you'll see why top quality merchandise and first rate service (with a Customer Service Department always available) will squeeze the most value out of every dollar you spend.



USAF Flight Jacket— These flight jackets are issued to military fliers and are designated Type MA1 for Intermediate Cold. (This means that it is the medium weight jacket, designed for comfort in a temperature zone of about 20° to 55° F). Look for the military designation, sizes and stock numbers inside the left pocket. The outer shell and lining are 100% nylon making the jacket completely wind and waterproof. The interlining is 100% polyester fiberfill for the highest degree of warmth per ounce. This jacket is reversible, outside in your choice of either sage green or blue and the inside is survival orange. It features: two hip pockets outside as well as inside, sewn pen and pencil holders plus zippered easy access storage pocket in the left sleeve. This a snappy, convenient, warm, fully functional jacket and it happens to be the latest fashion trend.
Specify: Sage Green or Blue Shell - Regular Length Only.
Sizes XS,S,M,L \$46.75/each; XL \$51.50/each

Brand New!! Flight Jackets in Black and Woodland Camouflage - Exact in every detail to the genuine GI MA1 jackets above, manufactured by the same government contractor, to military specs; with reversible orange linings. The Black nylon shelled jackets feature a gold zipper and the Woodland Camo jackets are made from genuine GI cloth of 50% cotton/50% nylon.
Specify: XS, S, M, L \$48.75/each; XL \$53.50/each;

US Navy Cold Weather Deck Jackets— Type A2—These jackets feature windproof cuff and hip closures plus a full zipper front with button overclosure. The Olive Drab (OD) green shell is 50% cotton/50% nylon. This blend allows the jacket to be water-repellent (not water-proof) while at the same time it has the softness of the natural fibre. It is lined with double face pile in both the body and sleeves. It sports two hip pockets and a breast pocket with snap closure. The Deck Jacket is cut slightly below the waist so large or tall persons will find it quite comfortable.
XS, S, M, L \$47.75/each; XL \$50.75/each; XXL \$62.75/each.
Specify Olive Drab (OD) Green or Woodland Camo Shell.

M-65 Field Jackets— This is the basic issue combat jacket. Designed for complete utility, these water-repellent and windproof jackets feature: 4 super large utility pockets; gusseted back for complete mobility and freedom of movement; epaulets; adjustable cuffs and collar; drawstring waistband; hidden hood in collar. Brand new, of course. Sizes are XS, S, M, L, XL. Long lengths are available in Olive Drab (OD) Green and Camouflage, Woodland Pattern (latest GI issue to Army) only. If you're unsure of your size, tell us your chest measurement when ordering. XS-L \$55.00/each; XL & all long lengths \$60.50/each; XL/long \$85.00/each.
Choose from: Olive Drab (OD) Green Camouflage, Woodland Pattern (latest GI issue to Army) Desert Tan - (NATO issue). Camouflage, Tiger Stripe - (Commercially made in a US mill to military specs).

M-65 liner - Genuine GI— designed to quickly and easily button into M 65 Jacket to provide complete warmth by sealing in the body heat. Brand New XS, S, M, L \$19.00/each; XL \$20.50/each

USAF Heavyweight Flight Jacket - Type M2B - This is the warmest flight jacket that the military issues. It features full pile hood which drapes over the shoulders when not needed. This is the cold weather version of the Intermediate Weight Flight Jacket - Type MA1 featured elsewhere in this ad. This jacket is designed for subfreezing temperatures. Waterproof and Windproof. S,M,L \$87.75/each; XL \$95.75

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QUIET KILLER

An air rifle with the terminal ballistics of .45 APC? That's what the manufacturer claims for the A-I-Rifle Number 5. The hollow-point .428-in., 180-gr. cast slug moving at 860 fps, has the same Taylor Knockout Scale value as .243 Win. . . . with much less noise.

It's a weapon with interesting potential for targets under 100 meters. One more bonus: Few legal codes define pneumatic weapons as firearms requiring a license. A catalog with prices, specs and color photos costs \$4. ITR—A-I-R, Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 557, Maricopa, AZ 85239.



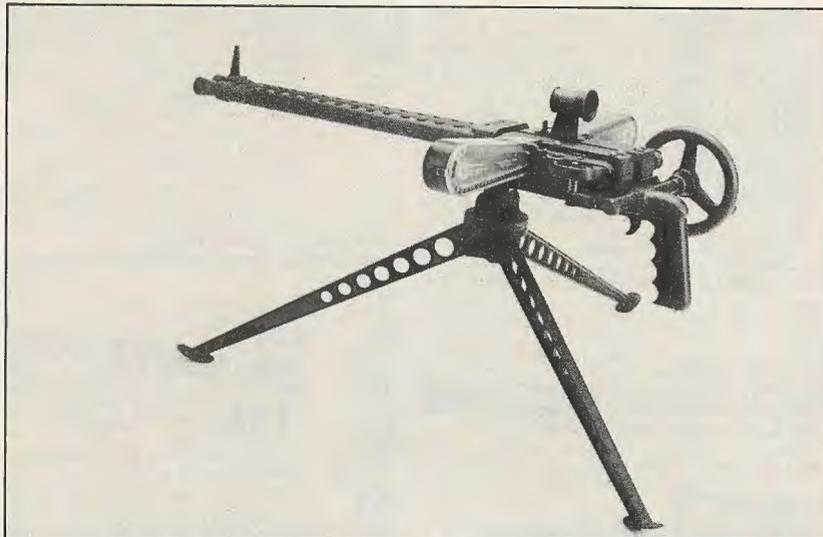
PAINT POWER

SOF Conventioneers in Las Vegas saw how realistic paint-gun games can be. Now you can develop your own weapons and close-combat exercises with your own pistols.

High velocity .68-caliber marking guns fire bright blue or scarlet paint pellets using an entirely enclosed CO₂ system advertised to be leakproof and protected against dirt. The paint is water-soluble and easily washes off skin or out of clothing.

And by the time you read this, there should be a semiauto paint pistol on the market. In quantities from one to five, the guns cost \$135 each, and volume discounts are available. The Ultimate Game Inc., Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 1856, Ormond Beach, FL 32075.

ADVENTURE QUARtermaster



UNLICENSED ROCK 'N ROLL

If you have a couple of Ruger 10/22s you'd like to trade for a machine gun, this is your lucky day. The Two-Twenty-Two system ties a pair of semiauto rifles on a tripod. Shooters simply hang onto the pistol grip and crank the handle for imitation full-auto. Since the crank trips the triggers individually for each round fired, it's perfectly legal without Title II paperwork. Price tag of \$285 doesn't include rifles. Mitchell Arms, Dept. SOF, 2101 E. 4th St., Suite 201A, Santa Ana, CA 92705. Phone: (714) 964-3678.

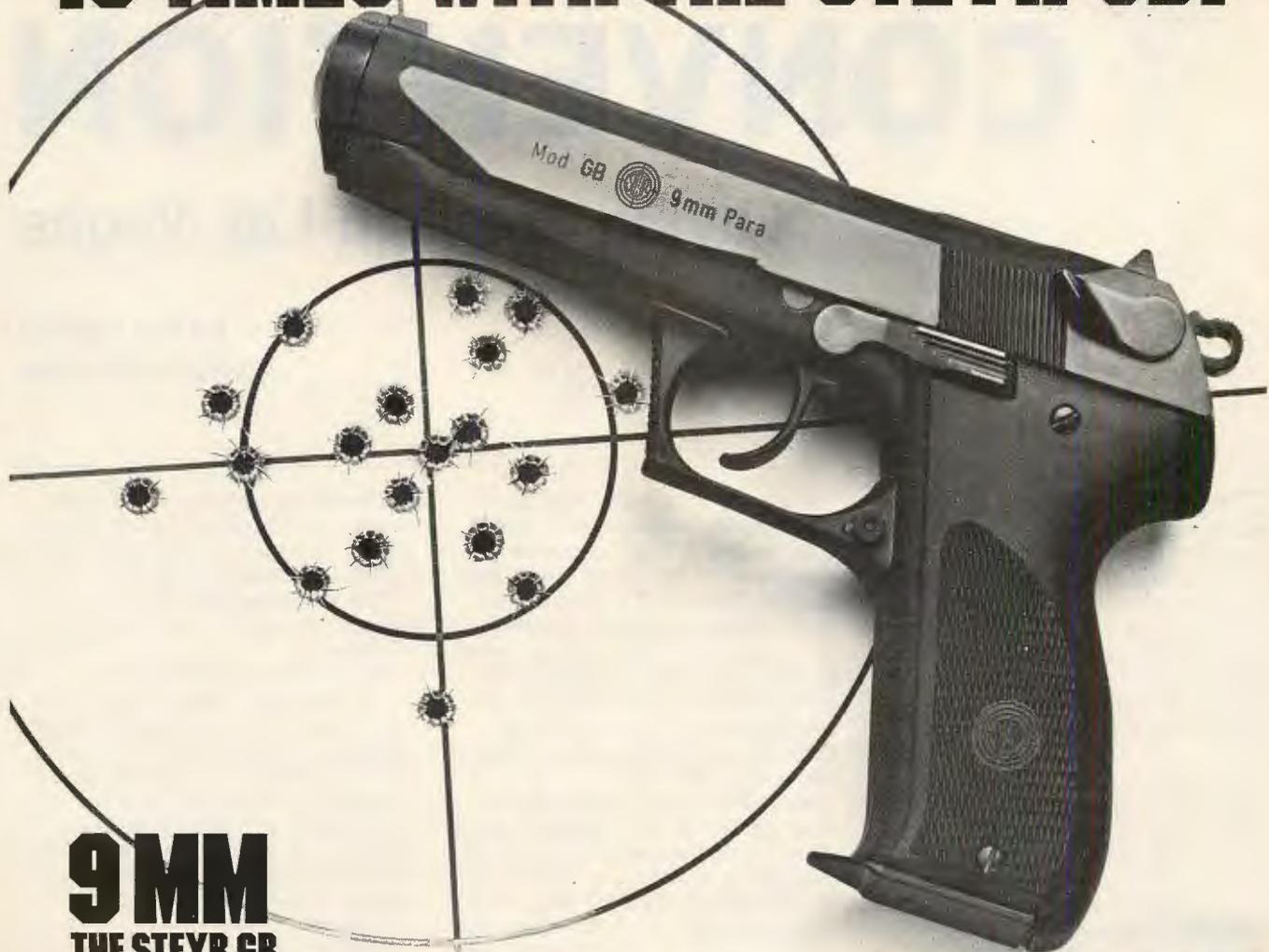


LAST HOLSTER

Gene DeSantis may put himself out of business with the Tripak. It's an inexpensive nylon holster system with a large and a small holster. Combined with different straps and clip systems, the Tripak carries on the belt, inside the belt, on the ankle, or practically anywhere else you can think of including a shoulder rig. At \$46.95 for the whole package, or \$39.95 for everything but the mini-holster, you may never need to buy another holster.

Mail orders should be addressed to Price Security Systems, Inc., Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 1048, Lenox Hill Station, New York City, NY 10021. Phone: (212) 794-9040.

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Speed and accuracy. With gas-delayed blowback action, you get minimum recoil for maximum accuracy—even rapid fire. And a self-illuminating, three-dot sighting plane brings your target in line—even during poor lighting conditions.

Quick handling and safety. When timing is critical, the GB can be field stripped in less than 10 seconds. A passive firing pin and hammer block safety keeps the weapon safe until the trigger is actually pulled. This system greatly reduces the possibility of accidental discharge if the pistol is dropped.

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For more than 130 years, Steyr has combined Austrian craftsmanship and innovation to develop such benchmarks as the famous Mannlicher rifle and the world's first automatic pistol.

That same tradition of excellence is bred into the Steyr GB. It's the ultimate handgun.

SPECIFICATIONS:

Overall length	8½"
Overall height	5½"
Overall width	1¼"
Barrell length	5¼"
Weight (unloaded)	39 oz.
Weight (loaded)	51 oz.



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SOF CONVENTION

Laying Siege to Las Vegas

by Bill Guthrie
Photos by SOF Staff

EVEN jaded Las Vegas was forced to alternately glitter, grin and grimace. The neon capital of America had become a ripe plum for the right army to pluck. And the troopers were definitely in the TAOR. Clad in everything from sinister SWAT suits to convertible camouflage smocks, they kibitzed the crap-shooters and bombarded the bartenders with war stories.

Blackjack dealers on breaks and bored casino patrons suffering from slot-machine elbow gathered by the pool to gawk and applaud the insanity as wild men pummeled each other with pugil-sticks. Explosions lit the distant desert and gun-toting human spiders scaled down the walls of the Sahara Hotel. Before their astonished eyes, signal flares arched across the void, the spiders spat death at terrorists holding hostages and SOF Art Director Craig Nunn — halted in mid-coup d'etat — fell like a wet sandbag onto the pavement. There is no truth to the rumor that he'd been drinking heavily prior to the engagement.

It was Friday, 21 September 1984. And SOF's Fifth Annual Convention still had two days to go.

A reporter for a major daily paper was semi-lost somewhere on The Strip feeding slots and desperately trying to avoid the convention he was assigned to cover. The man needed REST. Suddenly a gang of hollow-eyed gamblers standing nearby began to oooh and ahhh at a display of impromptu fireworks. He heard the artillery simulators and saw the flares. "Shit. I knew something would happen the minute I left."

Meanwhile, back on the Sahara Hotel battlefield, Nunn had been resurrected by the cheers of the crowd. He rolled over, stared into the muzzle of Fred Borchardt's H&K assault rifle, raised himself on a wobbly elbow and yelled, "Airborne!" The crowd roared. It's the *Convention*.

Borchardt's *Stor-Fjeld Ltd.* counter-terrorist rappelling simulation barely bothered the bloodthirsty bayonet fighters at the Pugil Stick Tournament around the pool. Editors, accountants, mercenaries and machinists — all SOFers — swung at each other to the rhythm of XO Dale Dye's exhortations.

"All right, girls! Your pugil stick is your service rifle with bayonet fixed! At ease, assholes! At ease! At the first whistle, you will assume your stance, and make an aggressive noise! At the second whistle you will attack your enemy along the plank! You will not take prisoners and you will not become one! Is that CLEAR?"

"AAARGH!"

"I can't hear you, maggots! IS THAT CLEAR?"

"AAAAAARGH!"

The whistle blew. New York playwright/producer/director David Mamet, poised in cammies and jungle boots, roared and aimed his weapon.

The second whistle blew. His shaken opponent — half a foot taller — retreated.

The whistle blew a third time.

"As you were, pukes! What is this shit, private?" Dye addressed the tall blond conventioneer in a swimsuit.

"I don't want you to hold your position, much less retreat!" Dye had seen *Patton*, and wasn't above plagiarism. "I'm gonna blow this whistle again, and I want you to attack! Mobile! Agile! Hostile! You ready?"

"Yessir!"

Whistle.

Mamet, with his black burr haircut and wire-rimmed glasses, squeezed into the masked football helmet and charged an uncertain foe who promptly took a dive into the floodlit swimming pool. Mamet's pugil-stick sailed out of his hands and hit the water.

He swore he spiked it in celebration. Expert witnesses testified he ditched it to keep his balance. The Drill Instructor wasn't buying either story.

They stayed at it until Dye got tired.

Pugil sticks weren't the only water sports available at the SOF Convention. At dawn that day the Freedom Marine Corporation had staged a demonstration of an armed assault craft for Publisher Robert K. Brown in nearby Lake Meade.



"Do you want to man the 30?" The manufacturer's rep had to scream over the roar of the 50-knot deisel wedded to the sleek, Kevlar-hulled cigarette boat.

"You bet."

Brown crawled forward and grasped the fire controls of a low-recoil 30mm gun which later demonstrated its punch at the hands of "Mr. Machine-gun," Pete Kokalis, who bored big holes in the Nevada desert during the annual firepower demonstration. Brown recalled the days when he was helping to plan anti-Castro coups in Miami. He liked the boat... a lot.

He also thought there was dynamite potential for Nordac's *Warrior* armed dune-buggy which was configured as a Fast Attack Vehicle on the Desert Sportsman firing range and on the arms show display floor. The M60-mounted *Warrior* showed it could leap up hills, race through gullies, and blaze across flats at 70 mph. It was not what you find at your garden-variety, down-home gun show.

Fred Borchardt of *Stor-Fjeld Ltd.*, storms Sahara. H&K's guns, Co-Cam Custom Clothing (Moore, Okla.) and SOG International (St. Louis, Md.) SWAT suits, Adventure Specialists (Miami, Fla.) assault vests, Rainier International (Carson City, Nev.) rappelling gloves and Charcoal Cloth Ltd. (Berkshire, England) gas masks made assault look almost real.



Brown's favorite event: Smuggler-Shoot with low-recoil 30mm from speeding Kevlar cigarette boat.

Pugil-stick champ and SOF associate editor Dale Andrade (left) hammered opponents as much as 50 pounds heavier for his title.

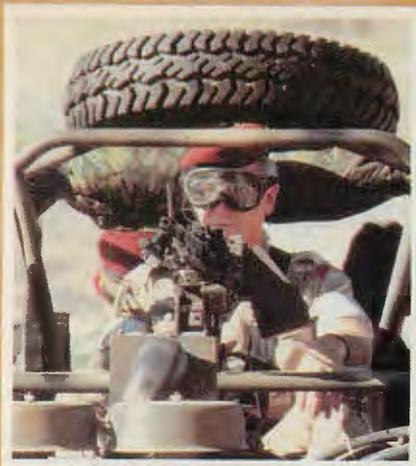
Pugil-stick tournament proved most popular event at convention. Hundreds gathered every evening by the pool to hear Dale Dye exhort and see fighters fall.



Weapons, equipment and militaria vendors and displays jammed every corner of the Sahara's Space Center exposition hall. Conventioneers and visitors got close-up, hands-on views of everything from aircraft to scuba gear, ammo to armor, and starlight scopes to anti-IR camouflage. It was an outstanding opportunity to learn, talk, handle or buy. One table sold \$4,000 worth of bargain-priced pocket-knives in the three days of the show. On the other end, SOF Contributing Editor Bill Bagwell showed incredulous audiences how his Damascus blades could slice through four free-hanging, one-inch ropes with a single stroke. If you wanted to shoot, stab or look like you could, the SOF Convention Arms Show was the place to be.

Running concurrently with the Arms Show and other convention activities was the action-packed SOF Three-gun Match, a world-class combat arms competition involving skill with pistol, rifle and shotgun over a hot, torturous desert course. The match, in its fifth successful year and run in 1984 by Combat Weaponcraft editor Ken Hackathorn with the help of international weapons trainers Andy Langley and Harry Claflin, drew 147 shooters vying for more than \$50,000 in cash and merchandise.

Despite the competitors' skill at arms, most would have been blown away with the enthusiastic crowd on Saturday, 22 Sept. when SOF's weapons demo team staged their rock & roll show on the firing line. SOF Contributing Editor Pete Kokalis led an assault on the Nevada desert that



Traffic kept respectful distance from editor/publisher Brown as he drove with Nordac's LAV down the Las Vegas Strip and out to the range.

would have pleased Rommel — or defeated him. Sub-guns, SAWs, .50s, the 30mm bunker-buster and machine guns of nearly every description combined with a cactus-level P-51 Mustang strafing run shook and scattered the sands until SOF's resident blast-master John Donovan awed them all with his earth-shattering explosive toys.

A quieter attack on the rocky wilderness began at dawn on three of the convention's five busy days. Alecto Group's "Operation Headhunter" gave conventioneers the chance to negotiate a five-mile course on compass-bearings which involved running up sandstone slabs and tumbling down twisting washes. In between, Headhunters rappelled over dangerous divides and tried to avoid painful cactus contact.

Author prepares to count coup in middle of Tyrolean traverse on Headhunter course. Guthrie finished second, but dropped a head for disqualification.



Objective: Find your assigned heads. Cut them off. Carry them back to the finish line. Don't fall and don't get lost. Seven five-pound sandbags sagged in rucksacks which blistered the competitors' backs in the 120-degree heat. Top Headhunter of the fifth annual SOF Convention was R.N. Reynolds who beat his nearest competitor to the finish line by a full 13 minutes. The Albuquerque karate teacher, firearms instructor, body-guard and hillclimb runner loped through the dangerous course in 40 minutes flat.

Reynolds obviously didn't need to attend Fred Borchardt's popular rappelling school but a lot of other conventioners did. Borchardt, president



"'Spouse we got enuff guns?" Pete Kokalis' cronies only worry about finding enough targets.



and founder of *Stor-Fjeld Ltd.*, Boulder, Colo., sweated several classes of would-be mountain goats through instruction in basic rappelling and advanced techniques for negotiating rough terrain with ropes and rigs. Despite the heat and height, many novices soon found themselves clambering up cliffs and flying down overhangs just like in the movies.

For the less adventurous, SOF's Annual Convention offered a genuinely fascinating schedule of seminars. Such information exchanges are the heart of this gathering of adventurers and astute students of world affairs. Information provided on defense affairs, military intelligence, professional soldiering and the situation in a number of world hot-spots was clearly the best that can be obtained without a Top Secret security clearance. From Vietnam to Afghanistan, from Beirut to Bangladesh, from sniping to strategy, military and police professionals gave large audiences the benefit of their experiences around the world.

A highlight of the gathering — especially for winged warrior vets — was the parachute school and jumps staged by Cliff Albright and his staff of the Phantom Airborne Division. A C-47 (Dakota for foreign vets . . . or DC-3 for civilians) served as jump platform for novices and experts who bailed out into clear skies over the Nevada desert and thrilled crowds of both conventioners and civilians who stopped to watch. Cherry jumpers and veteran sky-soldiers hooked up and shuffled out the door to swing lazily under OD T-10 canopies. On the last pass of the leap-fest Phantom Airborne skydivers flew brightly-colored para-foils and other more sophisticated rigs to the desert floor. It was a breath-taking spectacular for all who could make the early morning muster to either jump or watch.

Jumpmaster Albright is also a member of the Civilian Military Assistance Group which was represented by several others at the SOF Convention. The organization had lost two members in Nicaragua during an August-September training mission among the Contras and were the darlings of the national and international press who clambered all over the convention site. CMA organizer Tom Posey was the center of much attention and delegated a representative from his organization to receive a special honor from SOF Publisher Bob Brown at the annual convention banquet in memory of the two men who died.

Due in some measure to the publicity generated by the CMA tragedy, the press tended to mob the SOF staff in Las Vegas. They got everything they wanted . . . and more. Those who came to the convention searching for



Maj. Gen. J.K. Singlaub lauded private-sector supporters of the fight for freedom and eulogized those who'd died in Nicaraguan chopper crash.



Skydivers swooped through the military jumpers above the dry-lake DZ.

God Bless America: the last word for SOFers. From left, Bill Guthrie, John Donovan, Dale Dye and Hassan Gailani.



Australian abseil was graduation exercise for *Stor-Fjeld Ltd.* rappelling class.





David Isby — SOF contributing editor and internationally-published Soviet military expert — gave conventioners the lowdown on Afghanistan.



lives on the line around the world. There was no shortage of examples at the SOF Convention. Soft-spoken Gary Acker, a former Marine who spent seven years in an Angolan prison, came to tell about his fight against communist tyranny in southern Africa and his quest to free comrades still imprisoned by an illegally-convened "war crimes" tribunal. And there was tall, rawboned Paul Fanshaw, formerly of the U.S. Army and Marines, 13-year veteran of the French Foreign Legion, adviser to the Salvadoran Cazadores Battalion and SOF reporter.

It was all topped off by the Saturday night banquet. The Sahara Hotel's top parking deck was cleared and conventioners and guests gathered under the desert moon and stars watching John Donovan in his traditional role as master of ceremonies. Colors were posted by a Marine honor guard, the Pledge of Allegiance was pronounced and dinner began.

SOF banquets are usually rowdy, but the world was subtly different this year, and our place in it had changed. The dinner-table talk was reserved and relatively serious. Keynote speaker Maj. Gen. John K. Singlaub caught the mood. He somberly told us what we had lost when the Contra helicopter went down in Nicaragua. But he also explained what we had won. The sacrifice of two unarmed American volunteers for the war against communism in Central America showed the world that private citizens can fight.

He said we called ourselves "soldiers of fortune," but we were really "soldiers of freedom." As individuals we were responsible for peace and freedom on this planet, and for the welfare of our fellows.

Singlaub inspired us. But there must have been still greater hope in his exhortations for our foreign guests. Hassan Gailani of the Unity of Afghan Mujahideen, and Dr. Edgar Chamorro of the reformed ARDE. Col. Safi, trainer and a battlefield commander of Afghan mujahideen could not come. His position was surrounded by Soviet troops, and he had not yet fought his way out. There was an empty chair at the head table in his honor.

Gailani and Chamorro thanked SOFers for their support. And we thundered our thanks for their fight for all of us.

Our business done and our speeches all made, we sang "God Bless America."

No one had anything more significant to add. ✕



Executive editor Dale Dye taught and entertained in seminar on Beirut.

Squad of the Dead: Yellow splashes are "hits" from paint-pistol house-clearing exercise.



juicy copy about knee-jerk reactionaries, neo-Nazis, hired guns or steely-eyed killers came away disappointed.

A few years ago, *Soldier of Fortune* revelled in a sort of free-wheeling, "say anything you want, just spell the name right" approach to publicity. But the magazine has matured into a forum for Vietnam vets and a whole generation of disenfranchised Americans who have had to watch at home while freedom and security are blithely stolen from the populations of whole continents. That's a sobering position for a magazine that started on one of Bob Brown's ragged shoestrings and it's brought about a new relationship between SOF and the media. Reporters looking for easy marks and sensational copy came away wondering at our candor and perception. It showed in the stories they wrote.

SOF has developed a reputation for credibility in chronicling the adventures and motivations of private-sector soldiers and adventurers who lay their



SOF CENTRAL AMERICA

MARTYRS IN MORAZAN

El Salvador's Struggle Suffers A Setback

Text and Photos by James L. Pate





THE news from El Salvador could hardly have been more tragic or stunning. It was as if — on the eve of D-Day during World War II — General Eisenhower and his Allied generals had all been killed. Only the assassination of President José Napoleón Duarte and most of his cabinet could create a greater setback in El Salvador's fight against communist guerrillas, especially at a time when the tide of a fluid war was clearly turning in the government's favor.

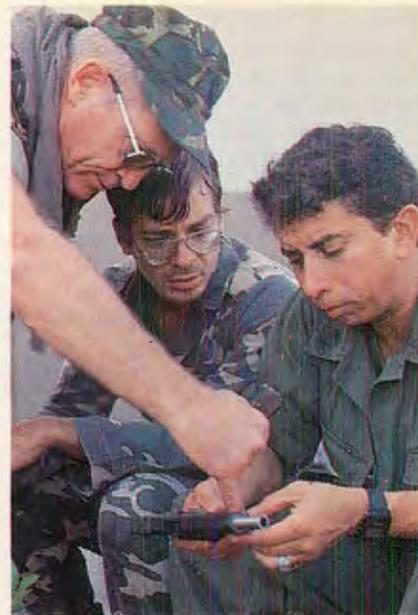
In a fiery, late-afternoon helicopter crash on 23 October, during a full-scale counter-guerrilla sweep of one of the country's most bitterly-contested provinces, the budding corps of El Salvador's field-wise combat commanders was reduced by four significant personalities. Civilian and military dignitaries with special interest in the plight of Central America quickly gathered in San Salvador to help the entire country mourn the deaths of Lieutenant Colonels Domingo Monterrosa-Barrios and Napoleón Herson-Calitto, and Majors José Armando Azmitia-Melara and Nelson Alejandro-Rivas. Those combat-veteran officers, eight other soldiers and two civilians all perished in the wreckage of a single UH-1H Huey helicopter which went down in northeastern Morazan.

Undoubtedly the biggest single loss was Lt.Col. Domingo Monterrosa, highly regarded at home and in the U.S. as his country's most capable field commander. Known to his men as "the soldier's colonel," Monterrosa was celebrated for his practice of staying with his men in the field and leading operations from the front with his M16 at the ready. His charisma and concern for the people of El Salvador's most turbulent guerrilla strongholds earned him unmistakable devotion and respect. The 42-year-old commander of the 3rd Infantry Brigade, which is responsible for security in Morazan, San Miguel, La Union and Usulután provinces, was slated for promotion to full colonel in late 1984 and was the prime candidate to become the army's next Chief of Staff.

Monterrosa was hailed by a Reagan administration source who knew him well as "an effective and aggressive field commander who symbolized the new Salvadoran Army. His tragic death and that of his subordinates is a significant loss. We are confident, however, in the ability of El Salvador's armed forces to continue on the course charted by President Duarte."

From the Pentagon, Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff General John W. Vessey Jr. sent his sympathy and regrets to the government of El Salvador and called Monterrosa's death a "tragic loss of an outstanding individual." From

This is the type of late-afternoon view of the mountains of northern Morazan that the passengers in Monterrosa's Huey could see just prior to the fatal crash.



Relaxing at San Miguel, Brown shows Monterrosa an engraved .45. Steve Salisbury translates.

across the border in Honduras, MISURA political coordinator Wycliffe Diego said Nicaraguan freedom fighters "share the sorrow of the Salvadoran people at his death." Diego indicated Monterrosa was well known and respected by anti-Sandinista soldiers as a "great commander who gave his life in the fight against communism."

A much more low-key but also highly effective field commander was Monterrosa's former executive officer and one of his closest friends, Maj. José Armando Azmitia-Melara. Azmitia, a former instructor at his nation's *Escuela Militaire*, commanded the U.S.-trained Atlacatl Battalion at the time of his death. The Atlacatl, a unit famed for lightning strikes on guerrilla formations, was participating in the Morazan combat operation under Azmitia's command as part of Monterrosa's 3rd Brigade field force.

But the fiery crash, which occurred at around 1700 near Cerro Ocote Seco about five kilometers from the Honduran border, burned even deeper into the ranks of El Salvador's top military commanders. Lt.Col. Napoleon Herson Calitto was one of Monterrosa's most aggressive subordinates operating in guerrilla-infested Morazan Province and Maj. Nelson Alejandro Rivas was the third-ranking officer in the Morazan chain of command as CO of one of the army's revered commando battalions.

In a country in which operational helicopters and men qualified to fly them are always in extremely short supply, the 23 Oct. catastrophe also meant the loss of a vital aircraft and three pilots, two of them trainees who were along on the mission. A total of 14 men died when the chopper went down from an altitude of 1,000 feet, including two door-gunners, a three-man film team from the Ministry of

Defense, a Catholic priest and his acolyte. Sources inside the Salvadoran Air Force indicated the cause of the crash is under investigation but attributed the tragedy to mechanical failure rather than guerrilla ground-fire. Those same sources said the wreckage indicated the transmission and main rotor had separated from the aircraft. Despite eyewitness accounts that indicated there was no effective rebel fire in the area, guerrilla leaders were quick to capitalize on the propaganda aspects of the tragedy.

Even as grieving troops struggled to recover the charred bodies in the mountainous jungle terrain of Morazan, rebel *Radio Venceremos* aired a haughty, jubilant claim that anti-government forces shot down the aircraft and killed Monterrosa, described in the propaganda broadcast as "one of the biggest war criminals in the country." Ironically, on the day before his death Monterrosa had conducted a telephone interview with Associated Press in which he described his troops' capture of *Radio Venceremos* broadcast equipment. He also told reporters that his men had already killed 12 guerrillas and captured 11 in the first five days of his offensive.

Meanwhile, the communist account of the crash was officially refuted by Lt. Col. Ricardo Cienfuegos, chief spokesman for *Estado Mayor*, El Salvador's version of the Pentagon. Cienfuegos termed the tragic crash "an accident" possibly attributable to "mechanical failure." He said an official investigation would determine the precise cause but he had no idea when the inquiry might be completed.

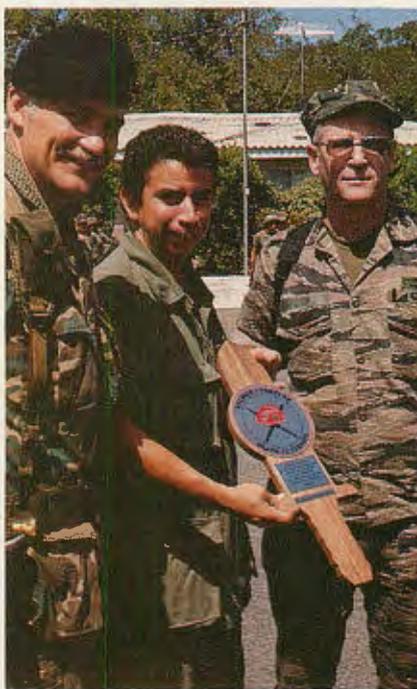
Cienfuegos refused to speculate concerning the tactical advisability of four senior commanders riding in a single helicopter, especially in the face of continuing mechanical failures and maintenance problems in El Salvador's aging, rickety aviation arsenal. A likely explanation is the simple lack of sufficient helicopter assets. Under pressure from conservative elements of Congress and the private sector in this country, El Salvador's minuscule helo fleet was recently expanded through the Foreign Military Sales program. Despite that, troop lift capacity — particularly for large-scale operations — remains severely limited.

No matter what the final outcome of the investigation into the cause of the crash or the real reason why four vital commanders would risk their lives in a single aircraft, the impact on national morale and El Salvador's struggle to control its own destiny will be serious for some time yet. President Duarte's senior government officials and his army commanders face a serious challenge in reassuring the people of the countryside that they can effectively carry on the fight and provide security. Duarte wasted no time in publicly avowing that the morale and motivation of the army would not be



El Salvador has lost four of its best military leaders. But they have left their country dedicated, motivated, professional soldiers.

Monterrosa receives award from Robert K. Brown and Dale Dye.



"And what have you done for our country?" Under recent leadership exemplified by Azmitia and Monterrosa, the military has restored itself as an honorable profession in El Salvador.

allowed to erode. He named successors for the dead officers including: Lt. Col. Miguel Antonio Mendez, operations chief of the army general staff, as replacement for Monterrosa; Lt. Col. Carillo as new CO of the Atlacatl Battalion and Lt. Col. Augusto Maravilla to command Morazan Province.

At *Soldier of Fortune*, news of the tragedy in El Salvador brought a frantic deadline scramble to cover a significant story as well as profound sorrow over the deaths of superior soldiers with whom the magazine has had a close and continuing professional relationship. Several SOF staffers who have been on training missions in El Salvador rushed to reach San Salvador in time for the funerals. Contributing Editor Pete Kokalis, long-time adviser and armorer for the Atlacatl Battalion, struggled to maintain his professional composure as he spoke by telephone of his relationship with Monterrosa and Azmitia, who had become two of his closest friends.

Kokalis called both officers "quite simply the two finest combat officers in the Salvadoran Army" and provided an assessment of their capabilities. "Both of these men were very courageous," he commented. "Both — time after time — exposed themselves to enemy fire so they could lead their battalion from the front. Their example commanded not only loyalty and respect, but the adulation and love of the men they led. Either one of them could have been a colonel in anybody's army. They were of a special quality, that special breed of military personality."

Monterrosa was described by his own men, including Azmitia, "as a person who in combat never did quite what the guerrillas expected," Kokalis said. "He was an unorthodox tactician and [he] believed in all the concepts of keeping on the move, catching the enemy off guard, hitting him and hitting him again. The guerrillas particularly feared him because they never knew what he was going to do next."

Indicative of the love and personal bond Monterrosa shared with the men under his command is the story of his leaving the Atlacatl in late 1983 to take command of the 3rd Infantry Brigade headquartered in San Miguel.

"Monterrosa called all of the officers on his radio net to sign off his command," Kokalis recalled. "He wept openly on the radio when he said goodbye. He was the type of combat commander one rarely encounters . . . a charismatic leader who was idolized by his men . . . A number of his officers confided that even though the Atlacatl spends about 80 percent of its time on combat operations, they actually felt safer because his superior leadership had produced such a finely-honed fighting elite."

As he dashed to make a last-minute flight to El Salvador the afternoon following the crash, SOF Publisher Bob Brown stopped at a pay phone to call the office and praise Monterrosa and Azmitia as "hard-charging leaders of the Salvadoran Army who had a total and comprehensive grasp of all aspects of counter-insurgency warfare." He compared Monterrosa in military stature with General George S. Patton Jr. and characterized Azmitia as "a most capable commander who always sought out the enemy and worked very well with *Soldier of Fortune* personnel."

Azmitia, Brown said, "was never reluctant to seek advice, a very down-to-earth individual who was not pompous or know-it-all, but always seeking assistance wherever he could find it to upgrade the effectiveness of his unit." In an interview with NBC News three weeks prior to his death, Azmitia confirmed Brown's characterization saying "Before [SOF] started to help us, we could anticipate that 50 percent of our machine guns were going to fail in the field. And right now, we have almost zero malfunctions."

Although the decision was not ultimately his to make, it was unthinkable among Salvadoran Army insiders and U.S. observers that Monterrosa would have stood still for the naming of anyone other than Azmitia to take over command of the Atlacatl Battalion. The personal command style of the two men was sharply juxtaposed, but no less effective and inspirational to the men they led.

While Monterrosa was more personally outgoing and expansive in meeting new people, Azmitia was somewhat bookish and reticent, more reserved in his conversations, dress and demeanor. Probably his most expressive act in garrison was to acknowledge the kidding of his young troops who would admiringly taunt him as he walked past on the parade deck, "Baile! Baile!" ("Dance! Dance!") Azmitia would cut a little jig, a subtle display of friendly tomfoolery that was a perfect counterpoint to Monterrosa's free-wheeling exuberance.



Lt. Col. Jose Armando Azmitia-Melara, CO of the Atlacatl Bn., gave all anyone can to the fight against communist tyranny when the Huey he rode in crashed in northern Morazan Province. Photo: Courtesy Carlos Cucalon

Even if Azmitia was not always as personally engaging as Monterrosa, he was nevertheless "Monterrosa's perfect complement," Kokalis said. "He was a man who would pay great attention to detail in an operation. Azmitia was also very well educated, a tremendous military historian and a student of guerrilla warfare. He voraciously read everything that I would take down there on unconventional tactics. Both men were brilliant tacticians, but Azmitia approached his operations in a more academic, almost scientific manner, while Monterrosa operated more on his gut instincts, which were extremely good."

Despite Azmitia's reserved demeanor in garrison — where he spent very little time — combat operations were a visibly stimulating and enjoyable release for him. After Azmitia returned from one patrol, Kokalis was summoned from the Atlacatl's armory, where the SOF staffer had been directing the repair and maintenance of machine guns, and invited by the battalion CO to share a beer over an operational debriefing.

The incident made an indelible impression on Kokalis. "I almost didn't recognize this man who normally was the absolute picture of conservative spit and polish, looking more like the proverbial bush beast with his hair wild and disheveled and a five-day growth of beard. The moment I walked through the door, he grabbed me and exclaimed, 'We had

contact!' I could tell from the fire in his eyes and the glow on his face that he was right where he wanted to be, being a combat officer."

Both Azmitia and Monterrosa displayed a zest for combat, but that was tempered with a deep concern that the rest of the world know that Salvadoran soldiers were not fighting a "civil war," as the situation has so often been described. Rather, both men insisted publicly that they were involved in a crusade to free El Salvador of outside political and military influences bent on making their country a pawn in the worldwide philosophical confrontation between East and West. In one of his last personal letters from the field, written to a young Salvadoran friend in the United States Marine Corps, Azmitia expressed his frustration with the American media which, he said, "always accuses El Salvador's forces of being hostile" to the people they are supposed to protect.

Knowing the guerrillas as well as he did, Azmitia wrote U.S. Marine Corporal Carlos Cucalon, a 23-year-old artilleryman with Charlie Battery, 1st Battalion, 11th Marines at Camp Pendleton, Calif., saying, "I expect very little from the peace talks." A practical commander to the last, he went on to note that "I am running out of trained people because of casualties. I need more qualified help with my training so I can keep my units at full strength."

As is the fashion among Latin American military officers, Azmitia signed his last letter to Cucalon with a heartfelt salutation. It hardly sounded like the sentiment of an officer who would use his troops to oppress his own people.

"Long live our country," Azmitia wrote. "Together the people and the armed forces will win our battle."

Charismatic Monterrosa and precise tactician Azmitia are gone now from the bloody battlefield their country has become, but the fight they waged to the last breath continues. If they could speak from their graves, both men would urge advocates of freedom on both sides of Central America to keep fighting and never bow to tyranny or communist expansionism. Among the people who loved Monterrosa and Azmitia in the hinterland provinces of El Salvador, the dead officers are likely to become martyrs.

Perhaps that's the best tribute to their spirit and the most effective ultimate contribution either man could make. Certainly, the guerrillas have made a major tactical error in claiming to have killed the popular soldiers. The simple *campesinos* who have been aided, assisted and protected by Monterrosa, Azmitia and their soldiers, will exact the best revenge they can and dry up support for guerrilla bands. That may give replacement officers the chance to regain the initiative that has been lost. ✕



SOF FEATURE

PITY THE PERISHER

Hazing Skippers for the Brit Sub Club

Text & Photos by Frank Durham



AMERICAN sailors might argue the point but under the deep, dark waters of the world, when the sonar signature spells out "Her Majesty's submarine," there's no doubt. Somewhere inside that hull, under as much pressure as his deep-diving boat, is a member of the most exclusive club in the world.

If you had the equivalent cash that it took to put him there, you could bet more than \$2 million that the man is a member of The Perisher Club. You could bet he faced and survived one of the toughest and most expensive military training courses on earth complete with charging ASW frigates, marauding helicopters, hunter-killer subs, sonic torpedoes and crewmen gone berserk.

With your winnings you could further wager that he did not miss his earned place among the few survivors of the Perisher course to drink the ceremonial glass of port with fellow members of the exclusive organization of submarine commanders.



Teacher John Lang got this view of a surface contact on his dual control periscope.

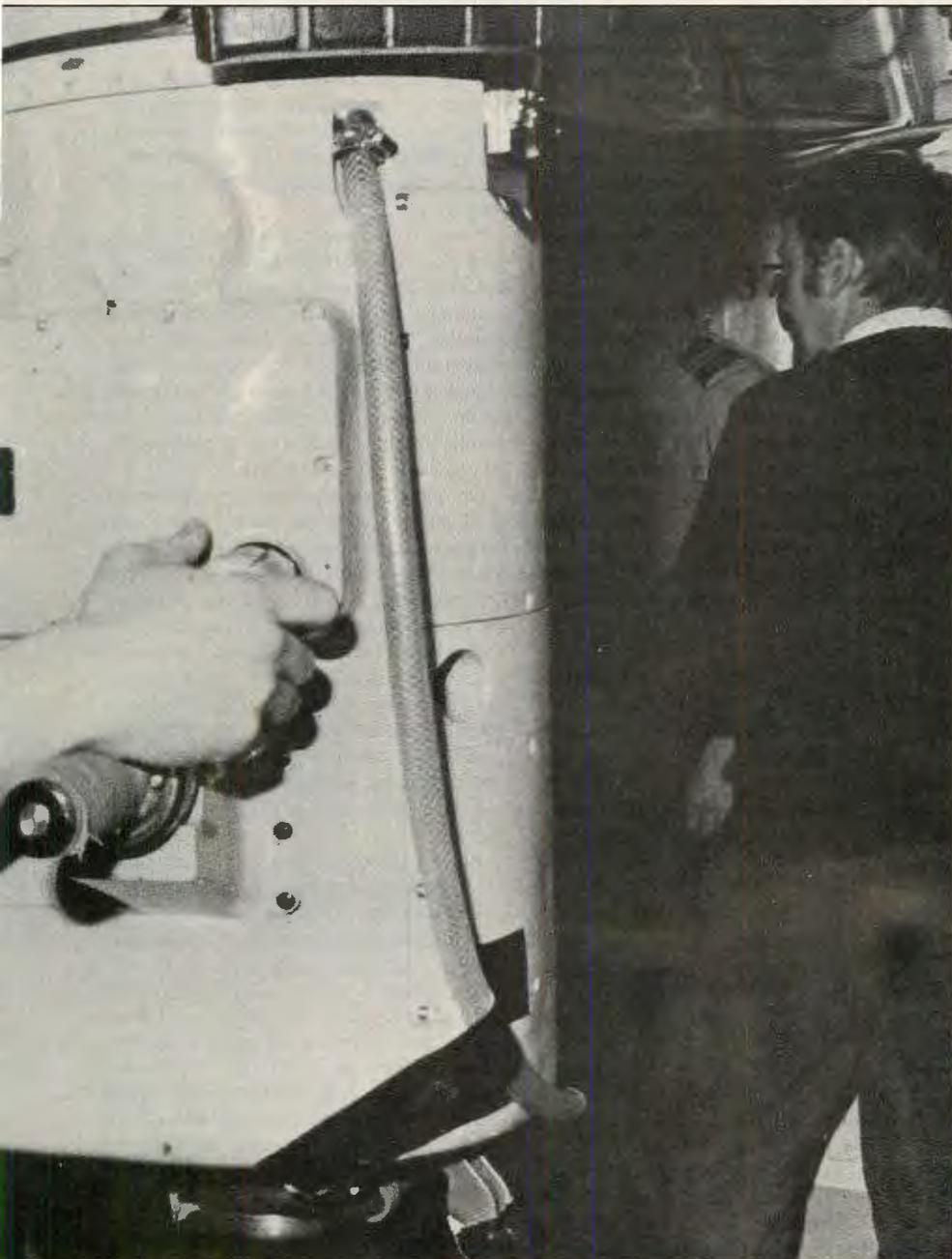
Perisher student Andy Johnson stalks his prey.

A course as challenging as The Perisher should be of intense interest to everyone concerned about the condition and capabilities of the men who wield some of the Free World's most deadly weapons, but no journalist had ever gone to sea before to observe it. I determined to solve that shortcoming.

I didn't know what to expect as I squeezed myself into the diesel patrol boat *Onyx* and we dived beneath the waters of the Firth of Clyde, west of the Isle of Aran, to begin the lesson for the day.

I found it strange mixture of schoolroom and weapons platform. The 10 candidates were split into two groups, with a teacher in each of two training boats. Some of the students hope to eventually win command of a nuclear sub armed with Polaris, the missile packed with a firepower greater than all the explosives used in World War II, including the two atomic bombs. Those who end up commanding a Polaris boat know they could be at the sharp end of a retaliatory strike. One of the crew members told me, "If we had to fire the missile, we would know that the crew's families were probably already dead."

South of the *Onyx* the other Perishers — British, Canadian and Australian — were



ON LAND AND SEA

Veteran journalist Frank Durham has traveled the world to report military matters. Assignments have included Northern Ireland, the Mediterranean, Arctic Norway and the Malaysian jungle.

Durham, a 50-year-old freelance, served in the Royal Air Force intelligence as a Russian linguist.

sweating it out aboard the good ship *Olympus*.

Time after time, the frigates *Alacrity* and *Galatea* thundered toward us, a bone of foam in their teeth.

Time after time, we "killed" one or the other of them, using a bird hunter's deflection shot with our four imaginary torpedoes, then dived to safety. Sometimes the frigate roared furiously past, just 15 feet above our steel roof.

The Perishers stalked their prey at the periscope, with up to three stopwatches as their masters. There was a sheen of sweat on their faces as each attack's tempo accelerated to a devil's gallop. And they knew they would soon be graduating to set-piece attacks with as many as five ships up there "on the roof."

The object of the game was to do a series of lightning mental calculations to work out the speed and range of the oncoming ships. Stopwatches were set for times in seconds when the student was due to take look at his enemy. Too much looking brought a rap from Teacher, because periscopes make telltale tracks in the water

There were times to look at one frigate, times to look at the second, times for an "all-round look" to see what had appeared over the horizon. And, all the time, the student had to remember that the last second for a safe dive was when the oncoming ship was a minute's steaming time away. If timings went terribly wrong, the fin of the submarine could be torn away and the bottom of the frigate slit open like a tin can.

Every move a student made and every word he uttered was monitored by Teacher.

Our teacher, 38-year-old Cmdr. John Lang, viewed each student's attack through a twin periscope, like the dual control system on a driving-school car. And if a poor Perisher, perspiring under a load of mental arithmetic that would blow a computer's fuse, forgot to dive deep in time, Teacher would do it for him.

That would cost the student a tot of whiskey in the bar that night. But he could win it back by getting the speed and range of a ship exactly right, as confirmed by a radio signal.

Teachers tend to drink more and pay less.

The Perisher course is divided into two main parts. In *Onyx*, we were engaged in the final phase of Part One.

A first, students are settled down gently with visits, lectures and a chat with an admiral. Then they practice attacks on dry land, using a simulator. The Perishers attack the ghostly images of wooden models, projected by a TV camera, in a mock control room. Then they try out the lessons they have learned at sea, with frigates — as one captain put it — "running up and down like clockwork mice."

The second part of the course, called Cockfight, is concerned with tactics. Students learn about anti-submarine warfare and attacking under operational rather than set-piece conditions. Would-be commanders are taught how to creep into shore to



Perisher Geoffrey McCready takes over as duty captain of submarine. If he passes Perisher, he will be doing the job for real. If he fails, he will never have another chance.

land agents and lay mines, and about the mysteries of photo-reconnaissance and surveillance. Above all, the Perishers learn how to stay undetected: to kill and not be killed.

The lessons learned are so valuable that many countries send their submarine men to the Perisher, rather like sending a boy to Eton. Two key German U-boat men are members of the Perisher Club. The one who runs the Norwegian version downed his celebratory port with the British, too. Teacher takes under his wing students from Canada, Australia, Holland, Portugal, Sweden and Denmark.

On the average, 70 percent get to the celebration port and 30 percent the consolation whiskey.

As *Onyx* turned into a floating schoolroom, I met the Perishers of the day. Geoffrey McCready, 31, from Worthing, Sussex, had been first lieutenant of the submarine *Otus*. He was also a fluent Russian linguist.

The senior student, thrown in to do everything first, was something of a rarity. Lt. Cmdr. Andy Johnson, from Downton, Cornwall, had recently switched from being one of the Navy's supply officers.

There was 34-year-old Lt. Cmdr. David Nicholls, who had joined the Australian Navy and made his home in Sydney.

And 28-year-old Huntly Gordon, whose last job was first lieutenant of H.M.S. *Porpoise*, could almost see his Helensburgh home through the periscope.

Last, from Halifax, Nova Scotia, there was Lt. Norman Nicholson, aged 29, winner of that day's tot for getting it all right.

All candidates are screened and recommended before setting out on the Perisher. They are all thought to be fit to command —

but it remains to be seen if they can withstand the ordeals that await them.

The stories of curves teachers have thrown to Perishers are told with glee in wardrooms around the world. The setting is nearly always the same: The student is peering through the periscope at the most crucial point in the attack.

Enter a chef, tomato-catsup blood all over his shirt, one finger apparently missing and a sausage clasped in the other hand. The captain has to delegate someone else to deal with the panic since he's in the middle of a critical torpedo attack. One submarine rating chuckled with glee as he told of the look on the conning tower officer's face as he watched a control-room rating pick up the severed "finger" and eat it.

Or, enter a berserk stoker, a wrench in his hand and murder in his heart. As one such Perisher was approached this way, he said coolly, "Deal with it, Number One." The first lieutenant, a burly six-footer, knocked the stoker unconscious to the deck.

Enter a comedy team of two hands with yards and yards of green plastic hose, announcing that they had come to pump out the well beneath the periscope. The duty captain had the hose wrapped around his feet and the periscope before he realized he was on the receiving end of one of Teacher's curves.

Enter a rating, writhing on the deck in a fit, or perhaps appendicitis.

Enter a worried-looking sailor, just as the torpedoes are about to be fired, insisting on sending a domestic telegram to his wife.

Then there is the legendary Case of the Disappearing Crew. As Perisher was poring over a chart during a pin-point navigation exercise, Teacher crept up behind each member of the control-room crew, tapped them on the shoulder and signaled for them to slink away.

When the student at last turned around, he and Teacher were the sole occupants of the submarine's nerve center. Moral: Never forget what is happening around you.

What sort of man is Perisher material? Cmdr. Lang, as delicate with an artist's brush as he is with a torpedo setting, summed it up: "He must be the sort of chap in whose submarine I would be happy to sleep."

A senior officer added, "And one I would go to war with."

An official document states, "The aim of the course is to qualify submarine officers for command of patrol-class submarines. However, as there is no subsequent formal course of a similar nature before commanding a nuclear submarine, the standards set and achieved on Perisher are demanding and long-lasting."

"Demanding" seemed a typically naval understatement as *Onyx*, with 70 souls on board — plus mine and the Perishers' — slipped down to precisely 48 feet to start work.

The frigate's sonar tapped its fingers down our hull in what would have been a nightmare rhythm in wartime. In the control room, the first Perisher began his attack.

Comfortingly near was the broad back of the engineer officer, 48-year-old Douggie Blake. Commissioned from the lower deck and with 28 years' service under his ample belt, Blake had been aboard a similar boat when instructor Cmdr. Lang went through his Perisher ordeal.

Blake remembered, "He sweated — just like the others. When we are the crew for the Perishers, we catch their enthusiasm. As they make the attack, you start seeing the picture in your head. When you hear those ranges from the frigate go down, you get quite a sweat.

"People's hands go toward the equipment they're due to operate . . . They know what the candidate should be seeing."

When news of the successful candidates is announced in the submarine's wardroom, the crew are eager to congratulate the men they have seen toiling day after day.

Lang said, "They're magic." And he explained how the ratings often gave the Perishers their own personal nicknames. One officer was "Kneecaps;" an Australian candidate was dubbed "The Cool Koala."

Just how does it feel to pass the world's toughest mental-assault course? *Onyx*'s CO, 32-year-old Lt. Cmdr. Charles Tibbits, a Perisher graduate, took over his first command at the end of January 1983.

"On one of my last attacks, everything dropped into place. I had a marvelous feeling of satisfaction. When the whole thing ended, my teacher threw us all out of the wardroom, and we stood in the passageway to be called in one by one.

"When it was my turn, teacher turned to me and said, 'Welcome to the club.'

"I don't think I really believed it for the moment. Then there was relief followed by self-satisfaction. And I was pleased for the others. We had done it together.

"The Perisher is always held up to you. From the day you join submarines, this is your aim. When I saw my first command sitting alongside, I thought, 'You have passed Perisher and this is your reward.'"

There's a lot of intense concentration that

Intrepid reporter Frank Durham (left), first journalist to go to sea with the Perisher.

goes into finally reaching that end. Aboard *Onyx* as we neared the end of the day's instruction candidate David Nicholls said, "If a nude bird walked up to me when I was duty captain, I'd tell her to get out of the control room."

Andy Johnson elaborated. "It's an uphill struggle, but we all enjoy it. You're only as good as your last attack. If it was good, you feel good. If it went badly, you feel bad. The Perisher tests you to the limit — and it shows you what your limits are. It is the biggest single step any of us will make in the Navy."

Johnson hurried away to the dimly lit control room to make a blind attack on one of the frigates, still patiently flogging up and down over our heads. He came back to report hits by two of his invisible torpedoes.

Lang told me that most of his students lose weight during the course, in spite of great helpings of traditional submarine fare. This includes elephant's footprints (Spam fritters), babies' head (tinned steak-and-kidney puddings) and yellow peril (smoked haddock).

Lang, whose previous job was "driving" the *Polaris* submarine *Renown*, said the most important quality he sought in a Perisher was safety. Added to that, he said, a Perisher must have rapidity of thought and mental agility: "The man must have an almost indefinable quality of assurance, and he must be able to work under stress and make accurate decisions.

"This course started in World War II, and what you see is just a vast expansion of that. The day the course finishes, the successful candidate is eligible to take a submarine to war. So this is a very exclusive club.

"If there is going to be a shooting match, it could happen at sea, and the submarine is going to be in the forefront of the battlefield.

"The boat's CO is a link in the *Polaris* chain. If he didn't play his part, the submarine couldn't fire the missile. This man is carrying the nation's deterrent. It's an enormous responsibility."

But even when the newly qualified Perisher steps onto his more modest first command, feeling "10 feet tall," that diesel patrol boat is still a whole lot of responsibility.

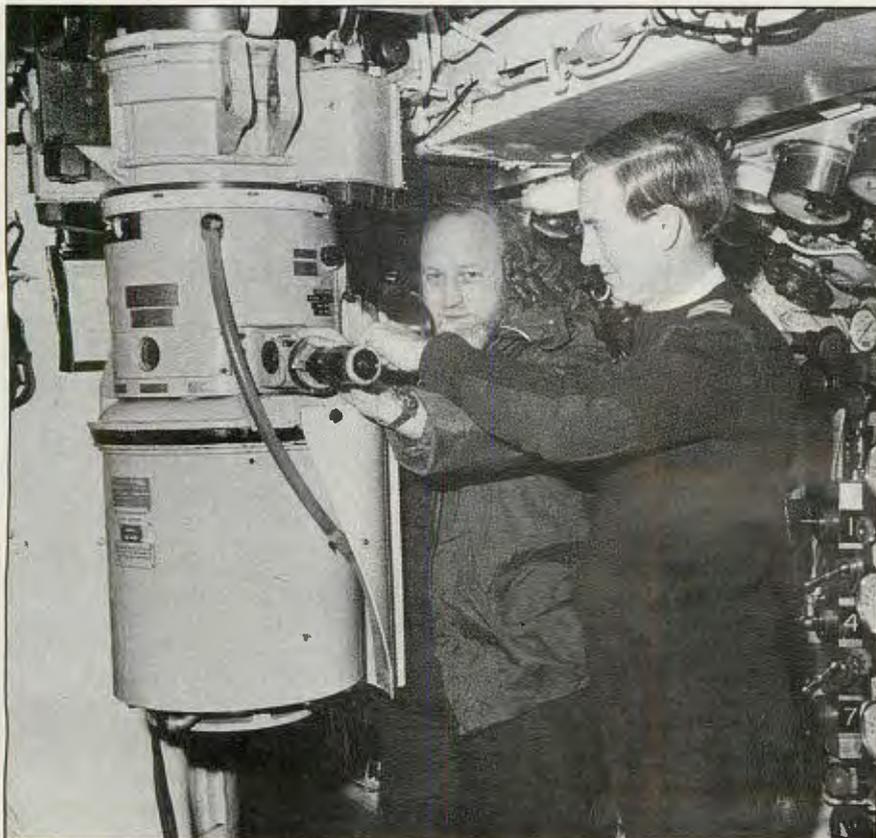
Under Lt. *Comdr.* Tibbits' command in the Oberon class *Onyx* are 2,560 tons and 295 feet, six inches of valuable government property.

The two 2,000-horsepower diesel engines would supply enough power to light a small town. Seventy-two men rely on their captain for everything from life-and-death decisions to taking the can for an audit that doesn't balance.

One day Tibbits will probably win his "brass" commander's hat and the \$200-million "nuke" that goes with it.

But to the new members of the exclusive Perisher club, the golden moment is when they take their first command to sea.

Said Lang, "It's the loneliest but most exciting moment of your life." ✕





SOF AFRICA

BACK TO THE BUSH

Trekking Through A Southern Africa Timewarp

by John W. Coleman

Photos by AP/Wide World

Although most white soldiers, like this Selous Scouts trooper, left Rhodesia after ZANU took over, a few remain in Comrade Mugabe's army.

“THEY’RE gonna hang your ass if you go back there.”

My buddies were less than encouraging about my trip back to the country where I fought during the dark days of the Rhodesian conflict. Those discouraging words and several others that can't be printed came from my small circle of Rhodesian-vet friends who evinced all sorts of doubts about the sanity of a man who was preparing for a seven-week visit to Zimbabwe. In fact, I had some doubts myself and wasn't sure what sort of reception I'd receive when I landed at the international airport in Harare (Salisbury), capital of the now "independent" state of Zimbabwe.

I had served more than three years in the Rhodesian Army during the so-called struggle for liberation, and I knew anything that even smacked of the Rhodesia days would land me jail for a lengthy stretch. What I didn't know was how closely the Zimbabwean government has kept tabs on ex-Security Force members, especially foreigners whom they quaintly termed "racist, blood-sucking mercenaries."

The Air Zimbabwe 707 from London touched down in Harare just before 8 a.m. and I hoped the customs and immigration people would still be half asleep. My gut was churning as I climbed out into the heat and breathed a sigh which seemed to say, "look out central prison, here I come." I walked up to the African immigration official, plopped my passport down and put on my most innocent Yankee tourist expression. If they kept a "prohibited immigrants" list, my name would probably be on it. I expected to see a couple of hard-cases with bulging armpits slide up beside me to serve as escorts during my direct trip to the Central Intelligence Organization's downtown offices.



AFRICA REVISITED

"Once you go to Africa you never really leave it," John Coleman told us two years ago. "I've no doubt that I'll be going back." So his 1984 trip to Zimbabwe to check out the new regime came as no surprise.

Coleman joined the U.S. Army in 1969 and served during 1970-71 in Vietnam in infantry recon at Quang Tri and Tuy Hoa. When he returned to the states, he attended the Instructor's Training Course, NCO Academy and Ranger School.

Disenchanted with the peacetime army, he left the states in 1976 and joined the Rhodesian Army, finishing

basic in the top fourth of his class. He then transferred to the Rhodesian Light Infantry, where he completed the company-level tactics course and later served as an instructor.

Coleman had found his military home: "I found an army that looked like an army, acted like an army, fought like an army and — best of all — had a cause worth fighting for." But by 1979 that cause was lost.

He returned to California, where he now lives with his Rhodesian wife, and settled down as a free-lance writer. SOF has published two episodes from Coleman's RLI career — "Five AK Rounds" (February '83) and "LALO Jump" (January '84.)



Nothing. Just a few pointed questions as to my place of residence in Zimbabwe, how long I would be staying and how much foreign currency I had. No soldiers, guns, bayonets or thumbscrews anywhere in the terminal. Suddenly, I was standing outside the airport, somewhat bewildered just as I had been nine years before.

On the surface, the country hasn't changed much from pre-independence days. The streets are still clean, the buses still run pretty much on time and there's still a very bloody civil war in progress.

This war — although it's never referred to as that by the one-party ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union) government of Robert Mugabe — is basically designed to exterminate Joshua Nkomo's opposition ZAPU (Zimbabwe African People's Union) political party which was allied with Mugabe during the Rhodesian war. The tactics include intimidation, starvation and murder.

Backed by North Korean, Chinese and British "advisers," Mugabe's 40,000-man military machine is bound and determined to convert the ZAPU Matabele tribe to the one party-state concept, even if it means annihilating the entire tribe.

ZAPU is hardly rolling over for this typically African style of political persuasion. I wasn't back in the country long before I discovered Mugabe's propaganda ministers call resisters "bandits" or "dissidents" since the word "terrorist" is considered too Rhodesian for public use. Call them what they will, Nkomo's veteran guerrilla forces are carrying on the fight in much the same manner as they did against the Rhodesian government. The continuing campaign calls for sabotage, ambush, assassinating government officials and typical hit-and-run raids against military encampments.

No one on the continent has any doubt about where Mugabe is getting the military might and expertise to stay in power. But there seems to be some national and international question about who opened the can of spinach which gives ZAPU the military and logistical muscle to continue the resistance. It's obvious to anyone who was around in this country for the final sell-out that ZIPRA (Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army), Nkomo's military organization, inherited plentiful stockpiles of arms and equipment

During Rhodesian war Selous Scouts selection course included rigorous training. In 1979 students like this man fired PKM medium MGs during weapons training.

left over from the Rhodesian war. It quickly became apparent to me that the organized resistance in this country is also getting substantial aid — in one form or another — from the Republic of South Africa. It's not hard to understand why.

The South Africans have a vested interest in keeping Zimbabwe in turmoil. The country borders South Africa on the north and presents a two-pronged military threat to the Republic. A united Zimbabwe, with its 40,000-man military force, could feasibly mount a conventional attack on the South African Defense Forces already spread thin by a continuing brush-fire war against terrorist activity within their own borders. Mugabe's forces would have to coordinate with other African nations to have any chance for a significant victory, but there's no doubt the military planners in Pretoria take this threat seriously.

Perhaps more importantly, the South Africans want to keep the pot boiling in Zimbabwe to prevent their northern neighbor's territory from being used as base or sanctuary by anti-South African guerrillas. The border zone is dominated by anti-Mugabe dissidents and a nation torn by internal strife does not rank high on the list of favorite operating bases for third-nation forces. If a SWAPO-style South African terrorist movement, sanctioned by Mugabe, attempted to establish bases in southern Zimbabwe, they would have to contend with SADF cross-border raids as well as try to steer clear of running battles between ZANU and ZAPU.

A number of sources indicated to me they had first-hand knowledge of supplies shipped from South Africa to ZAPU fighters in Zimbabwe, but there is also significant speculation among long-time observers that the South Africans may also be involved in other, more secretive ventures in Zimbabwe.

Shortly after independence, a series of early morning explosions rocked Thornhill Air Force Base near Gweru (Gwelo), a centrally-located urban center. Hawker-Hunter attack jets, Canberra bombers, Lynx heli-

copter gunships and a variety of other aircraft were destroyed by blasts from Limpet-type explosive devices. It was unclear who had set the charges but Mugabe's government used the incident as an excuse to purge the last white-dominated military organization which remained in the country. Six senior Air Force officers were arrested and blamed for organizing the attack. Confessions were extracted by torture but an African judge refused to be a party to the travesty and later exonerated the men. Meanwhile, Mugabe scored further propaganda coups and succeeded in bullying organized resistance into the shadows. His version of the attack on Thornhill still stands as official in Zimbabwe.

A variety of sources both in and out of Zimbabwe paint an entirely different picture of the incident. They credit the attack to a group of highly-trained and experienced guerrilla warfare experts who were unceremoniously booted out of the country after independence was declared. These former Rhodesian soldiers had fought for their country for 15 years when they were told to leave taking only a paltry \$1,000 emigration allowance. It's not hard to imagine that a certain nearby government might offer them larger sums (sources indicate the price was about Rand 32,000) if they would reenter the country and take out specific targets. There are indications that other Thornhill-style raids have taken place in Zimbabwe over the years since independence, but for obvious reasons the Mugabe government isn't about to confess to a lack of internal security. For the record, the South Africans aren't saying anything about such activity either.

Throughout my stay in Zimbabwe, I was surprised at the low profile maintained by Mugabe's military forces. In trips to the northern, eastern and southern sectors of the country, the only troop concentration I noted was around the Nyanga (*Inyanganga*) area where the BMATT (British Military



African trooper readies MAG MG before 1977 battle. Today Grey's Scouts still ride to war on horseback as Zimbabwe struggles to contain dissident forces.

Advisory Training Team) was based. Although they, like everyone else in the country, were camera shy and reluctant to talk about their mission, it appears that they are running a company commander-level leadership course for the Zimbabwean Army. A class of officers did graduate from the course during my stay and a local innkeeper told me, "They [the British] had one helluva piss-up down at the Nyanga Country Club.

"They're not bad blokes," he said. "They seem to view their time here as a lark, as a break in their normal routine."

BMATT is a mixed bunch from various British military units including the SAS. Before I left for my visit to Africa, a rumor reached me from various sources indicating the team may have a darker side to their mission in Zimbabwe. The story circulates about a reconnaissance team, composed of ex-Rhodesian SAS and Selous Scouts, who attempted a clandestine crossing of the border between South Africa and Zimbabwe in late 1983 or early 1984. Through fate, faulty intelligence or a security leak, the team ran into a BMATT-supervised ambush and were killed.

To date the subject has largely been relegated to bar-talk between old Africa hands but there is no doubt BMATT soldiers are sensitive about the story. Trying to verify or disprove it, I eased into a conversation between a fairly senior member of BMATT and his subordinate during an evening at the local pub in our hotel. The atmosphere was frosty — no introductions offered and a less-than-cordial welcome for a fellow Westerner — but at least they weren't adverse to the idea of my buying them a round of drinks. As the evening went on, I interjected the question as to whether or not the BMATT would be involved in active operations such as the ostensible ambush along the South African border.

Quickly depositing his unfinished drink on the bar, the senior man stood and motioned for his colleague to do the same. He asked my name, jotted it down in a notebook, and the two stalked out of the pub. End of conversation, end of evening, end of tenuous relationship with the BMATT in Zimbabwe. I'd be interested to know if the stuffed shirt is still trying to run a trace on "William O. Darby." If he's not having any luck, he might try the U.S. Army Ranger School.

Outside the concentration in the BMATT area, the majority of Mugabe's operational forces are deployed throughout the southern and western sectors of the country, traditional strongholds of the ZAPU-aligned Matabele tribe. Not anxious for a quick arrest or deportation, I didn't inquire as to the order of battle for the government but it's obvious that some well-known units are still beating the bush inside Zimbabwe's borders. The 5th Brigade, already notorious in the international press for its inhumane dealings with the Matabele population, is active in the area as is the 1st (Zimbabwe) Commando Battalion, formed after inde-



In 1977 Selous Scouts helped guard Rhodesia. Today British military advisers train Zimbabwean officers near Nyanga.

pendence.

Previously commanded and trained by senior white officers, the Parachute Battalion of the Zimbabwean Army draws recruits from the Parachute Training School in Harare to stay active and available as Mugabe's elite, quick-reaction force. That's not as efficient as it appears. During my stay, the PTS graduated only 12 soldiers from the basic airborne course out of an entry class of 167 African troops. For some strange reason, the parachute training, combined with army basic training, has been extended to *nine months*. In Rhodesian days, the army ran a three-week, U.S.-style jump school and graduated a great deal more qualified airborne soldiers.

The situation is indicative of the serious problems confronting the Zimbabwean parachute contingent. The last two veteran airborne officers (both white) left the school without a fully-qualified commander and training officer in August. To further complicate matters, pilots and spare parts for the aging, pre-independence Dakota jump aircraft are in short supply. The maintenance effort for these multi-purpose transport planes is spotty and unprofessional. Given all that, it's very likely the 1st Parachute Battalion will rapidly lose the ability to carry out its designated role in national defense as well as counter-guerrilla warfare.

Another unit heavily involved in field operations still carries the pre-independence designation as Grey's Scouts. It remains a mounted infantry unit trained in tactics that date to the 1800s when the horse was the only viable form of military transport. Grey's Scouts were mounted to navigate rough terrain and keep pressure on guerrilla forces during the Rhodesian war. Mugabe's version of the unit remains on horseback but uses their mounts much less effectively than the Rhodesians did.

A former senior NCO of Grey's Scouts indicated some surprise that his old outfit was still operating. "I'm surprised they haven't eaten the horses," he commented. It may be that logistical considerations have

forced continuation of a mounted unit in the Zimbabwean Army. Throughout my travels around the country, the only fairly new military transport I saw consisted of a few Land Rovers. Virtually all other troop-carrying vehicles were the ancient British RL trucks used by the Rhodesian Army during the war. Half of the ones I saw were being towed behind equally-ancient recovery vehicles. The situation is the same as it is with aviation maintenance. A lack of spare parts and a haphazard maintenance effort seriously hampers the army's ability to move troops around the country and respond to threats. Since maintenance on a horse is considerably less complicated than working on a 2½-ton truck, the future of the Grey's Scouts in Zimbabwe is reasonably assured.

In the ranks of such units there is a mixed bag of military winners and losers. It's a sure bet that the majority of middle and senior ranking NCOs and officers in the army come from ZANLA (Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army), Mugabe's military arm during the Rhodesian war. For the most part under-trained and poorly-disciplined during the terrorist war, these troops, under the watchful supervision of Chinese, North Korean and British advisers, now form the backbone of the active army units.

There are still a few whites serving in the army, air force and ZRP (Zimbabwe Republic Police) but their numbers are decreasing yearly. The reasons such men stayed on with the new Marxist regime after independence vary but devotion to Mugabe and his minions doesn't seem to be a key factor. Toward the end of the Rhodesian war, many of the current senior white officers were junior officers or NCOs rapidly promoted into key positions to temper and train the influx of rank-hungry ZANLA bush-fighters. Many were support troops or administrative types who were enthralled by the potential for advancement from sergeant to major in just a few years.

Squadron Leader Kevin Milligan, the last white commander of the Parachute Training School, is an example of the former Rhodesian soldiers who opted to remain after independence. When I knew him in 1978, Milli-

gan was a corporal instructor at PTS. He knew no one else on the staff was likely to stay on and requested permission to do so, presuming correctly that he would eventually inherit the command by default. For quite a time he was literally the only one in the country who who knew anything about military parachute training.

An absence of professional military skills among the Zimbabweans is clearly the single factor which most often served to keep whites in uniform. It was particularly evident in the air force immediately following independence. There simply weren't any qualified African pilots available to fly Zimbabwe's outdated airplanes or black maintenance technicians to keep them airworthy. A number of promises and incentives were offered to whites who had these skills, but after the Thornhill attack and subsequent arrest of the senior air force officers, the majority of these men took off for home. The Zimbabwean Air Force was never much in evidence during my stay in the country. I never did see any of the nation's aviation assets actually take to the air.

Along with such practical considerations, there is another, ironic reason why certain whites remain in the Zimbabwean military. Some Rhodesian soldiers entered service near the end of the war under long-term, benefit-filled contracts. Despite a general amnesty release program which went into effect shortly after independence and allowed members of the Security Forces to simply drift out of the military and go home, the unfortunates on such contracts were required to fulfill them. Most of these — primarily high-school drop-outs — signed on for a period of five to seven years in 1980 with the promise of overseas military training in Britain. They are obligated to finish their tours in a military force comprised primarily of former enemies who tried to destroy the country the volunteers enlisted to defend. The irony raises bitter emotions in men like the young air force corporal who spoke to me on condition that I not use his name. "It's pure shit," he said, "but I'm locked in until the end of 1986. There's just nowhere for me to go."

There was somewhere for veteran Rhodesian servicemen to go at the end of the war in

1980. Many of the regular force soldiers and airmen (especially Selous Scouts, SAS and RLI troops) followed a self-preservation instinct and joined the South African Defense Forces. The SADF offered former Rhodesian soldiers a one-year contract to serve in the various Recce Groups and Parachute Battalions. Many accepted and signed on for continued service while others found it too difficult dealing with the Afrikaner mentality of SADF and left after a year. Some who left got involved in the abortive Seychelles raid led by former Rhodesian officer Mike Hoare and others gravitated to the Transkei Defense Force in southern Africa to serve under Major General Ron Daly, former commander of the Selous Scouts.

As a final consideration of whites remaining in Zimbabwean uniform, it should be noted that job security is tenuous at best. African politics are traditionally turbulent and uncertain. A prestigious senior military command today might be the ticket to a jail cell — or worse — tomorrow.

During a trip to the eastern highlands district, it became apparent to me that Zimbabwe wasn't the only country in the region facing an internal crisis. Mozambique, the sanctuary for Mugabe's ZANLA forces during the Rhodesian war, has become a genuine African pressure cooker. The heat is being generated internally by FRELIMO (Front for the Liberation of Mozambique), Samora Machel's rag-bag army, and externally by the Republic of South Africa. Machel's FRELIMO troops are having a difficult time dealing with the Mozambique Resistance Movement (MRM) which is supported by the South Africans. The movement is dedicated to Machel's overthrow and is very active throughout the country, especially the central regions. The threat posed by marauding MRM bands has made it impossible for FRELIMO forces, operating in the Espungabera-Macane areas of Mozambique, to drive directly across-country to the capital of Beira. They are

The terrorists these black and white Rhodesian troops hunted in the Zambezi River Valley in 1966 are now the backbone of Comrade Mugabe's army — or still fighting for power in Nkomo's ZIPRA.



Black and white Selous Scouts stand at ease before returning to Rhodesia's war in 1977. Today drought as well as terrorists threatens Zimbabwe. Coleman estimates that one more dry year will cause the country to collapse.

forced to cross over into Zimbabwe at Mt. Selinda, travel north to Mutare (Umtali), and take the main road through Chimoio to Beira. I saw a convoy of FRELIMO, riding Russian trucks and wearing something similar to East German camouflage, navigating the circuitous route and was told by villagers that it was a common sight in the area. Many of the coffee farmers near the Mozambique border reported hearing explosions and small arms fire nightly from MRM units attacking FRELIMO formations.

During the last few days of my visit to the country where I'd spent long years fighting the communist-backed insurgency, there were two final stops I wanted to make. The first was Hero's Acre, the Zimbabwean memorial to its Chimurenga (freedom) Fighters of the Rhodesian war, and the second was Warren Hills cemetery, the final resting place for many fine troops of the Rhodesian Army.

Hero's Acre, if you can look beyond its morbid purpose, is an impressive multi-million dollar project designed by the North Koreans shortly after independence. In a stadium-like surrounding there are multi-tiered mausoleums designed to hold hundreds of "heroes of the revolution." Only seven are buried there at present. The area is flanked by large, impressionist depictions of the "struggle for national liberation" done in bas-relief. Located centrally is a huge statue of a warrior in heroic pose and overlooking all is an imposing granite monolith topped by an electric "eternal" flame.

There were a few problems encountered when the area was constructed including cost overruns into the millions of dollars. The memorial put a severe crimp in Zimbabwe's already shaky national budget. But there are more noticeable glitches. Each of the "freedom fighters" depicted in the bas-reliefs has a decidedly oriental cast in the facial features. When the area was first



opened for viewing, public furor sent the North Korean designers back to the drawing board.

The huge, plastic mock-up of a candle which was to be lit electrically and represent an eternal flame at the Kennedy Memorial in Arlington National Cemetery, refused to emit any light. Plans are being made to purchase a new flame for around \$150,000 from — of all places — the Republic of South Africa.

Warren Hills is an entirely different story. Visitors may not simply drive into the cemetery, look around and leave. Surly guards brandishing AK-47s complete with fixed bayonets informed me I needed a letter of admittance from the Ministry of Information before I could see the graves of some of my friends. I managed to obtain the document from an obliging clerk in Harare and returned to confront two different guards equally suspicious of the reason for my visit. I gave them the yankee tourist song-and-dance and they reluctantly allowed me to enter. Waiting for me was the guard detachment sergeant major flanked by two more armed guards.

After satisfying himself that my permission to visit was legitimate (I'm certain he never believed I was simply a tourist) the NCO escorted me around the site with both guards maintaining a discreet, vigilant distance. I asked him about his military service during the war and his duties at Hero's Acre.

"I joined the struggle in 1975," he said, "and did my first training in Mozambique. From there I went to Tanzania and finally North Korea. When I came back to Zimbabwe I fought in Manicaland until the struggle was over."

I smiled and nodded my head in casual interest. On the inside I was feeling as cold and empty as some of the graves at Hero's Acre. I had been on many bush trips in that area pulling RLI fire force duties from my base at Grand Reef airfield near Umtali. I'd probably seen the sergeant major before — and he'd likely seen me — over rifle sights.

His job at Hero's Acre, he said, was simply to keep the place intact. Certain disaffected elements had blown up the independence monument near the airport shortly after the war, he indicated, and the government was taking no chances on a recurrence at Hero's Acre.

Warren Hills Cemetery, the resting place for many Rhodesian and foreign servicemen and women, lies only a few miles down the road from Hero's Acre. The last time I was there was to bury a member of Support Commando's Recce Troop, my first official duty as new commanding officer. On this occasion I was going to visit a friend, Sgt. Hugh McCall, ex-3 Commando and a native of New York City, who was killed in action in July 1979.

I wasn't sure what to expect as I drove into the cemetery. Would the new government have left it alone? Or torn down the headstones bearing the hated insignia of Selous Scouts, Special Air Service, Rhode-



Selous Scouts train near Msango Bay in 1977. War still continues in Zimbabwe. Farmers in Matabeleland told Coleman that it's worse today than during the Rhodesian war.

sian African Rifles, Rhodesian Light Infantry and numerous other units which represented the honor of Rhodesia? That had been the pattern in other African countries as revolutionary governments sought to eradicate any traces of past administrations.

But Warren Hills was unchanged. The silent rows of markers, some bearing fresh flowers, stood clean and polished under a brilliant, blue African sky. The Mugabe government had let these men and women rest in peace. The Rhodesian markings on their headstones no longer represented a threat.

I wandered up and down the rows, pausing occasionally as a name or date keyed my memory. Finally I found the grave of Hugh McCall. I stared at the manicured ground and wondered if it had all been worthwhile, especially for Americans like Hugh and myself who fought in Africa. Did the death, pain, blood and fear we all experienced mean anything now that it was all over?

It did back then, I recalled, sweeping my eyes around the horizon of Zimbabwe. It still does. ✕

MAD JIM MAKES HIS PRESENCE FELT

Few tourists tramping over her borders in 1978 paid for their drinks with American Express Travelers' Checks and their socks didn't turn up in the hotel laundry with little nametags sewn to the top. Foreign visitors to Rhodesia in those days were sullen creatures, more likely to blow up a hotel than to sleep in it.

They spent their African vacations where they were happier — among the native *kraals* where peasants performed like trained poodles at the snap of an AK cocking handle. The plucky little government of Ian Smith may have controlled the army and police, but the countryside was increasingly controlled by the Terrs. Ragtag revolutionary gangs were everywhere winning hearts and minds by squeezing the peoples' balls. They were determined to mold a Marxist Zimbabwe out of Rhodesia's war-charred landscape.

Foreign volunteers trekked steadily to the *veldt* of the African frontier. Some brought only a passion for action and adventure. A few were like James Alexander Burnett, a man with a voracious appetite for violence.

Burnett stood like a giant among the sweaty stream of mercenaries scuttling from bar to battle and back again. He was known — and feared — as "Mad Jim" Burnett. He excelled at both civil and military disobedience. He also excelled at expounding on his own glory and expertise as a card-carrying, front-line *pistolero*.

The afternoon I met Mad Jim, he was roosting at a small bar on the manicured fringes of downtown Salisbury, treating everything in range of his booming baritone to his own peculiar brand of wisdom. He called it just as he saw it and he took his beer straight from the bottle. From his pulpit amidst a sea of empties and crushed pretzel sticks, he told me of the Holy Grail he intended to find in Rhodesia.

"Women and children, mate. I've come to rape, loot and shoot women and children." I glanced over my glass at him and supposed he might be half kidding. "Can't see much sense in a professional soldier blasting away at cardboard cutouts all his life. Women and children are what rifles were made for... and dogs, I hate dogs."

He picked at a tattooed forearm, waiting out a pregnant pause. I waited with him.

"When I first signed up, back in the British Army that is, there weren't no thought of turning me natural talent for killing things into a career then. Only thing I wanted then was to get me ass out of fucking Scotland. The army did that for me all right. It got me out and showed me the world. Also taught me what's the right end of a rifle. The more I blasted away at them paper targets, the more I sort of warmed to the idea. Pretty soon, the thought of slotting something with a little more meat in it really started to raise the old body temperature."

I could see the sails being rigged for a cruise to adventure with the wandering

Continued on page 133

EVERY MAN A TIGER

SACO Mauls the Japanese

by John B. Dwyer

Photos courtesy of Robert V. Larson

THE boat slipped silently through the night like a hungry shark cautiously approaching prey. The target loomed on the inky horizon as a dark blur, fat and quietly content like a lazy swimmer floating in an innertube. Only 300 yards of velvet water separated shark from prey.

Five swimmers silently skinned out of uniforms, hung deadly demolition charges around their necks and slipped over the side and into the water. In less than half an hour they returned to clamber, dripping and shivering, back into their assault craft. Any noise they made was hidden by the roaring explosions that split the darkness and changed the serenity of a China night into bedlam. The first phase of Operation Swordfish was successfully completed. Swordfish was led by Ens. John Mattmiller, an American officer attached to Naval Unit 6. His clandestine mission sounds like something out of a SEAL team after-action report from a mission in Vietnam. But seals were still circus performers when Mattmiller and his clandestine crew blew up enemy shipping in a dramatic swimmer strike. They were members of Capt. Milton Miles' SACO (pronounced "sock-o"), the Sino-American Cooperative Organization, officially designated Naval Group China, whose specialty was guerrilla warfare in the China Theater during World War II. Swordfish was one of their most daring and dramatic attacks on the Japanese.

The objective was to capture the vital, deep-water port of Amoy on China's south-east coast. Control of Amoy meant command of the Formosa Strait between China and Taiwan. The SACO intel net had learned that a Japanese freighter was docked in Amoy harbor for repairs. Miles and his staff decided to sink the 1,000-ton ship to help block the harbor, and the task was given to Lt. S.I. "Si" Morris' Naval Unit 6.



USS *Augusta* (heavy cruiser CA31), called the *Augie Maru* by her crew, reaches the inner harbor of Tsingtao, China, in summer 1939.

ON THE PERIMETER

John B. Dwyer joined the U.S. Army in 1967 and served in Vietnam during 1968-69 with the 69th Armor and 1st Bn., 14th Inf. Div.

Now a free-lance military writer, Dwyer specializes in special operations like SACO. The former editor-publisher of *Perimeter*, a national Vietnam veterans' newsletter, has also contributed to Chuck Allen's *National Vietnam Veterans Review* from its beginning. SOF welcomes him aboard.

The UDT-trained Naval officer, one of only a handful in Asia at this stage of the war, chose Mattmiller, another frogman, to lead the mission. *Target date* was set for sometime in April 1945.

Mattmiller needed Chinese swimmers for his mission. He found them at a swimming match at the unit's camp and chose four of the winners as his trainees. After several weeks of intensive endurance, demolitions and ship structural training they were ready.

The group made its way to the coast where the men commandeered a handy junk from which to launch their raid. They traveled by night until they neared the target freighter. From the launch area they swam silently to avoid alerting harbor patrols or freighter crewmen. They pushed the flotation-rigged demo charges ahead of them. Working from a rehearsed plan, they spread out along the ship's barnacle-encrusted hull and attached Limpet mines and Composi-

tion C charges fitted with timing devices to the hull, rudder and propeller. Then they swam silently back the way they had come to watch their exhausting, nerve-wracking work pay dividends.

"As we crawled aboard," Mattmiller recalls, "we saw two big explosions." That was all they needed to know and they promptly cranked the junk's asthmatic engine into life to clear the area before Japanese patrols began roaring around.

The first blast neatly holed the freighter at the waterline. The second mine took out another strategic section of hull plate and the freighter heeled hard to one side as she took water. Crewmen on deck were tossed into the water as the ship lurched violently. By morning, allied recon planes reported the ship was lying on its side effectively blocking Amoy harbor. Ens. Mattmiller received the Silver Star for his part in Operation Swordfish. Both he and his Chinese volunteers had lived up to SACO's motto: Every Man a Tiger.

Clandestine swimmer strikes such as SACO men pulled off in Swordfish were only one type among all sorts of guerrilla operations staged in China during the final year of World War II. Like most special warfare units tossed together in the initial desperate days of the war in the Pacific, SACO had a strange track record.

Immediately recognizing the strategic value of the China coast and ports like Amoy, U.S. Navy planners sent Capt. Milton Miles to the occupied nation in April 1942 on a special mission. His orders were vague. He was to set up bases and to prepare the China coast — "any way you can" — for amphibious landings the Navy anticipated in three or four years. The future vice admiral had no way of knowing when he slipped across the border into China that the lack of specific guidance in his orders would result in sufficient latitude for him to assume leadership of American guerrilla forces harassing the Japanese in mainland China, or that he would become the *de facto* Far East chief for OSS operations — an appointment that annoyed OSS commander "Wild Bill" Donovan and one that became a source of continuing friction between SACO and the OSS.

In-country, Miles met Chinese Gen. Tai Li, and SACO was born. The two men immediately held a series of organizational sessions to plan the overall SACO program and outline several major operations against the Japanese. They also agreed that each of them should have veto power to prevent execution of any operation they could not agree on. Both men emphasized the Sino-American cooperation reflected in the organization's title and this eventually led to official recognition by the War Department and President Roosevelt.

Miles became Tai's deputy CO, directly commanding only the Americans assigned to the unit. He suffered some criticism of his secondary position from other American commanders who did not trust the skill or motivation of the Chinese resistance fight-

ers, but Miles shrugged it off. "It seemed reasonable to me," he comments. "It was his country."

SACO's mission was to help drive the Japanese out of the China Theater. Gen. Tai provided the troops from China's Loyal Patriotic Army and Capt. Miles provided the training cadre from Navy, Marine and, less frequently, Army personnel. "Happy Valley," eight miles outside Chungking, became the organization's headquarters.

As SACO grew, sub-headquarters were established at Chihkiang and Kienyang. Ultimately, the Americans in SACO served in 14 Naval Units whose camps stretched from the Gobi Desert to southernmost Yun-

nan Province. There were also 10 commando raiding groups, several mine units and field hospitals, and 20 coast-watcher outposts which covered a coastline that stretched from northernmost Liaoning Province to just north of Haiphong in Vietnam. SACO also established far-flung meteorological stations that provided valuable weather data for the Navy's carrier air wings and other allied units dependent on area weather for operational planning. SACO people also established a radio intel net that provided extremely valuable information on Japanese intentions and Imperial Army movement. Because they were scattered in small bands throughout the Chinese hinterlands, SACO teams also frequently rescued or helped recover downed fliers from Gen. Claire Chennault's 14th Air Force.

Despite such varied operations, SACO's most important elements were clearly the Naval Units and their attached raiding groups. These men formed the cutting edge that frequently ripped the belly out of Japanese plans in the China Theater. Their tactics included hit-and-run raids to blow supply depots as well as railroad and communication lines. SACO raiders generally wreaked havoc against the Japanese whenever and wherever possible. They became masters at moving quickly, using cover and concealment in rugged terrain. They also learned to cooperate with the local population.

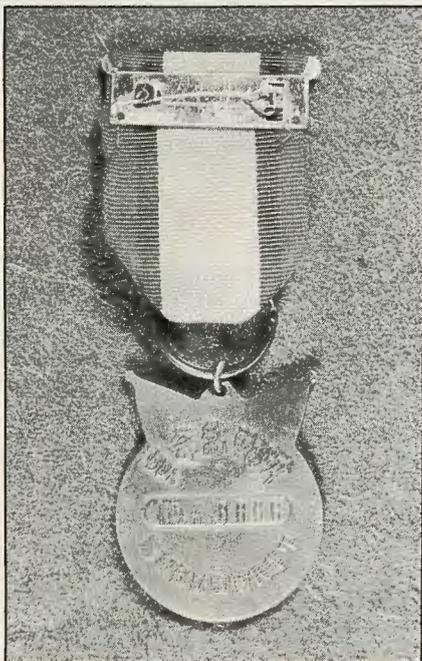
One officer who put his SACO training to good use later is Capt. Phil Bucklew, USN, Ret., who helped establish the Navy's SEAL program and was the first CO of Navy Operations Support Group, Pacific, which directed the first deployment of SEAL teams in Vietnam. Bucklew was no amateur when he joined SACO. He had earned two Navy Crosses for his daring beach recons before the Sicily and D-Day landings in the European Theater. He was one of the Navy's most combat-experienced frogmen and a natural for the SACO assignment.

Despite their emphasis on naval operations, SACO guerrillas shook the Japanese serenity on land also. On one such operation in November 1944, some of the cadre of Unit One were sent to disrupt the Hangchow-Kinhaw railroad in Chekiang Province. Led by 1st Lt. Milt Hull, USA, they set out with 131 Chinese guerrillas to blow the line and derail a Japanese military train. The attack force split into two groups of approximately 50 and 80 men for their 35-mile hike to Anhwa station. Each man carried a ¾-pound plastic explosive charge. When they reached the attack area, 17 men were detached from the larger group. Their mission was to plant a 40-pound charge at the point where the SACO intelligence net said the military train would pass on 26 November at precisely 2230.

Moving quietly through the scrub-brush along the rail line, the raiding party split into small squads which took up assigned positions. The 17-man demo group pulled back to a house 200 yards from the tracks while



Front and back of Republic of China's Victory Medal awarded to Bob Larson and other foreigners who fought in that country during WWII.





CHINA, B.C.

Before it became necessary to have spies and counterinsurgency groups like SACO and OSS in China, there was an American presence in that teeming country. Bob Larson, a B.C. (Before Communism) China sailor, remembers how it was then:

It all started, I suppose, when I first began reading the *National Geographic*, back in 1934. I was just a kid then and the depression was in full swing, but it didn't cost anything to walk the few blocks to the local public library where I would eagerly read the latest copy.

I learned two things from the *Geographic*: I learned something about sex (all those bare-bosomed native women in obscure corners of the world), and whenever the magazine published an article about China, it invariably — or so it seemed to me — included a photograph of the heavy cruiser *Augusta*, flagship of the Asiatic Fleet, moored in man-of-war row near Shanghai.

Six years later I was a signalman striker aboard the *Augusta*. "A home and a feeder," the plank owners said proudly. It was a "happy ship," the "Augie Maru," thoroughly "Asiatic," and although I was a callow stripling of 18, I knew I was fortunate to be serving aboard her.

China, B.C. — the old China. What memories it still evokes in my mind. A 4000-year-old culture, flecked with barbaric traditions that the Chinese accepted stoically, but which made us shudder. The old China, magnificent, beautiful, awesome — she was all these things — but corrupt and jaded, as well. Beauty and bestiality, existing side-by-side, cheek-to-jowl, with the obvious inroads of a modern society brought to her shores by Western man.

"Let China sleep," Napoleon warned, "for when she awakens, the whole world will tremble." But China, especially after the ill-fated Boxer ("Harmonious Fist") rebellion of 1898-1900, was hardly in a position to resist further Western incursions.

Bob Larson was treated at Oak Knoll Naval Hospital in Oakland, Calif., after his release from Japanese prison camp in 1945. A China, B.C., sailor, Larson's article recalls those happier days.

In June 1900, with the covert blessing of the old Manchu Empress, Tz'u Hsi, the Boxers, determined to rid China of Westerners and Western influence, occupied Peking and besieged the Western legations. Two months later, an international relief column of American, British, French, German, Russian and Japanese troops marched from Tientsin to Peking and, in heavy fighting, relieved the hard-pressed legations. In the process, they destroyed the Boxers' will to continue the fight.

"The Open Door Policy," a phrase coined by the Americans, was now an invitation for China to make more concessions to Western nations. She did so reluctantly. The Germans, for example, "leased" the Kiaochow territory on the Shantung peninsula in North China, and with typical foresight, constructed a fort at Tsingtao, strategically placing it above the harbor — ice-free in winter. The Japanese, who entered WWI on the Allied side, captured it in 1914.

Needless to say, China was in a mess. A clutch of war lords ruled the provinces with bloody fists. In some areas, people were forced to pay taxes 30 years in advance. Even window space was taxed — the larger the window, the more massive the tax. And in all parts of China, particularly in the north, there was a strong undercurrent of resentment against foreigners.

"Send a gunboat," Queen Victoria would say whenever a minister informed her of trouble in some far-flung colony of the Empire. The U.S. government adhered to a similar policy with our own Navy gunboats. It was called "gunboat diplomacy" and involved many Old China Hands who are still around today. Two coastal and five river gunboats were part of the Asiatic Fleet when I served in China.

The river boats, extremely shallow

draft and lightly armed, were commanded by Rear Adm. William A. Glassford, whose Yangtze Patrol headquarters were located in Hankow. Whenever there was unrest in one of the treaty ports on the river, a gunboat was usually sent to show the flag. We sailed to non-treaty ports also when local unrest agitated the Christian missionaries. There was never any love lost between the "River Rats," as the gunboat sailors proudly billed themselves, and the missionaries. At basic issue was the ultimate fate of Chinese hookers who the missionaries were constantly trying to convert and the sailors were constantly trying to subvert.

No doubt about it, an Asiatic Fleet assignment was choice duty. All the necessities — namely women and booze — were cheap. With the exchange hovering around 20 Chinese dollars to one American dollar, a quart of U.B. beer in Shanghai cost less than a nickel. One could dally for a short time with a girl for two "Mex," as the Chinese dollar was called — about 10 cents. All night was a more expensive proposition, costing as much as two bits. As a Seaman Second Class drawing only 36 dollars a month, my pay went a hell of a long way. And I didn't stint or strain to build a bank account.

It was a paradise but the final chapter was closing on an unforgettable era. In December 1937, the river gunboat *Panay* was sunk by Japanese bombers as she lay at anchor a few miles above Nanking. Two sailors died as a result of the unprovoked attack, and relations with Japan quickly deteriorated.

Late in November 1941, Adm. Thomas C. Hart, CinC of the Asiatic Fleet, ordered all gunboats, except the *Wake* and *Tutilla*, back to Manila. The *Wake* was captured at Shanghai, and the *Tutilla*, over a thousand miles up the Yangtze at Chunking, the provisional capital of Nationalist China, was turned over to the Chinese government. Its crew made it home the hard way. They flew to Calcutta, took a train to Bombay, where they embarked on a ship that carried them home — around the Cape of Good Hope to Trinidad, a distance of more than 11,000 miles.

Miraculously, the remaining river gunboats, their sides boarded up, made it across the China Sea to the Philippines, and performed gallantly during the battles of Bataan and Corregidor. None survived.

The final chapter has been long closed on the saga of the Yangtze Patrol, and though I was never fortunate enough to serve aboard one of those plucky little boats, I'm proud to have known some of their crews, but just as proud to have served in the old China, aboard the *Augusta*, the one and only "Augie Maru."

— Robert V. Larson

two other squads cleared fields of fire to pepper the train crew and security detachment after the derailment charge had been fired. SACO intel was right on the mark and at exactly 2230, the military train rolled through the station where it was lifted into the air by the force of the prepared charge. Chinese raiders poured rifle and machine-gun fire down on the train's defenders who died like flies all along the road-bed. Finally beginning to recover from the violence of the unexpected attack, Japanese crews near the station opened up with an artillery piece. Their rounds simply tore up empty terrain. The raiding party was already fleeing back toward their base camp. The trek involved eight days of hide-and-seek with marauding Japanese patrols, but they made it back without suffering a single casualty.

Shortly after the train derailling, the Navy proposed another important mission for SACO. Apparently someone recalled that Capt. Miles had originally been sent to China to prepare the coastline for amphibious landings. In January 1945, he was ordered to make a recon of the country's most-accessible beaches. Normally, the Navy would simply sneak a submarine into the area to do this sort of recon, but China's shoreline remained a mystery to most navigators and reliable charts were not available to the allies. It would have to be a recon conducted from the landward side.

Capt. Irwin Beyerly of Miles' staff was given the mission and he selected four recon group leaders, one of whom was Navy Lt. Phil Bucklew. Bucklew, holder of two Navy Crosses, was a SACO scout and raider. His objective was the "great crescent" northwest of Hong Kong. To reach it he had to travel 400 miles from the mountain vil-



Bob Larson (center) stopped at U.S. Naval Hospital 110, Samar, Philippines in 1945 after his release from Japanese prison camp. Before his capture on Corregidor in 1942, Larson served aboard USS *Augusta* in prewar China.



Vice-Adm. Milton Miles was a Navy captain when sent to China on mission that spurred the evolution of SACO. In addition, Miles was tasked as Far East chief of OSS, which caused friction with Wild Bill Donovan. Photo: DOD

SACO GUERRILLA COLUMN OPERATIONS

COLUMN*	ACTIONS	JAPANESE KIA	JAPANESE WIA
One	25	168	101
Two	94	1,200	2,600
Three	55	943	732
Four	167	1,600	1,324
Seven	12	292	65
Yangtze Raiders	22	744	

* These Columns operated in Kwantung, Hunan and Kweichow Provinces. These totals are for the three-month period, May-August 1945.

CUMULATIVE TOTALS FOR THEIR ACTIVE MONTHS OF SERVICE

COLUMN	MOS. ACTIVE SERVICE	JAPS KIA	JAPS WIA	ACTIONS
One	14	2,691	957	231
Two	14	5,106	1,642	435
Three	11	3,151	1,529	122
Four	14	7,950	2,638	448
Seven	2	292	65	12
Yangtze Raiders	10	1,395	684	78

TOTALS 20,485 7,515 1,326

Chart from p. 477, *A Different Kind of War* by V. Adm. Milton Miles.

lage of Kienyang in Hunan Province. Other team leaders were given different coastal areas. After mapping their areas, the four teams were to join up and return to Camp Six.

Bucklew disguised himself as a coolie, but his 6'2" 240-pound frame towered over the 12 Chinese guerrillas who went with him. It was a dicey trip, tempered only slightly by the delight of the Chinese villagers he encountered who nicknamed him "Big Stoop."

It didn't take long for Japanese Army units to hear about the huge coolie and his entourage. They sent out patrols to capture them but the recon team evaded them. They found haystacks were useful hiding places, but the recon team could not afford to spend much time evading the enemy. There was a deadline to be met and the constant pushing finally caused Bucklew's coolie sandals to disintegrate. Eventually he found himself traversing rough terrain barefoot.

Finally his team reached the rendezvous point where they were to pick up a hidden motorboat to carry out their photo recon. This was the moment that Big Stoop, the experienced naval officer, had been waiting for. The overland trek had been, as he described it, "the reverse of what I'd done before."

The 13 men of Bucklew's team could not immediately get their oars in the water. Suspicious Japanese troops had sunk the boat they were to use and they had to prowl the shoreline in order to commandeer some sampans and carry out their mission.

Then they turned back to join the two other groups that had successfully mapped different areas. On the way, Bucklew slipped and fell into a ravine, tearing the ligaments in one of his legs so badly that his faithful Chinese guerrillas had to carry him the last 10 miles to the rendezvous point.

It was a painful, difficult and dangerous mission for the the SACO recon teams involved. Unfortunately, it was to no avail. By the time their report reached the Navy planners in Washington, evolving strategy precluded landings on the Chinese mainland. Big Stoop remained philosophical about the mission and modestly accepted two Nationalist Chinese Medals for his SACO service.

SACO operations set the pattern of conflict to come in Southeast Asia. Adm. Miles must have realized that. In his book which describes the operations of the unit during World War II (*A Different Kind of War*), he declared, "It seems clear to me that it is in Asia that such unfinished fighting as we must see now lies. I do not see how we can possibly escape it, and to be successful we must be supple . . . and we must never stack arms."

One of his young staff members, a psychological warfare expert, developed a daring scheme to penetrate the Japanese stronghold in Vietnam during WWII. Lt. j.g. George Devereux's "Special Military Plan for Indochina" (cited by Ronald Spector on pp. 25-26 of *Advice & Support*,

the Early Years — The U.S. Army in Vietnam 1941-1960) called for 20 specially-trained SACO operatives to be parachuted into Vietnam's central highlands near Kontum. The team was to establish rapport with the local Montagnards. Devereux had been an anthropologist before the war. He knew the tribesmen and their historical enmity



USS *Augusta* stands out of Shanghai during heavy fighting between Japanese and Chinese in 1937. Chapei District burns in background.



Orient's answer to Broadway: Bubbling Well Road in Shanghai circa 1940.

Hollywood came to China before the war: Grand Theater on Carter Road, Shanghai, 1940.



towards lowland Viets, the French and the Japanese. SACO would organize the Montagnards into guerrilla columns, which, supplied by air drop, would become operational within five months and would, according to Devereux, "tie up enemy forces, offer a rallying ground for French patriots and native opponents of the Japanese." Additionally, the guerrillas would provide valuable intelligence and threaten the Japanese rear if the invasion of Burma went off as then planned.

Unfortunately, Devereux's plan was not executed. It became the victim of the continuing feud between the OSS and SACO. Despite that, the plan developed by a SACO officer became a guiding precept for the Special Forces CIDG/Mobile Guerrilla and Strike Force programs which were well-polished during American involvement in Vietnam some 20 years later..

As WWII wound down, SACO got involved in the sort of strange events that haunt professional soldiers when political considerations become the driving force for battlefield operations. The Chinese communists — Adm. Miles called them the Yanan Reds — had begun to jockey for post-war power. Although they had snowed some Allied commanders, SACO's more experienced staff knew precisely what they had in mind. It was maddening when orders came from on high that SACO could neither engage nor fire back at communist troops — a restriction which didn't keep the commies from gunning down SACO's men. The situation was exacerbated further when SACO learned that the Reds were actively in collusion with Japanese forces. When word came that SACO would have to work with these Reds, Miles was furious. But the die was cast. What eventually happened is, as they say, history.

By war's end, SACO units had secured a 200-mile stretch of the Chinese coast. Then R. Adm. Miles declared that each day of action through July 1945 "brought additional proof of the spirit and initiative of the men of SACO. At least a dozen of my young officers were handling operations which, except for their smaller scale, were of the complexity that are usually reserved for generals or field marshals — intricate military elements requiring the use of two or three languages, three or four different kinds of troops and, from beginning to end, unfamiliar techniques that had been almost entirely forgotten by Americans since the days of the Indians in western New York, Pennsylvania and Kentucky."

SACO was disbanded immediately after the war in the China theater ended but not before a grateful Chinese nation awarded R. Adm. Miles their highest decoration, the Order of Un Hui (White Cloud & Golden Banner), Medal No. 90. In response, Adm. Miles saw to it that his SACO commander and good friend, Gen. Tai Li, received the American Legion of Merit. Sadly, the decoration had to be awarded posthumously: Gen. Tai had died in a plane crash near Nanking. ☒



MIDDLE EAST UPDATE

Between the Druse and the Deep Blue Sea

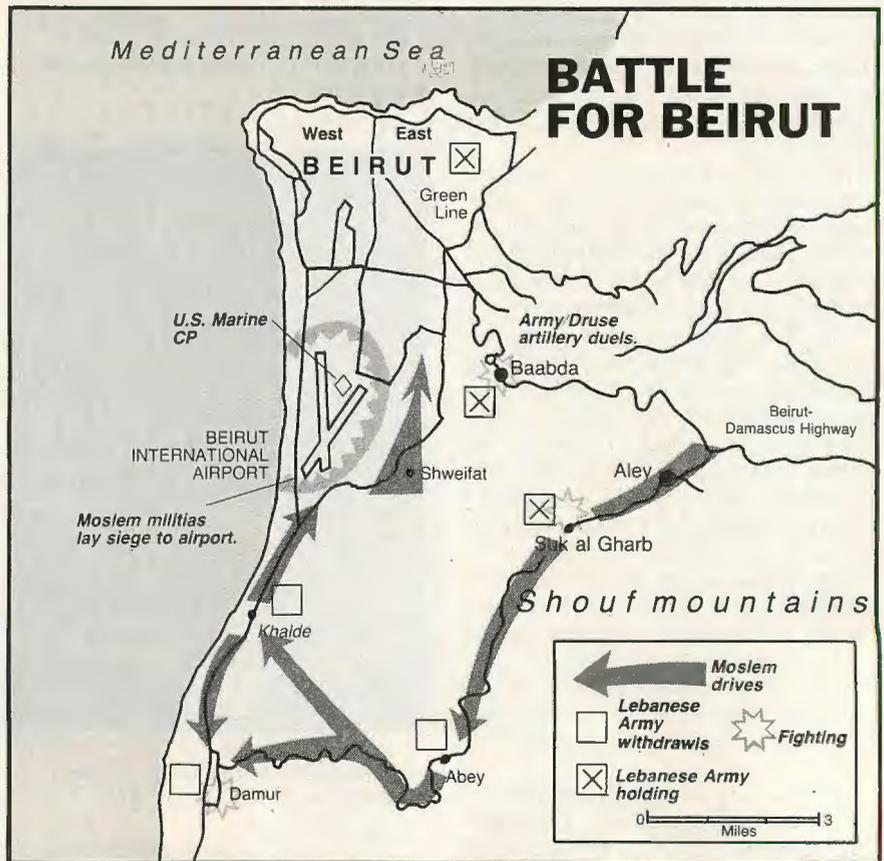
Text & Photos by Edward Rasen

“YOU have to take a stand somewhere,” said Hani Azzi as we sat on the porch of his father’s house, eating fresh Lebanese delicacies prepared by his mother. “Look up there,” he said, pointing at the nearby hills. “They are less than 2,000 meters away.”

I squinted up at the dun-colored, dust-covered hills to our rear. Azzi, a Christian, was referring to the Druze, Shi’ite and Sunni Moslem militias — aided, encouraged and supplied by Syrian-backed Palestinian guerrillas — who have encircled Jieh (pronounced Gee), the small, predominantly Christian enclave between Damour and Sidon, along Lebanon’s Mediterranean coast. From this perspective it was hard to believe his contention that the Christian families here are under virtual siege.

A fine mist hovered over the lush green lawn, irrigation from built-in sprinklers constructed by Hani’s father, who had seen similar systems during a visit to Los Angeles. A black Mercedes-Benz 450 SL sat in the driveway, framed by stately palm trees. The gentle, rhythmic roar of the sea, just a hundred meters away, helped to lull the senses. We could have been in Malibu except for the sporadic crackle of automatic weapons fire and the gutted shells of shattered houses which stood across the street.

Azzi shook his head, sighed and hitched at the holster which hung from his belt. The



CREDENTIALS EXTRAORDINAIRE

This latest report from Edward Rasen in Lebanon, where he has visited on a regular basis since the late 1970s, marks his fourth anniversary as an SOF contributor. SOF readers first met Rasen in the January 1981 edition through a comprehensive look inside war-torn Cambodia that included Rasen’s prose and photography. Articles by the University of

Southern California graduate have also appeared in *Playboy*, *Penthouse* and *New York* magazines, and have moved over the wires of United Press International. In addition, he worked as a cameraman, writer and producer for CBS News, ABC and the Public Broadcasting System in the 1960s and 70s. Besides Lebanon and Cambodia, Rasen has provided the public with stories of wars in Vietnam, Chad, Ethiopia and Nicaragua.





Christians in Lebanon would like to be left alone, he said. But he was fairly sure they never would be. Constant harassment by the various Moslem factions has placed their backs firmly against the wailing wall. Meanwhile, Azzi and his fellow Phalangists are convinced that no amount of weeping will pull the Christians out of their predicament. In Lebanon these days, the crying towel has been replaced by the Kalashnikov. Hani Azzi and others like him will have to fight if they want a peaceful return to their homes in Moslem-controlled areas of the country.

"We could leave," said Azzi, still wearing his Lebanese Forces' fatigue uniform and a 9mm pistol. "We have money. I had a very lucrative law practice in Sidon and my wife is a lawyer." She sat near him holding a young child in her arms while a second clutched at her dress. Azzis' 80-year-old father, the former chief of Lebanon's Judicial Police, offered a fine scotch whiskey with ice. His mother brought more food from the kitchen. "My father built this house. I was born here. My children were born here. Can I leave?" The question was rhetorical and gave some indication that there is more to the current conflict than merely a bloody feud between the haves and the have-nots.

It's difficult to grasp the real roots of what appears to be class-struggle or a low-intensity *jihad*. As a desultory kind of continuing abrasion, the turbulence in Lebanon has been punctuated by occasional explosions and personal tragedy following departure of the multi-national force and prior to the suicide bombing of the U.S. Embassy annex in September of last year. The last major factional fight had started on 7 February 1984 and ended three weeks later to the day when Israeli Defense Force (IDF) officers who remained in the area threatened all the militias with the full force of a substantial arsenal of modern weapons if they did not cease and desist from *violent territorial* bickering. No one wanted a repeat of the "Begin and the Jets" rock and roll show from the Summer of '82 and militiamen settled into a low-profile, neighborhood cat-and-mouse game. A couple of quick mortar rounds or the slap of a hastily-fired RPG mixed with some 12.7mm or .50-caliber machine-gun fire marked observance of a relatively-peaceful period in most of Lebanon's religiously integrated areas. One or all of the Druze, Shi'ite, Sunni or Palestinian militias usually took turns at popping any Christians who came in sight. The Christians rarely returned fire but that had little to do with ethics or a Biblical bent toward turning the other cheek. Ammo, previously provided in quantity by the IDF, was becoming a scarce commodity among the Lebanese Forces. In an effort to end the violence, the Israelis had slowed the supply pipeline to a trickle.

A militiaman in British cammies scans the city for anything unusual. His AKS hangs at his side.

THE BEIRUT BOMBERS

A person identifying himself as a member of *Jihad al Islami* (the Holy War of Islam), called a news agency in Beirut on 8 September 1984 and warned that the group would soon attack "a vital U.S. installation" in Lebanon. The caller said the action would be in response to a 6 September U.S. veto in the United Nations Security Council regarding a resolution calling for the withdrawal of all Israeli Defense Force units in south Lebanon and the lifting of all restriction on the movements of civilians in the same area.

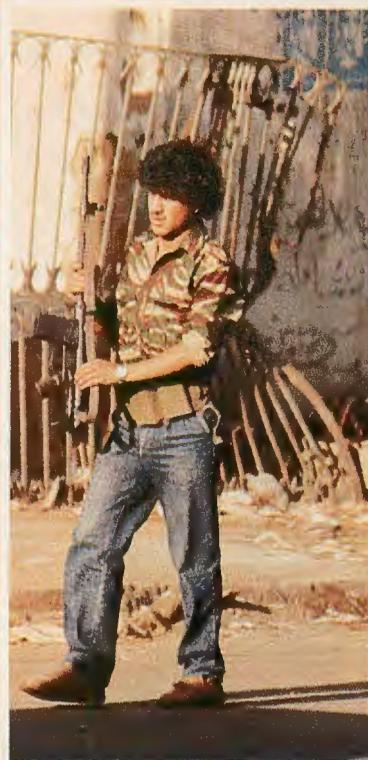
The group had previously claimed responsibility for the bombing on 18 April 1983 of the U.S. Embassy in West Beirut in which 63 persons were killed. They also master-minded the 23 October 1983 attack on the U.S. Marines' headquarters at Beirut International Airport which left 241 U.S. servicemen dead. And they were implicated in the bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait during December 1983. The caller should have been granted instant credibility.

The announced attack was carried out 20 September 1984 when a Dodge truck bearing fake diplomatic plates exploded near the U.S. Embassy annex located about seven miles from the city limits. Another U.S. facility in Lebanon bit the dust and took with it two American servicemen killed and four wounded.

Jihad al-Islami is a pro-Iranian fundamentalist Lebanese Shi'ite paramilitary group headquartered in Baalbek, an ancient city in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley near the Syrian border. Although controlled by the Syrian Army, Baalbek is also occupied by the Guardians of the Revolution, another fundamentalist Lebanese Shi'ite group, and Revolutionary Guard units from Iran. Israeli intelligence sources claim that representatives of these groups and others attended secret meetings during 1983 at Varno, Bulgaria, which were organized by the KGB under the banner of the Revolutionary Federation of the Arabian Peninsula.

Less than two years ago, Hussein Musawi and other dissident members of *al-Amal al-Islami* (better known as Amal), the Lebanese Shi'ite paramilitary organization headquartered in West Beirut, formed *Jihad al-Islami* in defiance of the "moderate political views" of Nabib Berri, the attorney who heads Amal. During and after the withdrawal of PLO and Syrian Army units from Beirut in late August and early September 1982, Berri maintained informal but close relations with the leaders of the Lebanese Forces, the predominantly Christian militia which controlled East Beirut.

Sources also claim that working through Dr. Ghassan Siblani, one of the



Amal guerrilla wanders through Galerie Semaan, West Beirut.

leaders of Amal's political bureau, Berri also established relationships with U.S. Marine commanders in Beirut. Berri and Siblani both speak excellent English and have lived in the United States. Although extremely popular among Shi'ites in West Beirut, Berri — for obvious reasons — was and is not well liked by pro-Iranian and fundamentalist Shi'ites.

While it is difficult for Berri to be anti-American, it is easy for Hussein Musawi, who comes from a large family of Iranian descent. In 1975, Hussein and other Shi'ite activists including the Ayatollah Khoemeini of Iran, signed an agreement at Sidon, Lebanon, pledging allegiance to the Islamic movement and calling for Islamic rule of the world. Apparently, during recent years, Hussein Musawi has not only been influenced by Khoemeini but by Sheik Mohammed Hussein Fadallah, one of Lebanon's leading Shi'ite scholars. Fadallah is a member of the Lebanese Assembly of Moslem Ulemas (scholars) which has very close relations with its counterpart group in Iran.

Fadallah preaches a strictly-fundamentalist, historically-rooted, pan-Moslem ideology which uses the Koran rather than political rhetoric to unite the Shia. As the Roman Catholic church used the Crusaders to fight the infidels, Fadallah encourages the fol-

lowers of Mohammed to rise against their enemies — which include everyone who is not a Moslem. Since the early 1960s he has been quietly promoting a concept taken from the Koran, which says the party of God will always be victorious. Fadallah is very dangerous. He is not a fanatic but he is a very logical and perceptive political strategist with a great sense of timing. He is firmly committed to long-term goals and unlike most diplomats or politicians, Fadallah is not seeking political office or personal gain.

The key to reaching his goals lies with *Hezbollah* (The Wrath of God), which is best described as a political trend rather than a group or party. It is in essence an informal alliance of Fadallah disciples who have infiltrated various social and political groups. Most are Lebanese Shi'ites by birth but proclaim themselves simply Moslems rather than Shi'ites. *Hezbollah* through its disciples has great influence on various groups including the Assembly of Moslem Ulemas, the Moslem Student's Union, the Shi'ite Scouts youth organization, the Guardians of the Revolution, *Jihad al-Islami*, and *Hezbo Dawa* which has strong influence on the militia and members of Amal.

Fadallah is a scholar; not a guerrilla leader. He offers religious and political guidance to those who share his goals rather than issuing orders for military operations. Hussein Musawi and *Jihad al-Islami* act in accordance with Fadallah's goals rather than at his direction. The organization has been functioning under Hussein Musawi's leadership as the special operations branch of *Hezbollah*. They are not a bunch of rag-head radicals and *Jihad al-Islami* only claims responsibility for extremely well organized and sophisticated operations such as the gas-enhanced bomb attacks on U.S. facilities.

Ahmed al Halaq, a Syrian intelligence officer, demolitions expert and high-ranking official in *Saiqa* (a PLO paramilitary group organized and controlled by the Syrian Army), is named as the primary operational link between *Jihad al-Islami* and the recent spate of bombings in Beirut. Caspar Weinberger, U.S. Secretary of Defense, says the bombing of the U.S. Marines' compound was conducted with "the sponsorship, knowledge, and authority of the Syrian Government."

Veteran Middle East observers speculate the most recent bomb attack at the U.S. Embassy annex was launched to support a Syrian claim that the Lebanese Army is unable to maintain security and therefore it is necessary for the *Syrian Army* — in a peacekeeping role — to once again occupy Beirut.

— Ed Rasen



"The situation is getting worse," said Azzi, nervously rubbing his fingers through his black beard. "The government doesn't protect us and the Israelis sit in Sidon [a few miles away] and do nothing to help us."

That's somewhat understandable. Jieh is geographically isolated from most areas still under control of the Lebanese Army and President Amin Gemayel's police units. The main highway from Beirut to Sidon has been cut and barricaded by the LF, under orders from the IDF, who hold a major choke-point just south of Damour at Saadiyat. Damour is controlled by Druze and Sunni militias. Khalde, the former coastal resort town between Damour and West Beirut, is controlled by the Druze, Amal (the Lebanese Shi'ite paramilitary organization), and Hezbollah (the pro-Iranian Lebanese Shi'ite fundamentalist group). Further north around Beirut International Airport, area control rests in the hands of Amal and Hezbollah factions. South of Jieh, the Israelis and the newly-created South Lebanon Army (SLA) which guards their flanks are firmly entrenched along the Awali River, just north of Sidon. The Christians in Jieh are surrounded and cut off by hostile or complacent forces.

The IDF doesn't help them because Israel is openly upset with Christian President Gemayel who abrogated the security agreement between the two countries in favor of an agreement with Syria to keep its forces out of Lebanon. He didn't have much choice. Gemayel would no longer be president if he didn't bow to Syrian demands. But that reality seems lost on the Israelis who apparently believe they can use the Christian population of Jieh as a bargaining chip in their efforts to secure a new security agreement. Continuing bloodshed and bloated corpses make a strong lever.

Azzi and his fellow Christians don't care much for playing pawns in the international struggle. "Sometimes I drink too much," he said gulping at his glass and refilling mine. "We cannot win...but sometimes you must fight even if you know you are going to lose." His young daughter, intimidated by my presence, cuddled between his knees and hid her face in his chest. "That is why I gave up my law practice," added Azzi as he embraced his daughter. "This is my home. I must fight for it."

Prestigious newspapers and newsmagazines regularly report that a "civil war" is being fought in Lebanon. That is patently false and simply a reflection of the inability of most Western observers to understand a situation that contains more grey than black or white. The majority of the factional fighting in Lebanon during the last 10 years has evolved from efforts by both Christians and Moslems to defend their homes and property. The so-called civil war began when Syrian-backed Palestinian guerrillas from the pro-Soviet Democratic Front for the Libera-

Leaning against a wall covered with slogans, a Mourabitoun guerrilla flashes the customary victory sign.

THE STRATEGIC SHOUF: CRADLE OF A CONFLICT

The Shouf Mountains east of Beirut have always composed a virtual Christian enclave overlooking Lebanon's capital city. The population of 250,000 was sprinkled through hillside villages dotted here and there with small Druze concentrations. That situation was not satisfactory for Druze activist Walid Jumblatt, who gazed with greedy eyes at the strategic mountain area. He began his quest for control of the Shouf in Aley, the largest city in the northern mountains.

It seemed a natural breeding ground for his insurrection since the population of Aley is predominantly Druze (until 1983 it was approximately two-thirds Moslem and one-third Christian). Unfortunately for Jumblatt's purposes, the Druze of Aley are from the Yazbaki clan which was not loyal to him. The Yazbaki are openly pro-American and did not approve of Jumblatt or the PSP's political and military activities. Had the peaceful Yazbaki been able to form their own militia, the situation in the Shouf Mountains might be different today. They were not able to muster military resistance and the PSP forcibly took control of Aley in 1982.

Various villages in the area fought sporadically but an Israeli Defense Force presence kept the confrontations from erupting into anything serious. During 1983, the IDF held control of three strategic hill masses in the area. They had moved into the Shouf in the Summer of 1982 on the bitter end of Operation Peace for Galilee which eliminated the Syrian Army and most of the PLO presence in southern Lebanon. They also took control of the coastal highway from Israel through Tyre, Sidon and Damour to the outskirts of West Beirut near the airport; the Beirut-Damascus highway from Beirut to Sofar, where Syrian Army Special Forces battalions were entrenched; and the high ground north of Ain Dara which overlooks the B-D highway. Bhamdoun, Aley, Baissour and Kfar Matta were firmly under their control.

U.S. Marines landed in East Beirut on 25 August 1982 to assist French Foreign Legion and Italian Army units deployed for the evacuation of PLO guerrillas trapped in West Beirut by the Israeli Army. The Marines departed on 10 September 1982 but returned just 19 days later following the massacre of Palestinians and other refugees at the Sabra and Chatila camps in West Beirut. The U.S. government exerted pressure on Israel to reduce its presence in the Beirut area and the Marines and the other members of the Multi-national

Peacekeeping Force were deployed throughout East and West Beirut. The Lebanese government, with the encouragement of the U.S., formally requested the assistance of the Marines to help facilitate redeployment of the shattered Lebanese Army with special emphasis on insuring peace in the strategic Shouf Mountains. The Marines began patrolling portions of East and West Beirut on 4 November 1982 and launched a Parris Island-style training program for Lebanese Army units in early 1983.

To relieve the Marines and continue the training effort, small detachments of Green Berets from 2nd Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group were sent to Lebanon. Meanwhile, relations between Israel and the U.S. continued to deteriorate and Lebanese President Amin Gemayel drew closer to the American government which had sent forces to help him restore order. Israeli forces were bitter and resentful about the situation, feeling they had done all the dirty work and were being asked to withdraw as foreigners took over.

Meanwhile the situation in the Shouf was also deteriorating. The Lebanese Forces and the Druze began skirmishing during early October, spreading terror through two villages in the Shouf near Bhamdoun. On 14 October serious fighting erupted near Kfar Matta, Abey, and Bahourta, along the road from Damour to Baissour. The IDF moved into the area and imposed a cease-fire but five days later they relinquished positions in Kfar Matta to a token Lebanese Army force of 50 soldiers with three tanks.

Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) units and Druze militiamen battled Christian Phalange forces along the Kfar Matta-Abey road and in Kaifoun near Souq el Gharb soon after the IDF withdrawal. On 31 October the Druze ambushed a Lebanese Army patrol near Aley and began shelling Souq el Gharb. The story of the Lebanese Army stand in this area was widely touted in the American press as evidence that the Lebanese government was on the comeback trail. Walid Jumblatt had suffered a set-back and needed backing for his Progressive Socialist Party, the political arm of the organized Druze resistance to the Gemayel government. He had been slighted before and was not about to let it happen again.

When Syrian and Palestinian units withdrew from West Beirut in late 1982, they left most of their heavy weapons and artillery pieces for use by various sympathetic groups including the Mourabitoun, Amal, the Arab Liberation Front and the Arab Socialist Union. The PSP was ignored and Jumblatt was not happy about being a weak sister.

Although PSP militiamen manned positions with Mourabitoun and ALF guerrillas along Beirut's "Green Line," they were — based on my personal observations — regularly insulted and threatened by their Arab comrades. Neither the Syrian army, the PLO or the left-wing Arab militias had much respect for the PSP militia. In reaction to such treatment, Druze warlord and PSP leader Jumblatt began a series of regular visits to Syria (despite the fact that his father had been assassinated by Syrian Secret Police) and embraced Syrian policies regarding Lebanon. The floodgates opened and the Syrian Army began supplying arms and ammunition to the PSP militia and Druze homeguard units. As the Druze/PSP militias escalated military actions, the Syrians increased the flow of arms and supplies.

Walid Jumblatt realized that it was in his best interest to exert pressure and attempt to undermine the government of Lebanon. He was hungry for power as a political broker in the Middle East. His primary competition was Nabib Berri, leader of Amal, the Lebanese Shi'ite paramilitary organization based in West Beirut.

While both men vied for Syrian favors, Jumblatt and Berri quickly formed an alliance against their enemies. PSP and Amal guerrillas eventually fought together in West Beirut against Sunni Moslem formations such as the Mourabitoun who were disenfranchised by the Syrians.

Very soon after this alliance was forged, Jumblatt found himself a significant power both in the Shouf and in Moslem West Beirut. President Gemayel realized he was facing formidable opposition and attempted to reach an accord with Jumblatt. His successful power-play explains why the external perimeter of the U.S. Embassy annex in West Beirut was guarded by 16 Amal and PSP militiamen — each paid \$2,000 a month by the U.S. State Department — prior to the second bombing of such a facility in September 1984.

Jumblatt's successes brought rejoicing in Damascus. Syria needed a supply line from Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, through the Shouf, to West Beirut so Amal could prevent the Lebanese Army from taking control of the city. The Druze were the key. Syria had to act fast because the Lebanese government was rapidly increasing the size of its army and purchasing large amounts of supplies and weapons from the United States. At Syria's order, the Druze went on the offensive, launching attacks throughout the Shouf and at Mtoule. The IDF essentially maintained their own counsel and kept pressure on the Gemayel government, hinting in July that it intended to withdraw all its units



The rotted carcass of a gutted building lies near Souq el Gharb on the road to Kaifoun.

from the Shouf. The area had become pivotal to the successful exertion of power by Lebanon's duly-elected government.

Senior U.S. military advisers in Lebanon, working with the Lebanese Army through the Office of Military Cooperation (OMC), were directly advising the Pentagon about the crucial situation in the Shouf. LTC Albert Baker, senior U.S. adviser and Vietnam veteran of service with the 101st Airborne and 5th Special Forces Group, said, "Any green second lieutenant could look at the map and see the tactical importance of the hills."

Maj. Alex Franco (also a 5th SF Grp Vietnam veteran) said that continual SITREPS were sent to Washington. The U.S. advisers wanted the Pentagon to advise Amin Gemayel from the highest levels of government that the Lebanese Army should take control of the Shouf. The U.S. military advisers helped Gen. Ibrahim Tannous, then commander of the Lebanese Army, develop a plan to secure the area but they claim the scheme was torpedoed by U.S. Middle East envoy Donald Rumsfeld, who thought he could negotiate a deal with Syria.

Syria wasn't dealing and the IDF continued to control the three strategic mountain-tops of the Shouf. By mid-August 1983, Lebanese Forces' intelligence had reliable information indicating an Israeli withdrawal in the immediate future. LRRPs began surreptitiously monitoring the Israeli positions and nearby Druze/PSP units.

Just after midnight on 3 September 1983, the IDF began Operation Millstone, withdrawing units from the Shouf and the outskirts of Beirut. The Druze immediately moved into their positions. Christian militiamen who also wanted to control the strategic redoubts fought a battle with the Druze forces on at least one hill and eventually took control following a six-hour battle. Lebanese Forces also attacked Druze militiamen at Kfar Matta and fought for nearly five

days to take charge of the strategic area.

On 4 September, Lebanese Forces surrounded the PSP stronghold at Aley while the PSP encircled Bhamdoun. LF units also overran PSP positions in Schweifat and Khalde, along the coast south of Beirut Airport. Israeli Air Force jets strafed a column of Syrian tanks, reportedly manned by PSP militiamen, attacking LF positions in Sofar. Fierce artillery and tank battles raged at Bhamdoun as the Druze/PSP militias assaulted LF positions. After two days of fierce fighting and heavy losses the Druze/PSP made a tactical retreat and Walid Jumblatt made a quick trip to Syria.

The tide of battle was about to turn. On 6 September 1983, the Syrian Army's 27th Artillery Battalion (Independent) stationed at Hammama, northwest of Sofar and the Beirut-Damascus highway, began shelling Bhamdoun with all 36 of its 130mm guns. Palestinian guerrillas from various groups including the PFLP, DFLP, PSF, PELP-GC, and Abu Moussa, began moving from the Bekaa Valley toward Bhamdoun. Heavy fighting erupted in and around Souq el Gharb.

Bhamdoun was lost on 7 September as the Lebanese Forces artillery units ran out of ammunition for their 155mm and 130mm guns and were unable to counter the Syrians. LF casualties numbered about 300 wounded and 50 killed.

Despite the loss at Bhamdoun, the organized Christian militia kept battling in the Shouf and sent 200 fresh troops including Kataeb Security Police (SKS) to reinforce the 700-man LF unit that had been fighting since 4 September. More than 3,500 LF militiamen were still fighting throughout the Shouf.

When Druze and PSP forces reinforced by Amal guerrillas captured Borjein and Ain el Houre, east of Jieh, the Lebanese Forces high-command diverted units from Baissour to the south. The decision proved disastrous. After two days of vicious fighting and four counterattacks, they recaptured the high ground in the area but suffered heavy losses in both troops and morale.

A decision was made to give Baissour and the Kabr Shmoun junction to the

Lebanese Army and then withdraw. Fouad Ali Nader says that he and other LF commanders expected the army to link with their units at Souq el Gharb, which would have made the Druze victory at Bhamdoun meaningless because West Beirut would have been isolated from the Shouf and Syrian support from the Bekaa.

But the Lebanese Army units gave up the strategic position during a probing attack by the Druze, and Palestinian guerrillas moved into Baissour. Amin Gemayel realized that things were not progressing as predicted and ordered the Lebanese Air Force into battle. On 16 September, five aircraft bombed PSP and Palestinian positions in the Shouf.

The situation was rapidly deteriorating. The following day, U.S. warships, in response to shelling by the PSP of the U.S. Ambassador's residence and the Lebanese Defense Ministry where U.S. advisers were based, fired five-inch guns at PSP positions in the Shouf.

The fighting continued to escalate. Heavy combat between the Lebanese Army and Shi'ite Amal militiamen erupted on 23 September in the southern suburbs of West Beirut near the airport. The United States ordered the battleship *New Jersey*, equipped with 16-inch guns, into position off the coast of Beirut. Staring into those huge muzzles, the factions agreed to the first of many temporary cease-fires.

Fighting continued to flare up in West Beirut and the Shouf during the following months. More than 200,000 Christians evacuated the area as the PSP/Druze/Palestinian coalition gradually took control.

The Syrians began pouring arms, supplies and terrorists into West Beirut and contradiction of reports to the Pentagon from U.S. advisers in Lebanon by area politicians resulted in a major tragedy.

On 23 October 1983, a U.S. Marine Corps HQ building at Beirut International Airport was destroyed and 241 U.S. servicemen were killed by a single terrorist driving a bomb-laden truck.

Lebanese Army G-2 officers told me that four or five days before the attack they received information that trucks carrying bombs would be driven from Baalbek in the Bekaa Valley to Beirut via the Shouf Mountains.

The Marines are no longer in Beirut. The Israelis are south of the Awali River and withdrawing their troops from Lebanon. The Lebanese Army fell apart during February 1984, losing all of the Shouf except Souq el Gharb. West Beirut is in the hands of Amal, and 3,500 Palestinian guerrillas have infiltrated the city. Amin Gemayel regularly meets with Hafez Assad. The Lebanese Forces are less than a third of their former size and the people of Jieh are fighting for their lives.

— Ed Rasen



His loyalties clearly marked by his T-shirt, a Lebanese Forces militiaman lifts captured B-10 rocket launchers out of a truck.



tion of Palestine (DFLP) murdered innocent civilians during the consecration of a Christian church in East Beirut on 13 April 1975. Later that day, Christians attacked a bus carrying armed Palestinian guerrillas and left-wing Lebanese sympathizers as it tried to enter Ain Rummaneh, a predominantly Christian area of East Beirut. In both cases, the Palestinians had illegally entered Lebanon from Syria. Despite breathless reports to the contrary in American media, Lebanese were not fighting other Lebanese. Everyone involved was either defending or extracting revenge on an *outside* faction that had invaded their area. That's when the flame under the bubbling cauldron was turned up.

Syria invaded Lebanon in 1975 disguised as the Palestine Liberation Army. Despite Yasser Arafat's posturing, the PLA was organized, trained, equipped and commanded by the Syrian Army. "We did not consult the Palestinians, nor did we consult the nationalist parties," Syria's President Hafez Assad later confessed. "We decided to go in under the name of the PLA." During December of the year when most Lebanese Christians were preparing for Christmas, 2,000 PLA soldiers were infiltrated into Lebanon. They joined with PLO guerrilla formations and left-wing Lebanese militias under control from Damascus. During mid-January 1976, they launched a coordinated attack against Jieh and Damour, which were then predominantly Christian-populated towns.

On 20 January, following a week-long siege and intensive artillery barrages, both towns were overrun, pillaged and nearly destroyed. At least 500 people, including women and children, were massacred. Despite the healing hand of time, the people of Jieh have not forgotten the incident. It's different with the people of Damour. They were all killed or forced to flee for their safety.

Lebanese Christians — particularly Phalangist militiamen — are hardly free from guilt in killing Moslems over the past 10 years. But the record indicates they clearly have been more tolerant of abuse than radical Moslem factions. That has not come to light due primarily to the September 1982 incidents at the Sabra and Chatila refugee camps in West Beirut.

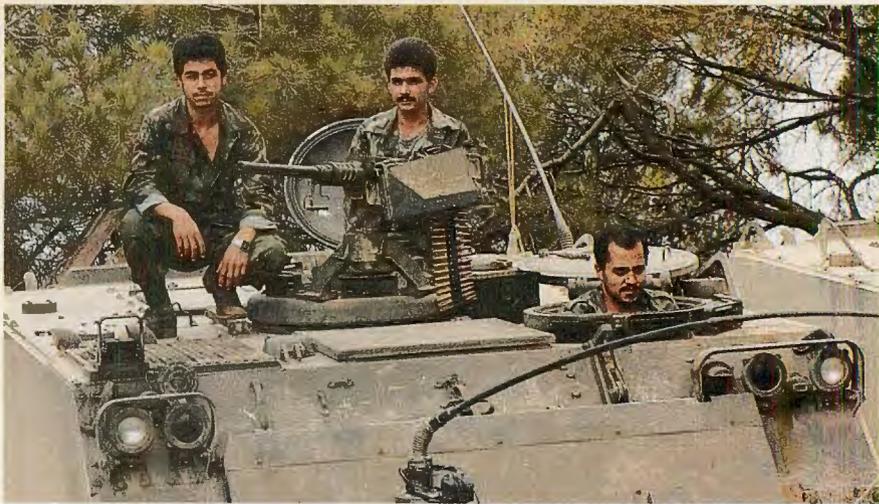
Phalangist militiamen — there is continuing speculation that they were directed if not led by IDF agents — marched into the camps and began a wanton slaughter of refugees presumed to be families of PLO fighters who had left Beirut under a U.S.-negotiated agreement. In fact, many of those killed were simply homeless Lebanese who had fled fighting in their neighborhoods. The Lebanese Forces, most of whom had nothing to do with the Sabra and Chatila massacres, have never been able to recover from the stigma in world

Brandishing pictures of their leader, Yasser Arafat, members of the Palestinian Liberation Army's Hatim Brigade retreat from Beirut in August 1982.

opinion.

It's easy to understand why people would forget what happened during the Moslem militia attack on Damour in that light, but the fact remains that the entire population of the town — some 20,000 people, virtually all Christians — were forced to evacuate during the PLO/PLA attacks in 1976. The town remained a PLO base and training center until June 1982 when it was again destroyed and overrun by the Israeli Army. Small numbers of Christians returned to Damour in late 1982 and began rebuilding their homes. Other Christians returned to

Lebanese soldiers of the 10th Bde pose on their M113 APC during a pause in fighting at Souq el Gharb.



RDX: THE DEADLY RECIPE FOR DESTRUCTION

Maybe they should add a line to the "Welcome to Beirut" sign that greets people who disembark at the city's international airport. A handy message might read: "Let all those who enter here beware the bomb."

On 14 September 1982, Lebanese president-elect Bashir Gemayel was killed by a bomb just a week before his inauguration. The Israeli Defense Forces headquarters in Lebanon was destroyed and many senior officers were killed by a bomb during November 1982. The U.S. Embassy in Beirut was crushed by a bomb blast which killed 63 people on 18 April 1983. The headquarters of the U.S. Marine Battalion Landing Team was leveled by a bomb killing 241 troops on 23 October 1983.

And on 20 September 1984 the temporary American Embassy annex located seven miles northeast of Beirut was heavily damaged in a suicide bomb attack which killed two U.S. servicemen and wounded four others.

Disregarding the wanton violence and suicidal fanaticism that characterized each of these car- or truck-bomb attacks, there is a common thread which marks them all as the work of well-trained terrorists who have very active links to the communist-bloc countries of the world. The common denominator is Hexogen.

This explosive, better known as RDX in America, is a plastic substance four times more powerful than industrial dynamite. It is primarily a military explosive with a few specialty applications in the oil industry. RDX or Hexogen appears on the U.S. State Department's list of restricted trade items and all shipments of the explosive are tightly controlled.

"There is strict control over granting export licenses in Europe," says J. E.

Dolan, Secretary General of the Federation of European Explosives Manufacturers, "with real authority exercised in most cases by defense ministries." The United States, Canada, France, Sweden, Israel and China are the only current sources for RDX but Western intelligence analysts indicate the Soviet Union and East Germany manufacture their own version of the deadly explosive. Israeli intelligence sources also indicate Egypt is now manufacturing small quantities of Hexogen.

While experts are still sifting through the rubble remaining from the 20 September attack on the temporary American Embassy in Beirut, it has become clear from investigation of earlier attacks that RDX was used in the tragic bombing of the Marine CP at Beirut airport. Yosef Bitar, Lebanon's top explosives expert (he has personally disarmed more than 2,000 bombs of all types since 1975), says the truck which drove through the gates at the Marine compound in 1983 contained 660 pounds of RDX enhanced with gas and primed with PETN boosters or detonation cord.

Lebanese intelligence officers say they are certain that food and souvenir vendors with access to the Marine headquarters scouted the area for pro-Iranian Lebanese Shi'ite Moslems who carried out the attack. Lebanese sources also blame Iranian Revolutionary Guards based near Baalbek in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley for helping to ready the vehicle which carried a bomb actually assembled in Syria.

There has been continued speculation, especially among Lebanese intelligence officers, that a radio transmitter was also placed inside the BLT headquarters designed to detonate the explosive device even if the driver — who was rigged with an electrical "suicide switch" — was killed before he could employ his trigger.

Explosives expert Bitar also believes

vendors placed rags impregnated with RDX inside the U.S. Embassy prior to the attack to enhance the blast. At least one source who survived the attack denies this theory and insists propane cylinders stored in the kitchen of the building exploded and increased the shattering effect of the bomb. Sources who helped conduct the stringent investigation following the attack theorize that the bomb was detonated by a remote transmitter located in a nearby building. Lebanese experts have previously indicated they believe the driver of the truck held two electrical contacts tightly clutched in his hand. As long as the contacts were closed the electric firing circuit remained safe. When the driver released his hand — as he would when shot or disturbed by a crash — the contacts were released and the firing circuit functioned to detonate his explosive cargo.

Whatever the real story on triggering the device which killed 241 U.S. servicemen in Beirut, it's clear that the bomb was gas-enhanced. Such exotic RDX explosive devices first started appearing regularly in Lebanon during 1982. Yosef Bitar claims to have seen the first examples of this explosive technology in 1979. Lebanese intelligence officers believe East German technicians are either preparing the bombs for terrorist use in the Middle East or training Syrian Army officers to do it themselves.

Only explosives experts with a great deal of practical experience can prepare a gas-enhanced bomb. Even American military demolition experts are not trained to prepare the devices due to the potential for disaster. The bomb must be prepared so that the gas cylinders are detonated first, thus creating a cloud into which the RDX is fired. It is the gas cloud that so drastically enhances the blast effect of the bomb.

— Ed Rasen & Dale Dye



Naami, a mixed Christian and Shi'ite town just northeast of Damour which had not been completely destroyed during the attacks.

But peace — that fragile commodity in the turbulent Middle East — was not in the cards. Following the Israeli withdrawal and the disintegration of the Lebanese Army's 4th Brigade at nearby Kfar Matta, Shi'ite (Amal) and Druze militias overran the area in February 1984 and the Christians once again were forced to flee their homes. These days they are contemplating a comeback.

Most of the fighters manning the frontline Christian positions at Saadiyat, just south of Damour, are from Naami. On a clear day they use binoculars to spot Druze and Shi'ite militiamen sitting in the houses they once owned. The level of anger and resentment remains high here. There is a sense of offended dignity. Christian militiamen are not occupying Druze or Shi'ite homes at Saadiyat. Their commanders do not allow them to drive into nearby Jieh and murder Moslem civilians and take over their homes. The Shi'ites have done all of those things to the Christian population.

Given the tension in the area and the potential for continued violence, Druze and Shi'ite civilians are not flocking to Damour and Naami to rebuild or reoccupy *their* houses either. The surrounding farms and fields are empty and barren, as is the fertile Damour Valley. Even six months after the Israeli-imposed ceasefire, only Druze, Amal, and Arab Liberation Front (ALF) guerrillas occupy Damour and the surrounding area. It is literally a No Man's Land and no man lives here long if he is not armed. That problem is handled by Syria for the Moslem militias. The Christians in the Jieh area *are not* armed or supplied by Israel, the United States or any other foreign power. They stand alone with captured weapons or those they retained from the glory days when the IDF signed the *check* for the Christian Phalangists.

Nabib Berri, the leader of Amal, and Walid Jumblatt, the Druze leader, both openly embrace Hafez Assad, the president of Syria, and act on his behalf in Lebanon. Their militias carry out activities in the area according to Syrian plans and desires. Ultimately, those *are one* and the same: total control of Lebanon.

The Druze and Shi'ite militias get their arms and ammunition from Syria which in turn is armed and supplied by the Soviet Union or other communist-bloc countries. There is ample evidence of that available from any U.S. Marine who served in Beirut. As recently as February 1984, Druze militiamen with Syrian/Soviet arms and ammo were shelling Marine positions at Beirut's airport. It's clear that Syrian-armed Shi'ite terrorists blew up the U.S. Embassy and

Continued on page 124

Anticipation of enemy fire sends Lebanese militiamen to the ground behind their patrol leader. Frequent fire fights keep Lebanese forces on their toes.



THE M16A2: THE FINAL VERDICT

Text & Photos by Peter G. Kokalis

One last high-pitched report bent the afternoon dust-devils as a bullet struck the berm at 250 yards.

"Well, that's it."

After three days in parching hundred-degree wind, the four testers didn't even cheer. Besides, we still had to fire for group, blow one last half-mag through the chronometer, and measure barrel erosion.

We weren't happy. But we were relieved. Over 6,000 rounds had gone down the spout, and the biggest civilian test of the free world's most important new small arm was done.

M16A2: the military technology story of the '80s.

Trying to beat SOF's experts into print, virtually every gun magazine or military-oriented medium has whipped out a story of one sort or another on the son of the much-maligned M-16 service rifle. Others have told you how it feels, how it looks, how it shoots. . . . But every other article has been based on the easily-available, semi-auto AR-15A2, or firing demos staged by Colt or the U.S. military.

That's just not good enough for a weapon that's destined to accompany our fighting men into combat for at least the next generation or two. Such superficial treatment has created a storm of controversy over the quality of the M-16A2 rifle that's devisive, counter-productive and unprofessional. With this in-depth test and evaluation report, we hope to correct all that once and for all.

SOF's Peter G. Kokalis — formerly of U.S. Army Technical Intelligence — bought the first M16A2 delivered to a civil-

ian. At our direction, the world-renowned author and weapons scientist was told to conduct a duplication of the Department of Defense official 6,000-round endurance test. Ammo was gathered, magazines cleaned, and a Black Canyon, Ariz., range reserved for three days.

Every day, firing began when the range opened, and the assault rifle's roar stopped just long enough for Mil-spec cooling between cycles. The desert summer tested weapon and technical team to the limit. Over \$2,000 worth of ammunition was stuffed into 20- and 30-round magazines. Although it was time-consuming and expensive, we felt the test had to be done.

To avoid bias and single-source problems with our M16A2 test, SOF sent Bill Guthrie, director of editorial research, to observe the test and verify results. Guthrie checked every malfunction, read velocity from the chronograph and performed all barrel erosion measurements. No piece of the body of data that made up the report came from one tester. The 'A2 test is too important.

This vital report is the longest military small arms article ever printed in Soldier of Fortune. This exhaustive technical account of the private-sector test of America's new battle rifle is presented uncut, with full scientific data, so SOF readers will know what DOD knows about the M16A2 — The Eds.



BORN in controversy, America's M16 service rifle seems destined to live — at least for some time to come — in that same angry clamor. Muzzle-energy fetishists and armchair experts, like angry bulldogs, just won't let go of their belief that the M16 will never be anything more than a plastic toy. Fortunately for the American fighting man and all the allies who will eventually end up with the M16A2 rifle, the facts don't support such conclusions. This study should finally demonstrate that for SOF

M16A2: Small arms scandal or military masterpiece? America's battle rifle for the end of the 20th century must be the biggest firearms story of the '80s.
Photo: Peter G. Kokalis

with its 4.7mm caseless ammunition. Enter the M16 PIP (Product Improved Program): A joint venture among Colt, the Marine Corps and Army which commenced in 1979.

Within nine months Colt submitted its first proposal on the improved rifle. The M16A2 was approved for service use by the USMC in September, 1982. It was type-classified (adopted) by the U.S. Army in November, 1982. The first 1,500 rifles were delivered to the USMC Marksmanship Training Unit (MTU), Quantico, Va., in January, 1984. Major deliveries to the U.S. Army will start by mid-1985.

Canada has adopted the M16A2 to replace its aging 7.62mm FN FALs. The

81,500 Canadian M16A2 rifles will be manufactured by Diemaco, Inc., Kitchener, Ontario, with full-auto instead of three-round burst. Canadian 'A2s will have hammer-forged barrels and 30-round plastic magazines. A good source alleges the Canadian government will pay \$1,300 per gun for the special run.

The M16A2 rifle retains the same method of opera-

tion as its predecessor. After firing a round, the projectile passes the gas port permitting gas to flow back through a stainless steel tube and a so-called bolt carrier key into the hollow interior of the bolt carrier. As the carrier moves rearward, a cam slot cut into the carrier turns the bolt's cam pin, which causes the bolt to rotate clockwise, freeing the eight locking lugs from their abutments in the barrel extension. The carrier's momentum draws the bolt rearward at a slightly reduced velocity.

There is no primary extraction and the extractor withdraws the cartridge from the chamber. The spring-loaded bump-type ejector emerges from the left of the bolt face and rotates the empty case, after it has cleared the chamber, around the extractor claw and out the ejection port of the upper receiver body. The bolt carrier assembly continues rearward, compressing the recoil spring and cocking the hammer.

The buffer and recoil spring return the carrier and a fresh round is stripped from

the magazine. All forward bolt motion stops after the round is chambered. The carrier continues forward to contact the rear face of the barrel extension and its cam slot turns the cam pin which rotates the bolt and its lugs anti-clockwise into the locked position.

Direct gas action without a piston was taken from the Swedish Ljungman AG42 rifle. The M16's trigger mechanism is based on that of the M1 Garand.

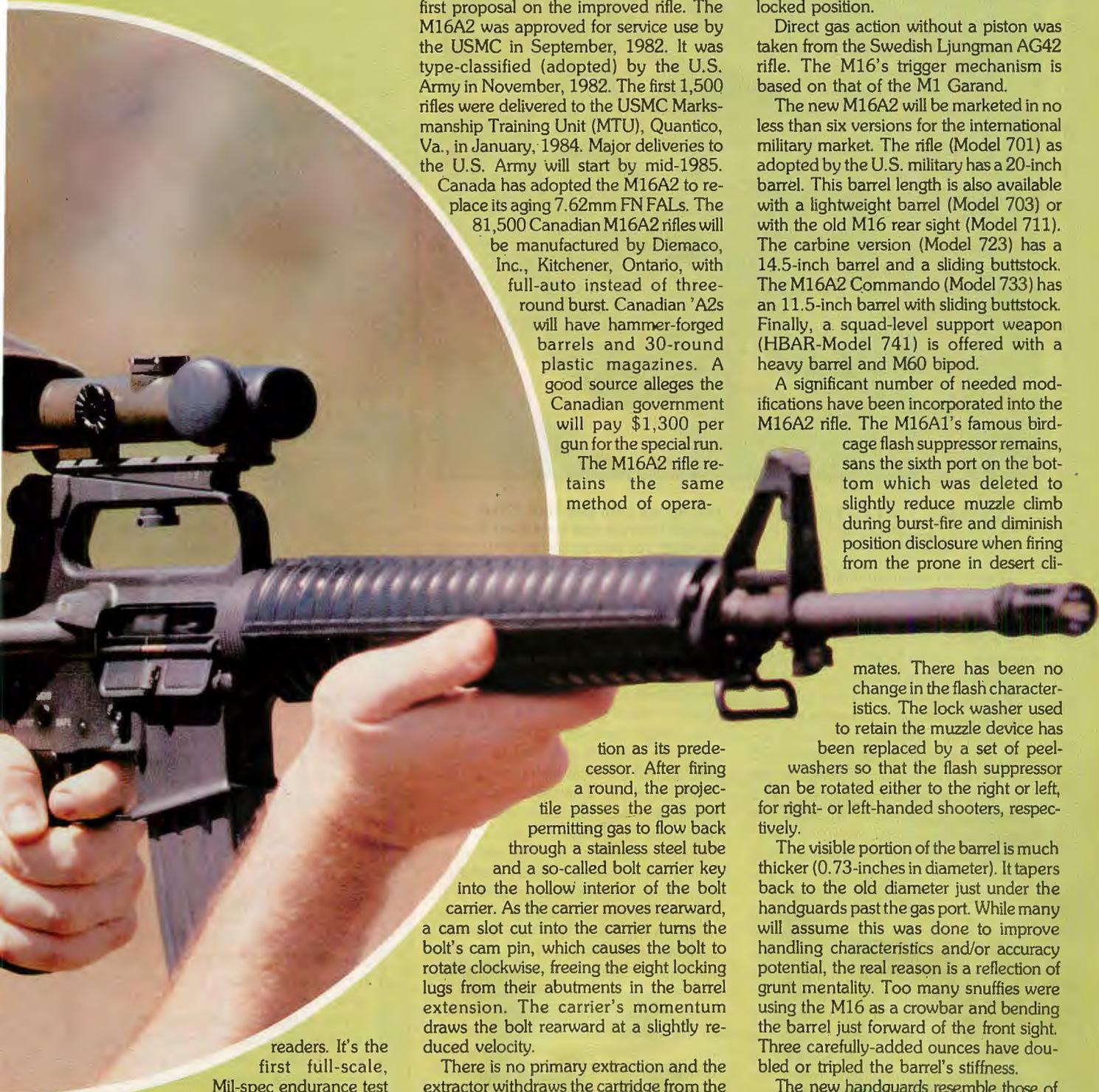
The new M16A2 will be marketed in no less than six versions for the international military market. The rifle (Model 701) as adopted by the U.S. military has a 20-inch barrel. This barrel length is also available with a lightweight barrel (Model 703) or with the old M16 rear sight (Model 711). The carbine version (Model 723) has a 14.5-inch barrel and a sliding buttstock. The M16A2 Commando (Model 733) has an 11.5-inch barrel with sliding buttstock. Finally, a squad-level support weapon (HBAR-Model 741) is offered with a heavy barrel and M60 bipod.

A significant number of needed modifications have been incorporated into the M16A2 rifle. The M16A1's famous bird-cage flash suppressor remains, sans the sixth port on the bottom which was deleted to slightly reduce muzzle climb during burst-fire and diminish position disclosure when firing from the prone in desert cli-

mates. There has been no change in the flash characteristics. The lock washer used to retain the muzzle device has been replaced by a set of peel-washers so that the flash suppressor can be rotated either to the right or left, for right- or left-handed shooters, respectively.

The visible portion of the barrel is much thicker (0.73-inches in diameter). It tapers back to the old diameter just under the handguards past the gas port. While many will assume this was done to improve handling characteristics and/or accuracy potential, the real reason is a reflection of grunt mentality. Too many snuffies were using the M16 as a crowbar and bending the barrel just forward of the front sight. Three carefully-added ounces have doubled or tripled the barrel's stiffness.

The new handguards resemble those of the M16A1 carbine, the Commando model and early factory literature depictions of both the M16 rifle and the Colt HBAR. As the upper and lower halves are identical, spare parts inventories can be reduced accordingly. They are more comfortable than the previous triangular cross-section handguards. Improved handguards and heavier barrel have increased the rifle's sustained fire capability by raising the probable cook-off limit by 20 rounds to 160 rounds. The hand-



readers. It's the first full-scale, Mil-spec endurance test of the M16A2 conducted by an independent civilian authority.

By 1978 most of the M16A1 rifles in the U.S. inventory had been worn out from use as training weapons. Many had fired more than 50,000 rounds. The need for new weapons was apparent and urgent. Something was required to bridge the supposed 20-year gap when the millennium would commence with something as wonderful as a fully-perfected H&K G11



YEAH... BUT IS IT LETHAL?

Along with many others I've heard from over the months since SOF published initial comments on the M16A2 in the September 1984 issue, I've had to take exception to some of the criticism leveled at the lethality of our newly-adopted service rifle. I feel qualified to act as spokesman for proponents of the weapon since I was directly involved in evaluating both the XM16E2 and a pre-production M16A2 at the Marine Corps Development and Education Command (MCDEC) in Quantico, Va., during August 1983.

You may have been unaware that the Commandant of the Marine Corps himself directed MCDEC authorities to compare SS109/M855, M193 and M80 7.62mm NATO ammunition for lethality prior to adding his vote for adoption of the M16A2. Though the official test results are classified, reliable sources and my own independent testing indicate that SS109 ammunition "tumbles" just as quickly as M193, usually breaking in two at the cannellure within four inches of gelatin. Given that, SS109 ammunition should produce explosive type wounds in targets out to nearly 200 meters.

Beyond this range, the SS109 has 50 percent more Kinetic Energy (KE) than M193 ammo at 400 meters and 100 percent more KE at 600-800 meters. Say what you will for or against the necessity of engaging targets out to these ranges, the fact remains that

During the 18th and 36th 120-rd. cycles, the rifle was held away from shoulder for free recoil, to test energy reserve.

when you must, you want effective lethality.

The SS109 round provides that for the reasons cited and because it has more surface area through which to transmit its energy since it is 0.163 inches longer than the 55-grain M193 projectile. According to test results, it can "punch a hole in steel plate at 500 yards" and still destabilize rapidly in tissue due to its hard penetrator (over 50 on the Rockwell C scale), a .315 ballistic coefficient, and the use of a thin jacket material which ruptures easily when submitted to 5,200 r.p.s. imparted to it by the A2's one-in-seven twist. Furthermore, the steel penetrator is less dense than lead which moves the bullet's center of gravity behind its center of form, a concept familiar to ballistic technicians since the invention of the Spitzer Bullet in 1898. The science was originally perfected by the British in their MK VII .303 bullet and more recently employed by the Soviet designers of the 5.45x39mm round.

The USMC and Army RDF units who receive the A2 will be equipped with one of the best and most lethal battle rifles ever adopted by any armed force. The lethality, accuracy and penetration of the A2 firing SS109/M855 ammunition has been well documented.

— Andy Tillman

guards are retained by a tapered slip ring, which was already in the system 14 years ago on the XM177E2. Joy in the barracks. No longer will you need four screwdrivers to pry off the handguards.

The pistol grip now has deep longitudinal grooves along its rear face and a finger swell one inch below the trigger guard. It's interchangeable with that of the M16A1 and, in fact, Colt seems to have exhausted their inventory of the older pistol grips since the new style was installed on all 4,000 M16A1 rifles recently sold to El Salvador.

The front sight-post is square and adjusted only for initial zero, which is now done at the Colt factory. This change was requested by Marine marksmanship experts who believe it offers an improved sight picture.

The new rear sight was also requested by the Marines, who first saw it on the old M16 light machine gun. It is a flip-type peep with two apertures calibrated for M855 ammunition. Flipped forward, the large aperture (0.197 inches in diameter), marked "0-2," is brought into view for ranges out to 200 meters, low light levels or moving targets. When firing within this range, the elevation knob should be set to "8/3" with the sight base at its lowest position. Flipped back, the peep sight brings the small aperture (0.70 inches in diameter) into view for ranges of 300 to 800 meters. A small indicator line

ROCK 'N' ROLL REPORTER

SOF readers who saw this month's cover blurb on the 'A2 didn't need to read the byline: They knew it was Kokalis. Peter G. Kokalis, SOF's military small arms editor, has the right tickets punched to do the first civilian endurance test of the U.S. Armed Forces' battle rifle.

A graduate of Northwestern University, Kokalis studied in the Medill School of Journalism and ran the student publishing company's photo lab to work his way through school. He later enlisted in the U.S. Army where he did one hitch in technical intelligence.

Pete began collecting machine guns while working as a real estate developer in Phoenix. Interest in rattle-guns even helped motivate him through a Master of Science degree from Arizona State University.

Kokalis' training and interests are expressed in his article's unique blend of technology, history and the view of someone who's seen the elephant. Soldiers and scientists alike have applauded Kokalis' presentations of his small arms tests.

We think Pete's just the best practicing firearms journalist in the world.



ARMY WANTS M16A3

The U.S. Army is currently exploring modifications of the newly type-classified M16A2 rifle to accept optical sighting equipment. And it wants the often-criticized carrying handle removed.

Scopes mounted on the carrying handle do not permit a proper cheek-weld (spot-weld) on the M16 butt-stock. And the Army says the luggage-type handle on top of the rifle makes it too easy for troops to avoid carrying the weapon combat-ready at all times. Project managers in the Department of the Army now see removal of the handle and installation of an optical sight with emergency iron sights as the answer to these problems.

Both collimator (devices that take advantage of human eyes' natural alignment by giving the conventional sighting eye an illuminated dot which projects to point of impact in the weak eye's field of view) and conventional telescopic sights are being tested. Scopes of the low-power 1.5x Steyr AUG type and more sophisticated concepts — such as the British Sight Unit, Small Arms, Trilux (SUSAT) are all in the running.

The 4x SUSAT scope would be an attractive choice. Presently fitted to the Enfield Individual Weapon and Light Support Weapon, SUSAT represents the results of 25 years of experience and refinement. Designed by RARDE (Royal Armament Research and Development Establishment, SUSAT has performed admirably during reliability tests in harsh environments during the UK Ordnance Board trials. The sight is fitted with a small acrylic aiming pointer — illuminated by a tritium-activated light source — to allow use under poor light conditions.

Latest word is that the Cobra Scope military optical sight (manufactured by Swarovski Optik, Hall, Tirol, Austria) is heavily favored for the Army's replacement for the 'A2. The Cobra Scope is a conventional, light-weight, compact,

According to SOF's sources, this is roughly what the M16A3 will look like. Carrying handle is out, and iron sights are for emergencies.

waterproof, shockproof rifle scope available with a variety of reticles. Unlike the SUSAT there is no tritium element, and it doesn't need batteries.

The Army intends to provide night-vision capability as well. But we'll have to wait to see what form that will take.

If the current tests demonstrate significantly increased hit potential (which I'm sure they will) the Army variant "M16A3" will soon become a reality. M16A1 rifles due for overhaul will be brought up to the required Army specs. Any M16A2 rifles delivered before adoption of the third-generation variant would be retrofitted. All of the

other modifications incorporated in the M16A2 will be retained.

M16A3 is our unofficial designation for this development. We chose it because it represents a logical numerical relationship to old models in the type-classification system the U.S. military has previously used. We don't have any idea what the '16 variant the Army is pressing for might officially be titled after type-classification, but a Colt Firearms source recently denied any knowledge of an officially designated M16A3 variant.

— Peter G. Kokalis



Maj. Gen. Wm. G. Carson, Jr., Director of Material Branch, HQ, USMC, accepts M16A2 rifle from Guy C. Shafer, Executive Vice President of Colt Industries at 12 April 1984 dedication ceremony. Photo: Colt Industries

matches up with the windage calibration lines on the back of the sight base. One audible click of the windage knob moves the sight 0.4 minute right or left. With the small aperture in use, the elevation knob should be set at the range required: 8/3 low for 300m, 4 for 400m, 5 for 500m, 7 for 700, and 8/3 high for 800m. Audible clicks between the main settings will raise or lower the elevation by approximately

one minute of angle. (Elevation is graduated to fit the M855 projectile's trajectory path.) The new M16A2 rear sight is easily adjusted and will be appreciated by riflemen trained in its proper use. I hope it will help to re-establish the rifle marksmanship training so badly needed in the U.S. Army. As things stand right now, the Marines produce the only riflemen who are regularly trained to make full and

effective use of the vastly improved sighting system.

The M16A2 upper receiver casting has also incorporated a case deflector to the rear of the ejection port which throws empty cases clear of left-handed shooters. In semi-automatic fire the ejection pattern has been altered five or six degrees forward by this deflection hump.

The spring-loaded retaining catch on



A most discussed (and often disputed) feature of the M16A2 is the three-shot burst control consisting of a simple and durable ratchet with an over-running clutch.

the ejection port's dust cover has been strengthened and enlarged. The cover's latch-pin is no longer retained by the slip-washer that so often disappeared at the wrong time. The first 2,000 M16A2 rifles were delivered with the old-style dust cover.



The forward bolt assist has been changed from a casting to a screw machine component with a button-like shape and concentric rings. I have never once personally used or observed anyone using the forward bolt assist in a battlefield. When I inquired of Colt officials why this feature was retained, I was informed that no one requested its removal. And so mutations often pass into the orderly cycle of evolution.

A most discussed (and often disputed) feature of the M16A2 is the three-shot

Steiner Scope lends accuracy, but head-high posture exaggerates recoil.



M16: FACT AND FICTION

The M16 (originally called the AR-15) is a creature of Eugene Stoner, then-chief engineer for Armalite, a division of Fairchild Aircraft. The AR-15 was essentially a scaled-down version of Stoner's AR-10 (see "Full Auto," SOF, August '83). A small quantity of AR-15 rifles were delivered to Ft. Benning for test and evaluation against the M14 on 31 March 1958. In a simulation of combat environments, the M16 proved to be almost three times as reliable as the M14. But Gen. Maxwell Taylor, the Army Chief of Staff, vetoed any further CONARC development of the AR-15 in favor of continued procurement of the M14. Fairchild, disenchanted with the AR-15 program, sold the entire AR-15 package to Colt in December 1959.

The AR-15 was tested in Vietnam by the Defense Department in the summer of 1962, under the code-name Project AGILE. The AGILE report was more than enthusiastic, as great claims were made for the .223 cartridge's killing power, and the improved handling, reliability, durability and ease of maintenance of the AR-15 over the M14. A favorable cost-effectiveness report followed from the DOD Comptroller's Office.

The anti-M14 group now had an alternative to rally around. A number of Pentagon agencies entered the fray and began comparing the AR-15 and M14. A comparative evaluation between the two rifles was held at Aberdeen Proving Ground late in 1962. The results were ambivalent.

A comparative lethality and wound-ballistics test at Edgewood Arsenal stated that the earlier Project AGILE report of the .223's killing power was a gross exaggeration. The official Army reply to Secretary of Defense McNamara's order for the comparative examination of the two rifle systems flatly concluded that "...only the M14 is

acceptable for general use in the U.S. Army. . . ."

But too much evidence pointed to an opposite conclusion. An Army Inspector-General's investigation decided that the Army had rigged some of the tests against the AR-15. As a consequence McNamara terminated procurement of the M14 rifle on 23 January 1963 and announced a "one-time buy" of 85,000 AR-15 rifles for the Army and 19,000 for the Air Force. An entirely new weapon system called SPIW (Special Purpose Infantry Weapon, firing small-caliber cartridges using steel-flechette multiple projectiles imbedded in plastic sabots) was believed to be at hand.

SPIW never materialized, and intensification of the war by 1965 caused Gen. Westmoreland to request the M16A1 rifle for all ground combat elements in Vietnam. Procurement was accomplished by August 1966. In December of that year, the U.S. Army type-classified the M16A1 rifle and it replaced all .30-caliber rifles in its inventory, except those eventually retained for use as sniper rifles.

By the spring of 1967, Colt's bed of M16 roses started to rot as reports of widespread malfunctions in combat began to appear in media hungry for every tainted tidbit about the war in Vietnam. The press gleefully printed melodramatic letters supposedly written by GIs whose comrades had fallen dead next to their jammed M16s.

And there were real problems.

Foremost was the change in mid-stream from a cartridge using an IMR propellant to a ball powder. Innuendoes of intrigue were leveled against the powder manufacturer, Olin Winchester. In truth, ball propellants generally burn cooler than extruded IMR-type powders, extending barrel life. This is no small consideration for modern, lightweight assault rifles with full-auto capability. The M16 upper and lower receiver bodies are fabricated from T6 aluminum, not steel, a

far superior heat reservoir. The trade-off — and there always is one — is that ball propellants generate more carbon residue which, of course, accelerates fouling of the gas system.

Ease of maintenance had been overstressed by both Colt and the Army. Proper cleaning equipment was not issued with the rifle and the troops were not impressed with its importance. In the humid jungles of Southeast Asia that was a lethal error of judgment. Subsequently, M16A1 chambers and bores were chrome-lined: another corrective refinement.

Early on, some M16s would occasionally fire out of battery as a result of excessive bolt carrier bounce. That bounce caused the same problem when the Soviets switched from the heavy, forged and milled receiver body of the AK-47 to the lighter sheet-metal receiver of the AKM. The Russian solution was a five-component device which acts as a drag on the hammer and has been erroneously called a "rate reducer" by Western experts (See "Soviet AKS-74," SOF, May '83). Research by Colt produced a new buffer which eliminated the potentially dangerous carrier bounce. An unexpected additional benefit was a reduction in the cyclic rate.

Original bolts could be installed with the extractor to the left, and that made the Black Stick futilely attempt to eject spent cases through the portless left side. But small arms systems mature with experience and one more fix was re-machining the cam pin and bolt to prevent misassembly. Designers and soldiers alike have been plagued by the M16 magazine. Sometimes troops overloaded them, but their flimsy, almost throw-away design and construction has troubled the system to this day.

With the single exception of a still-inadequate magazine, the M16's woes are now almost two decades in the past. Military authorities long ago conceded the M16 to be one of the world's

burst control consisting of a simple and durable ratchet with an over-running clutch. Each cycle of the hammer turns the spring 60 degrees until after 180 degrees the hammer falls from the auto sear to the trigger sear, holding it in place. The nine-component mechanism is of the interrupted type, which means it picks up the count wherever it left off. Thus the first in this cycle after a magazine change may be either one, two or three rounds.

This system is less complex and uses fewer components than the intricate ratchet-counting device fitted to Heckler & Koch weapons. The H&K burst control holds the sear off the hammer until the burst has been fired; any interruption

(such as an empty magazine) starts a new count and releasing the trigger resets the counter. The M16A2 three-shot burst control requires a heavier disconnecter and springs. Thus trigger pull weight is about one pound heavier. Because of the burst control's rotating cam, trigger-weight will increase with each pull until the cycle is completed. My M16A2 starts with a relatively drag-free pull of 7.5 pounds at stage one and ends with 9.0 pounds at stage three. While this may twitch the ultra-sensitive trigger-fingers of match shooters, it will not be noticed in the heat of combat.

Despite arguments to the contrary, from a military perspective three-shot

burst controls are righteous devices. They allow the shooter to forget about fire discipline and concentrate on sight alignment and target acquisition. That's handy in the adrenalin rush of a fire fight where the brain is busy with other things.

The selector lever location and markings remain as before, on the left side of the lower receiver, except the "AUTO" position to the rear has been replaced by "BURST." The selector markings, "SAFE," "SEMI" and "BURST," are now stamped on the right of the receiver also and the selector shaft notched, for the benefit of left-handed shooters.

The trigger pull length has been changed to a dimension determined to be



M16A2 proved comfortable for both left-handed testers.

best assault rifles, every bit the equal of the ComBloc Kalashnikov and its superior in accuracy potential.

But controversy haunts the M16. Charges of unreliability and inaccuracy, supported mostly by rumor or innuendo, dog the original microcaliber assault rifle. And for the M16's critics the *bête noire* is still the 5.56mm NATO cartridge.

On 28 October 1980, NATO approved the standardization of a second small caliber cartridge for use within the alliance (STANAG 4172), based on the Belgian SS109 5.56mm ammunition. Three different calibers were represented in the NATO trials: the British 4.85mm (never a serious contender), the German caseless 4.7mm (withdrawn because of cook-off problems) and three 5.56mm projectiles (SS109, U.S. XM777 and M193 for control).

Three considerations were paramount: increased long-range effectiveness, semi-armor-piercing potential and fear that high velocity projectiles of the M193 type might be restrained by international agreements. The first two are desirable attributes. The so-called

"humanitarian" parameter — a decrease in the tumbling and breakup characteristic of the M193 — is a grotesque charade. The Russians drop poison gas on the Afghans and biological bombs on the Cambodians and NATO worries about decreasing the inhumanity of mankind's most inhumane activity — the perpetual conflict of nations.

The SS109 projectile, with its more sharply tapered form (ogive), greater weight (62 gr.) and hardened-steel penetrator frontal core, offers armor penetration superior to the M80 7.62mm NATO projectile at greater ranges, boring right through the three NATO penetrations targets (3.5mm of mild steel plate at 640 meters, and the West German and U.S. steel helmets at 1,150 and 1,300 meters, respectively). As the use of body armor on the battlefield is expected to increase, this looms as an important quality. The improved ballistic stability which yields greater long-range capability through

improved wind drift performance has not been offset by the expected marginal loss in lethality. Extensive tests (still classified) at Aberdeen Proving Ground indicate the M855 (SS109) projectile has greater lethality than the M193 at ranges past 100 meters.

M193 ammunition performs admirably in the new M16A2 with increased long-range potential and little effect on tumbling and breakup, since the change in barrel twist (from 1:12 inches to 1:7 inches) has less effect on ballistic stability (yaw) than does the bullet's geometry. In fact, the barrel twist was principally changed to stabilize the new, much longer M856 (L110) tracer projectile which started to keyhole in less than 100 meters through 1:12-inch barrels and to yield a ballistic match between the ball and tracer cartridges.

This is welcome news since Lake City Arsenal is apparently having real trouble producing the more complex M855 (SS109) projectile — so we probably won't be seeing it in quantity for some time to come (the 200-rd. plastic assault packs for the M249 SAW will initially be supplied by FN). Obviously, important work is still afoot in re-engineering the '16's cartridge, and the weapon's capacity to handle it.

Systems mature by correcting problems, and — as it is with men or nations — that takes time. Stoner's system and its cartridge have been progressively adapted to each other, to the battle environment, and to user need. The M16 entered the arena of war as one of the most reliable and effective tools of conflict, and decades of testing, user feedback, and controlled development have only changed it for the better.

— Peter G. Kokalis

Portions of the historical segment of the text were obtained from the following sources:

Ezell, E.C., 1983. *Small arms of the world*. Harrisburg, PA. Stackpole Books, 12th edition, 894 pp.
Kirby, W.K., 1972. *The M-16 rifle controversy*. Oregon. Portland State Univ., unpub. Master's thesis, 63 pp.
Stevens, R.B., 1983. *U.S. rifle M14 from John Garand to the M21*. Toronto, Canada. Collector Grade Publications, 340 pp.

ideal by the Human Engineering Laboratory at Aberdeen Proving Ground. The lower receiver casting has been subtly altered and strengthened in the rear to accommodate the stronger buttstock — fabricated from foam-filled, high-impact plastic designed to resist fracture from rifle grenade launching (trendy once again with development of the bullet-trap types) and buttstroking Parris Island training dummies or body-armored enemy soldiers. The buttstock has been lengthened by $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch. The buttplate's edges are no longer rounded and the entire surface, not just the butt-trap, is deeply checkered.

The weight trade-off for these modifications is a modest increase from 7.0 lbs., empty (for the M16A1 — the M16 without buttplate trap or forward bolt assist weighed only 6.7 lbs.), to 7.5 lbs.

All that makes the M16A2 a handier, more comfortable, stronger weapon, but those things aren't the final measure of a service rifle's effectiveness. What about performance: reliability, durability, accuracy and hit potential, handling characteristics and claims of accelerated bore erosion? To settle the issue once and forever, SOF decided to conduct its own 6,000 round U.S. Government Military Specification Test (MIL-R-63997) on a new, strictly-stock specimen of the Colt M16A2 rifle.

MIL-R-63997 is a 48-page document. Much of it is devoted to a detailed description of the military specification for each component of the rifle, defect evaluations, interchangeability tests, inspection lot tests and the individual rifle test.

A total of nine malfunctions (attributable to the rifle) is permitted in the 6,000-round endurance test. The firing procedure consists of 50 120-round cycles. Intervals between cycles are determined by the cooling of the barrel, which must be such that it is capable of being held by the bare hand. Each cycle is fired in the following sequence: 30 rounds burst-fire with one three-shot burst every five-to-eight seconds; 30 rounds burst-fire with one three-shot burst every two-to-five seconds; and 60 rounds semiautomatic at a rate of 10 to 30 rounds per minute. During the 18th and 36th cycles, the semiautomatic fire is conducted with the rifle held in the hands not touching the shoulder and without restraining the normal recoil of the rifle.

MIL-R-63997 specifies that the ammunition used is to be M193 ball conforming to MIL-C-9963 (ball propellant), as M855 ammunition is not yet available in sufficient quantities. In an effort to accelerate what had been rumored to be rapid barrel erosion, SOF substituted 1,100 rounds of ammunition using IMR-type propellants. Fired in sequence, our inventory was as follows: 4,300 rounds of PMC M193, 500 rounds of Samson (IMI) FMJ (M193), 100 rounds of Lake City '77 (M193), 100 rounds of AAC '83 (Yugoslav ammo brought back from El Salvador



Improved sight adjustment system pleased all testers.

Spring-loaded slip ring holds identical halves of handguard.



Two cases inches apart show high burst rate that gives tight full-auto groups. Ejection was smart, and failed only once in 6,000 rd.

Post adjustment is unchanged, but with rear-sight elevation it is used only for original zero.



New dust-cover latch is stronger, more secure.



M16A2 SPECIFICATIONS

Caliber	5.56mm NATO — M855 ball and M856 tracer ammunition
Operation:	Gas — direct, no piston; rotary bolt with 8 locking lugs; semiautomatic and 3-shot burst-fire
Cyclic rate:	700-900 rpm
Magazine:	20 and 30-rd. staggered box type
Weight, empty:	7.5 lbs.
Overall length:	39.6 inches
Barrel:	6-groove, right-hand twist with 1 turn in 7 inches
Barrel length:	20.0 inches
Sights:	Front: protected square post adjustable for zero; Rear: flip-type peep with two apertures, 0.197-inch for 0-200m and 0.070-inch for 300-800m, knob adjustable for windage and elevation, calibrated for M855 ammunition
Accessories:	Bayonet, telescopic sights, bipod and blank adapter; will accept M203 40mm grenade launcher
Manufacturer:	Colt Industries — Firearms Division, P.O. Box 1868, Hartford, CT 06101
Status:	Adopted for service by the armed forces of United States and Canada



Testers took turns shooting and loading: Here Guthrie replaces reloaded mags as Martin fires a cycle.

—IMR type powder) and 1,000 rounds of reloaded ammunition (55-gr. Hornady FMJ bullet with 22.5-gr. IMR 8208M — a light charge designed to test the gas system's power reserve).

Our test site was the Black Canyon Shooting Range located in Arizona's Lower Sonoran Desert just north of Phoenix. Temperatures ranged from 91 degrees Fahrenheit to 112 degrees Fahrenheit. The test was conducted over a period of three days as the barrel cooled slowly (as did the four test participants). Two thousand rounds were fired each day.

Before beginning firing and after every 1,000 rounds we observed carefully-controlled measurement procedures. The rifle was cleaned thoroughly. A U.S. Military M16 Barrel Erosion Gauge was inserted to determine the progressive erosion of lands at the throat of the barrel (increase in freebore). Thirty rounds were chronographed with an Oehler Model 33 Chronotach and Skyscreen III detectors to measure any loss in velocity associated with increasing barrel erosion. The rifle was fired from the bench for group to determine the amount of loss in accuracy potential that would be expected with deterioration of the barrel.

During the first 4,000 rounds a Steiner 4X24 NATO rifle scope was attached to the rifle with a Swan M16 A1A2 Universal Top Scope Base (manufactured by A.R.M.S., Dept. SOF, 230 W. Center St., West Bridgewater, MA 02379). The Swan base accepts both Weaver and NATO STANAG military scope fastenings. It features a special bolt and self-locking thumbscrew that assures repeated positioning and zero hold and a wide-angle "TV-screen" iron sight see-through. The rugged Steiner scope (distributed by Pioneer, Inc., Dept. SOF, 216 Haddon Ave., Westmont, NJ 08108) uses the German military reticle pattern dating from WWI. It consists of a single, thick, pointed



Improved pistol grip and BURST marking distinguish M16A2.

Lower receiver markings on Kokalis' test weapon.



Lower handguard removed to show half-length barrel thickening and plastic-coated sling-swivel.



Thicker barrel at muzzle prevents bending.

post at the bottom of the field of view with horizontal side bars and stadia lines. Although never popular in this country, this format excels in subdued light and offers faster target acquisition than standard crosshairs.

After 6,000 rounds the barrel erosion gauge dropped a total of only 3.6 percent closer to the reject line. No visible signs of barrel erosion could be detected with a fiber-optic probe even after the final 1,100 rounds had been fired using IMR type propellants. Although linear extrapolation is not possible — since erosion will eventually become asymptotic — I estimate useful barrel life to be in excess of 30,000 rounds. But, this is a function of numerous uncontrollable parameters, such as the amount of tracer fired.

The average velocity of the PMC M193 ammunition dropped from 3,340 fps to 3,305 fps over its 4,300-round run (these higher-than-specified velocities are a function of the high ambient temperatures prevailing during the test). This is not a statistically significant decline as it is very close to the standard deviation measured for this ammunition.

The M16A2 maintained two minutes of arc (MOA) at 100 meters throughout the test. MIL-R-63997 specifies an accuracy potential of no more than 1.4 MOA, but firing is done inside an enclosed tunnel with the rifle held in a fixture and the distance from the muzzle to the target measured with exactness. The SOF test was shoulder-fired under conditions of high, erratic winds and tremendous heat mirage, both of which magnified sighting errors and shooter fatigue.

In calculations based on physical measurements, the least precise measurement determines the number of significant figures that may be used. Since range distances are always given, and measured, to one significant figure (i.e., 100m, not 100.0m) only, MOA figures measured to the tenth are stretching the point a bit. Extending this information to hundredth's (1.83, etc.) is an absurd assumption of nonexistent precision. Two MOA is excellent for a modern military assault rifle and will beat, by a considerable margin, any one of the more than 30 million Kalashnikovs manufactured.

So much for barrel erosion.

Another rumor about the M16 series of weapons is its reputation for mechanical unreliability. Of course, this has never been established by any scientific or even systematic test, yet the myth persists. There were three stoppages attributable to the test rifle: two failures to fire (light hits) and one failure to extract.

There were 24 failures to feed. But in every instance, the bolt overrode the cartridge base, dented the case severely with the locking lugs and failed to chamber the round. Called a "bolt-over-base" stoppage, it is always a result of faulty maga-

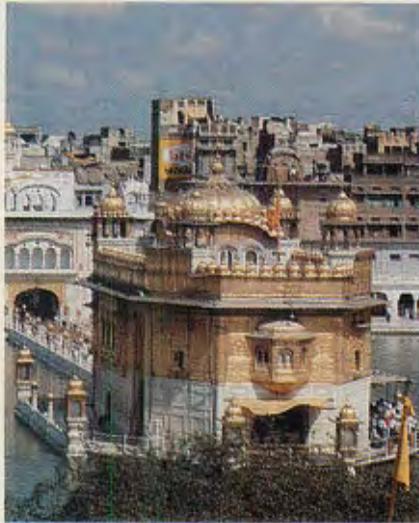
Continued on page 131

On 29 September 1984, the government of Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi returned control of the Golden Temple complex near Amritsar in the Punjab to representatives of the country's 13 million Sikhs. Restitution of their most holy shrine after a fierce battle in June 1984 marked a modest victory for Sikhs in their continuing fight against government harassment, but it didn't last long and many who survived the fighting for the temple could not enjoy it. The Sikhs raised a separatist flag over the Temple which angered the Indian government. On 1 October, Indian troops stormed the complex again and arrested 400 of some 1,000 militants who surrendered peacefully. The shrine was then turned over to five of the Sikh faith's highest priests. On 30 October, the Sikhs extracted brutal revenge. The pot boiled over in a bloody assassination when Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was gunned down in New Delhi by three of her body guards — all Sikhs. While the nation alternately mourned the loss and erupted in new sectarian violence, the Indian Parliament quickly swore in Gandhi's son, Rajiv as the new PM. He went on national television to urge an end to violence between Hindus and Sikhs but the situation remains unstable in the Punjab and elsewhere throughout the country. While SOF deplors such political assassination, the following eyewitness account of the first battle to prevent Indian government occupation of the Golden Temple may give readers some perspective on what happened in this turbulent land. — The Eds.

IT seemed a good place to die. For the 2,000 turbaned and bearded Indian Sikhs it was perhaps the perfect place to die fighting for freedom from government harassment and for preservation of their ancient lifestyle. They whispered prayers and tightened their grip on the mostly antiquated Lee-Enfields which would support their stand against an array of modern weapons wielded by the Indian Army. Their backs were against the gilded walls of the Golden Temple.

The Sikhs stared over iron sights at the drilled and disciplined throng of 10,000 Indian troopers who had cordoned off the entrances to the temple. Cannoneers had sighted artillery weapons on likely defensive positions along the walls and within the temple's spired minarets. Tank crews swiveled their turrets and registered on targets. Overhead, recon aircraft and helicopters droned and clattered spotting the defenders for the infantry below. It would not be a long fight and no one inside the walls of this most holy place had any doubt about the eventual outcome.

The battle lines were clearly drawn in the heart of the fertile Punjab, seat of the Sikh



The Golden Temple of the Sikhs, built in the 16th century, holds the office of the Akali Dal, the Sikhs' political party.

THE BATTLE OF THE GOLDEN TEMPLE

Gandhi Government Corners Sikh Separatists

by Singh
Photos by AP/Wide World



people and site of the Golden Temple. On this sweltering morning in June 1984, the hard-pressed Sikhs had retreated to occupy the walled area of some 75 acres, enclosing marble walkways, resthouses for pilgrims, and an artificial lake of calm, glistening water that sparkled in the intense sunlight. In the middle of the lake sat Hari Mandir, the Golden Temple where Sikh faithful have worshipped since the 16th century. If the end of Sikh resistance to Indian government oppression was to come, the defenders of the Golden Temple could think of no more appropriate place.

Over the past 18 months more than 200 Sikhs had been killed by Indian police and soldiers for what were perceived in Bombay as anti-government activities. It began with protests by Sikh activists who were concerned with infringement on their homelands in the Punjab and general religious persecution by Hindus. The crowning blow for the proud Sikhs was Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's refusal to acknowledge their protests or defend the Sikh position in any way. In an effort to employ an economic weapon, Sikh farmers and landowners called a boycott and refused to sell their vital wheat crop to government sources. It was effective. More than half of India's wheat supply — desperately needed to feed an undernourished population — was grown in the Punjab. Gandhi was furious and ordered Operation Blue Star, designed by her strategists to crush the Sikhs as a political and military force.

It would be a bloody struggle. Sikhs are notorious throughout the history of India as fierce and aggressive in battle. For years during the days of the British Raj, Sikhs were the most-feared front-line fighters of the Indian Army. On 5 June the government announced the tactical master-stroke of Operation Blue Star. They would invade and occupy the Golden Temple of the Punjab. It would be a fight for simple survival and both sides faced each other strung as tightly as fine piano wire. To avoid sympathetic reporting, all journalists were ordered out of the Punjab, all communication lines into the state were cut, and all roads into or out of the state were closed. The Punjab was paralyzed under a 24-hour curfew. Sikh farmers who knew nothing but working the land and bearded extremists who knew a lot about working weapons formed a motley army around activist leader Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. He would direct the final fight for the Golden Temple.

Farmers and Sikh families made scruffy camps on the temple grounds, inside guesthouses if there was room, outside if not. Bhindranwale's CP was inside the Golden Temple itself. By ancient custom the area was a sanctuary from police and government interference. This was not a day for



India's primary battle tank, the top-of-the-line Soviet-made T-72, passes in review during the annual Republic Day Parade in January 1984.

respecting tradition. He ordered his men to fortify the area, spread out and take positions on the roofs of buildings along the temple's perimeter. Stoic Sikh women and children stuffed sandbags while the defenders hefted them into positions throughout the golden turrets and gleaming white walls of the temple.

About 30 meters from the entrance to the Golden Temple, on the sixth floor of a building overlooking the marble walkway which speared into the interior, the CO of the government assault force set up his headquarters. It was mid-morning before he had radio contact with all his forces surrounding the area. Western Army Commander Lt. Gen. K. Sundarji and his Chief of Staff, Lt. Gen. Ranjit Singh Dyal had an unobstructed view of the temple and its main entrance. They contemplated the sight as a hungry diner would stare at a plump roast duck.

A full-scale assault appeared inevitable. Since 0900 the Sikhs had been bombarded with surrender appeals shouted through loudspeakers. They were somewhat effective, particularly among Sikhs with families to protect. By 1400 some 500 people had straggled out of the area and into sanctuary behind government lines.

And then the stream of refugees dried up. It was that time of day when Westerners seek refuge from the blazing sun with a gin and tonic. But there was neither shelter nor refreshment for the Sikhs. Their time had come.

Under the direction of former Indian Gen. Shubheg Singh, a skilled guerrilla fighter loyal to Bhindranwale, supplies and weapons were dispersed so the attackers would have to deal with multiple targets firing from different directions. It violated the principle of mass, but Singh realized he

would have to divide if there was to be any chance of conquering. The Sikhs opened fire with small arms as soon as the government forces indicated they were on the move. There seemed no sense in prolonging the inevitable bloodshed. From sniper hides atop two minarets and the water tower inside the complex, riflemen pelted government infantrymen moving from their perimeter into the assault.

Several men fell clutching gaping wounds made by ancient .303 ammo. The assault line faltered. None of the soldiers had expected to take casualties so early in the battle. It was clear that this would be no piece of tactical cake. Sundarji wanted to

maintain momentum and ordered up an anti-tank weapon of World War II vintage. With three quick rounds he silenced the snipers in the minarets and blew the entire top off the offending water tower. Waves of warm water cascaded over the Sikh defenders below. Only Sundarji knew his high-explosive tactic was merely a feint. Indian Navy divers had landed to the rear after a flying trip in an AN-12 transport out of Bombay. The divers were on their way to the temple site from Amritsar even as the smoke was clearing from the AT rounds.

Gen. Sundarji reviewed the original concept for Operation Bluestar and realized he was drastically behind schedule. Paracommandos from the Bihar Regiment were to have landed and secured the northern entrance of the complex to cover the wide marble walkway around the lake. Once that area fell to their fire, the paras would enter the temple from the east by the Akal Takht building and clear the area of Sikh defenders under cover of darkness. None of that had happened as yet since the Sikh defenders had been able to pin the commandos down with well-aimed plunging fire.

The divers using SCUBA rigs would search the moat for hidden caches of weapons and ammo. Sundarji wanted to dry up the Sikh supply if possible before committing more troops to the assault. Meanwhile, inside the temple, activist leader Bhindranwale, second-in-command Amrik Singh and strategist Shubeg Singh moved their command center to the basement of the Akal Takht building at the extreme eastern end of the temple lake. From there they could scan the entire approach area and use what few automatic weapons they had to control access to the footbridge. Any assault troops entering the temple would have to survive a withering crossfire to use this

WHAT SINGH SAYS

This first-person account of the battle at the Golden Temple and the historical background leading to the confrontation between Sikhs and the central government of India was submitted by an experienced observer who asked that he remain anonymous. SOF chose to by-line the report simply "Singh," which is a typical Sikh name. The author travels frequently through the more turbulent states of India and would be unable to continue these adventures if his true identity was revealed. Although closely watched by the Indian government, he promises to continue reporting on the area for SOF.

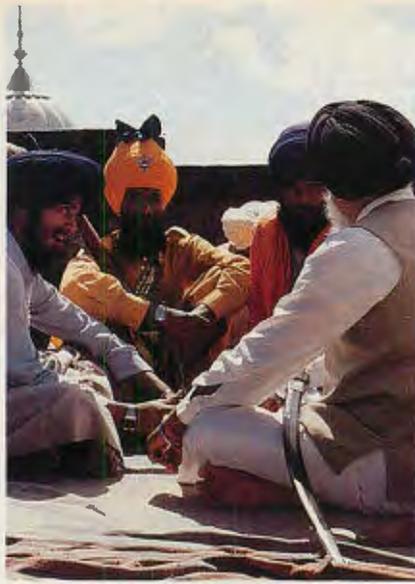
single temple access route. The Sikh CP stayed in touch with other outposts using prearranged signals and runners. They had no modern communication equipment.

The pointy end of the Indian Army's bayonet was thrust home shortly after 1600. Government troops advanced toward the marble walkway on the edges of the lake. Bhindranwale ordered his two machine guns — which the government knew nothing about — to hold their fire until the bulk of the initial assault force was milling around near the entrance to the footbridge. One gun was in flanking position in the Golden Temple itself and could traverse through a 360-degree field of fire. The second gun was dug in on the ground floor of the Akal Takht building covering the eastern flank of the approach route and one complete side of the lake. When Bhindranwale finally gave the order to open fire, the guns took the Indian soldiers by surprise. They retreated leaving a number of dead and wounded near the marble walkway. Round one was over as darkness descended on the Golden Temple and the decision had gone to the Sikhs.

At dusk Gen. Sundarji tried to turn darkness to his advantage by cutting all power to the temple complex. The Sikhs anticipated Sundarji's angry response and replaced their dead light sources with two huge bonfires. The firelight immediately revealed the furtive movements of Sundarji's troops. When more well-aimed fire turned them back into the shadows, they responded with tear gas cannisters and concussion grenades in an attempt to regain the initiative.

While the defenders *struggled* to see through the swirling white clouds of gas and shake off the effects of the grenades, a unit of the 10th Guards Regiment began a massive frontal assault directed at the northern entrance to the temple grounds. Again the Sikhs had predicted such a move. They had fortified the CP walls in the Akal Takht building with a temporary brick lining. Fortunately for the defenders, a strong breeze blew up from the lake washing the cloying gas from the streaming eyes of the Sikhs. The Guards fell under heavy fire and had to turn back to rally points. The seesaw series of assaults had been raging for 10 hours.

It was nearing 0500 and the government troops had gained precious little ground. The Golden Temple was still firmly in the hands of the beleaguered Sikhs. There was virtually no cover for assaulting troops be-



Turbanned Sikhs sit, waiting for the next move of the government troops after the leader of the Indian Army forces appealed to them to surrender and evacuate the temple. By midafternoon, about 500 Sikh women and children left the temple.

tween the perimeter positions and the single entrance to the temple. The open area had become a slaughterhouse and Indian Army commanders realized they would have to score a victory very soon or lose the momentum of their attack entirely. It had to happen before sunrise. With the dawn, assault troops would become clearly visible targets for the Sikh marksmen.

Sundarji got on the radio and spoke to his armor commander. The clank and rumble of an armored personnel carrier added to the din around the temple. The infantry aboard were hand-picked for the mission of riding the armor close enough to dismount, storming the Sikh CP and killing Bhindranwale.

As the APC groaned through the court-

Sikh farmers who knew nothing but growing wheat gathered around Sikh activist leader Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale when the Indian government announced its intention to invade the Golden Temple.



WHO ARE THE SIKHS?

For centuries Sikhs have been among India's most skilled soldiers. A basic tenet of their religion demands that each Sikh develop the martial skills necessary to protect their freedom and the freedom of any people who are too weak or poor to defend themselves. These are no flower-bedecked purveyors of peace through love and inner sanctity.

Since the 15th century when Mongol hordes swept a bloody path through northern India from Afghanistan, Sikhs have defended their religious freedom. Their current dispute with the government of India is an extension of that fight.

Sikhism had its beginnings during this period of Indian history under a prophet named Guru Nanak who protested the Mongol attempt to convert all Hindus to Islam under threat of death. Guru Nanak taught that all human beings are created

by the same God and no person has the right to force his creed or religion on another. He taught that there is no Hindu or Moslem and one religion encompasses all people.

Through the 16th and 17th centuries, Sikhism grew in strength. It was often at odds with the prevailing Islamic religion throughout India and Sikhs fought often to help protect the religious freedom of themselves and the Hindu portion of the population.

Sikhs are also skilled businessmen and farmers who have no compunction about turning their plowshares into swords when the right circumstances arise. Their creed says, "When all peaceful means have been tried and have failed . . . it is honorable to take up the sword against unrighteousness in self-defense." They also believe they must not bow before any man, they must earn their living honestly "by the sweat of the brow," and share a portion of what they

The open area had become a slaughterhouse and Indian Army commanders realized they would have to score a victory very soon or lose the momentum of their attack entirely.



yard heading for the footbridge entrance to the temple. Bhindranwale pulled another unexpected ace out of his meager arsenal. Two Sikhs ran forward, rapidly loading a Chinese RPG-7. The single anti-tank weapon had been hidden from government aerial observation throughout the day. With a frightening boom and roar the shaped-charge rocket left the launcher and crashed into the side of the APC with a loud metallic clang. The vehicle lurched and caught fire. Sundarji was furious and more determined than ever to pry the Sikhs from their stronghold.

How many RPGs could the lightly-armed Sikhs have? The Indian Army commander figured no more than the one that got his APC, or perhaps two. He decided to take the risk and ordered seven Russian-made T-55 tanks to crank up and assault the temple from the northwest. The tide of the frustrating battle began to ebb away from the Sikhs. The tanks fired cannon and machine gun rounds at Sikh defensive positions in a deafening roar. Several of the vehicles were able to reach the Akal Takht building under the harmless spray of small arms fire that spanged off their hulls.

Cannon fire swept the walls free of machine guns and the Sikhs were never able to effectively employ their single RPG after the initial success against the APC. They were simply overwhelmed by fire. It was a bloody, angry fight with no quarter on either side. The Indian Army continued to fire and the Sikhs continued to die.

The SCUBA divers went into the lake waters once again on a more offensive mission. They crossed the moat and emerged from the water to silence a Sikh machine gun position in a stunning surprise attack. The area was mostly under army control by dawn, but Sundarji was not through extracting his pound of flesh.

He sent recon patrols through the battered area of Akal Takht and discovered Bhindranwale and his number two dead in the basement of the building. Witnesses could not agree whether the resistance leaders died from a single bullet in the head or as many as 72 rounds riddling their bodies. Combat sweeps continued against isolated pockets of resistance until nearly dusk on the day of the assault. The sacred temple of the Sikhs had been reduced by gunfire from a proud four stories to a single-level, shattered, smoking hulk.

The Golden Temple had fallen. What re-



Delhi policeman takes aim with his baton at a Sikh walking his motorcycle during a confrontation in June 1984 just outside the Bangla Sahib Sikh Temple.

earn with the needy. Sikhs do not cut their hair or beards and believe men should always keep their head covered with the traditional Indian turban.

Characterized by their high morals and values, honesty in business, and

ferocity in battle, the Sikhs have thrived in northern India, primarily in the fabled Punjab. Prior to falling from favor with the government of Indira Gandhi, Sikhs controlled much of the agricultural and industrial wealth in the country. The Indian Army, particularly in the days of British occupation, boasted some of the most fierce formations in the area: mostly Sikhs.

— Singh



Government troops established a perimeter around the Hari Mandir, cordoning off temple entrances. All comings and goings required going through the military line. Troops regarded all people living within the temple complex a potential threat.

ained was the task of policing up the dead and counting the casualties. The official government report stated 259 Sikhs and 59 Indian soldiers died in the battle. Ninety

Sikhs and 110 government soldiers were listed as WIA. That did not jibe with a report from the Associated Press, the only news *Continued on page 120*

WHAT'S THE BEEF?

In India the saying goes that "the Punjab is a mother with two sons: one Hindu and one Sikh." If that's true, the brothers are at war.

Indira Gandhi's Hindu-dominated government, which welcomed military assistance from the Soviet Union, has driven a wedge into this northern Indian state by promoting its conflict with the Sikhs as a religious war. According to the official line out of Bombay, Hindus and Sikhs are at odds over basic religious differences. That doesn't square with history which records Sikhs frequently defending Hindus from outside aggression. The real roots of the bloody struggle between the government and the Sikhs can be found by examining the domestic history of the nation since independence from Great Britain. In 1947 when the British Raj left India, the Sikhs were given the choice of declaring their fertile Punjab farmlands part of Pakistan or remaining inside the newly-independent nation as Indian citizens. Sikhs are intensely nationalistic and loyal so it came as no surprise that they remained tied to India with a promise from President Jawaharlal Nehru to "carve out a state for the Sikhs so that they might feel the glow of independence." Their Punjab homeland was then divided in two. One part went to India, the other went to Pakistan and 50,000 Sikhs recrossed the new border back into the Punjab.

Since independence, and particularly over the past 20 years, tension between the Sikhs and the central government of India has escalated to an unbearable pitch. Promises made in 1947 were never kept and many Sikhs saw their vital independence threatened by Gandhi's frequent declarations of martial law.

Massive changes were made in the Sikh lifestyle including their traditional leadership and predominance in the Indian armed forces. The Gandhi government required that the "religious and cultural percentage of the army reflect



Sikhs in New Delhi held demonstrations in the wake of the Indian Army takeover of their Golden Temple complex in Amritsar, shouting anti-government slogans in front of the Bangla Sahib Sikh temple.

the strata of the population." Under that system only one percent of the people in uniform could be Sikhs, down from a proportion that frequently reached as high as 30 to 40 percent of the country's combat formations. The move alienated a large number of Sikh youths who had planned to follow their forefathers into the service.

Increasingly socialistic moves by India's central government have also eroded the agricultural and economic base of the Sikhs, forcing many farmers off family lands. Water flow from the Ravi Beas River, a critical source of irrigation, has been diverted so that it no longer flows through the Punjab. And, over the last 10 years, the government has allowed the price of wheat and other crops to plummet while imposing a stiff excise tax on farm equipment. The once wealthy Sikh population has been plunged into virtual poverty.

In a crowning blow that eventually led to bloody confrontation, the Gandhi government eliminated the Sikh majority from the Punjab state government despite census figures which show 56 percent of the constituency is Sikh.

Since 1976, Sikh demands on the central government to correct such injustices have been persistently ignored. The government has refused to debate or negotiate in any way. The Sikh community organized civil disobedience

protests, called *morchas*, to protest Gandhi's intransigence. Each day groups of Sikhs gathered in front of local police headquarters, an illegal act in the Punjab which typically resulted in two or three days in jail. At one time in the Spring of 1982, there were more than 100,000 Sikhs in jail, adding cost and embarrassment to the government. Despite that, the *morchas* lasted from 1980 to 1984 and a number of Sikhs were killed in other, violent protests.

The *morchas* had little obvious effect on the Gandhi administration which further angered the Punjabi Sikhs. Activists began calling for a separate Sikh state, claiming the central government was ineffective and unresponsive. There were some proponents for creation of an Indian state, called Khalistan, but most Sikhs understood they would be little better off in an independent, land-locked area smaller than the state of Texas and surrounded by hostile nations of much greater population and power.

Gandhi's administration seized on the Khalistan issue to promote conflict in the Punjab as a religious war between Hindus who wanted to retain their Indian nationality and Sikhs who wanted to break away. It was a clever ruse to draw attention away from the government's violent solution to the Sikh question.

At the same time government troops attacked the Golden Temple, killing activist Sikh leaders, other formations attacked 40 Sikh temples across the Punjab. Today, travel is limited in the Punjab and there are few phone connections in. Correspondents and foreign journalists are forbidden to enter. All international calls out of Delhi are monitored and the line is disconnected if the political situation in the Punjab is mentioned.

In the Punjab today any Sikh may be arrested without charge and imprisoned for a period of up to two years. At the end of that sentence they may be rearrested and sent back to jail. There are rumors that Sikhs are shot on sight by government troops patrolling the more volatile areas.

— Singh



CMA IN CENTRAL AMERICA

The Private Sector Suffers Two KIA

by James L. Pate

Photos by Cliff Albright

"Discoverers of forgotten truth or mere companions of my youth, all are in my thoughts tonight being dead."

— William Butler Yeats

THE clatter and roar of helicopter rotors overhead was the last thing the solemn crowd wanted to hear. It seemed so...poignant, sad, even ironic.

They had gathered 28 September at this Huntsville, Ala. cemetery to pay final respects to a man who spent the last moments of his life listening to that same sound. Death had probably been the last thing on Dana Parker's mind then but it was a grim reality this day for the friends and family members who stood gathered at his hillside gravesite.

It was 27 days after communist Sandinista troops in Nicaragua shot down a helicopter in which Dana H. Parker Jr., a Huntsville police detective, and James P. Powell III, a Memphis flying instructor, were passengers. Parker and Powell, both members of the Alabama-based Civilian Military Assistance (CMA) organization, were helping train Mario Pozo, a pilot for the anti-communist *contra* faction known as the Democratic Force of Nicaragua (FDN). All three men died when the Hughes 500 Defender chopper was



Sandinista troops inspect remains of FDN'S only helicopter after Mario Pozo, Jim Powell and Dana Parker were shot down. It was Powell's fourth and final helo crash. Photo: Gamma Liaison

downed by ground fire in a fiery crash that caused reverberations throughout the nation.

Bodies of both Americans — Parker's badly burned and practically unrecognizable — were exploited for their full propaganda value by the Sandinista government, which paraded them through Managua in a ghoulish attempt to imply connection between the CMA and the CIA, before the communists finally agreed to ship them home for burial. Now nearly four weeks after the men died, their grieving families were finally being allowed to lay them to rest in U.S. soil.

Although other news photographers and reporters were held at a respectful distance by the Huntsville Police Department, the roar of a low-circling local TV news chopper over the cemetery almost drowned out the minister's graveside eulogy for Parker. For most of the mourners it was another bitter reminder of the lack of compassion and understanding with which they felt most of the U.S. media and public at large had received news of the fateful CMA mission to Central America. Parker and Powell — both born 21 October 1947 — belonged to a six-man team slated to spend two weeks helping train FDN freedom fighters in the war against the Sandinista's communist-dominated dictatorship.

Standing under an overcast sky, straining to hear the few, frail words honoring his fallen compatriot, Tom Posey of nearby Decatur probably felt as acutely as anyone the frustration of having to explain over and over and over just why Parker and Powell felt morally obligated to go to the Honduran-Nicaraguan border area to help the FDN. As a CMA founder and its principal spokesman, Posey had faced a relentless barrage of merciless criticism from liberal congressmen and senators as well as inane questions and witticisms from national network television news anchors, editorial writers and magazine columnists.

Three typical examples:

In the first question of a *Washington Post* interview, as if to imply that somehow the two qualities should never go together, reporter Brian Barger said to Posey, "You seem like a down-home country boy, an all-American who believes in mom, country and apple pie. Why would you decide to ... fight communism in Central America?"

Newsweek described Parker, Powell and other CMA members as "small-town, small-time guys who love guns and camouflage suits and manly make-believe. They are Vietnam veterans who think that combat was a kick.... (who) were playing far out of their league."

And from a CBS Morning News anchor, Meredith Vierra: "What is your cause here? Why bother?"

"Why bother?" Posey wondered aloud, his exasperation at the question obvious. "Since 1950, over 100,000



JOURNAL OF A PROFESSIONAL ADVENTURER

James P. Powell III of Memphis was shot down three times as an Army helicopter pilot in Vietnam and suffered from excruciating back pains. But his desire to go to Honduras with other members of the Civilian Military Assistance organization to help train Democratic Force of Nicaragua (FDN) troops in their fight against communism was undaunted. These passages were excerpted by SOF from an undated journal he kept on that trip. Soon after Powell's last entry, he, CMA member Dana H. Parker Jr. and Mario Pozo, an FDN pilot, died when their helicopter was shot down by communist troops in Nicaragua.

Our journey here was difficult ... a weather-plagued flight. ... Cleared customs, had rough ride. Met other team members — great guys. Met many commanders — Mike Lima [who] lost arm, leg. Good fellow and fighter. ...

Long hard drive to Vi Lodoso. Arrival at night, tired and [back] hurt very bad. Cried in pain and had to stop truck. Camp is rough but neat, and pride is evident. Rain and cold — Central America is cold in the mountains. Met Commander Mike; tough warrior, organizer and leader.

[Four CMA team members] got out for mule ride and hike the next day. Rain and extreme terrain exhaust them all. Lou gives web gear [to FDN

From left in foreground, Cliff Albright, Comandante Mack and Jim Powell a couple of days before Powell's death.

troops]. Parker gets back first, great shape — exhausted. All struggle in tired with new realization [of] how tough these people really are. ... Rest from pains. Another hard ride on cow path roads to camp. See Sandinistas and Nicaragua for the first time. Two [communist] planes and one helicopter are working out.

Impossible roads again, hurting very much. Arrived at night. Security and beds, food — beans and rice. More military protocol here. Short helicopter flight over country. [Attended] service for downed aviators [by] wounded Catholic priest. Met Aldopho, commander in chief ... again. Father led great ceremony, mass; gave cross to Aldopho from Pope.

We are leading classes on Starlite scope and planning parachute school — great guys I am with. [One CMA team member] has not shit yet, so we made a pool on when he will.

Everyone is dedicated to helping these people. They have impressed us with their determination and valor. ... Resilient soldiers. ...

These people, and the Americans I am with, make me proud to be here — one of the most proud times of my life. I think of my son [and other family members] often ... Mother and Father and all my friends coast to coast. They probably don't understand why I am here, I am sure.

I am doing what I think is right!

Americans have been killed and the United States hasn't declared war against the communists yet. We keep sacrificing our own men. For what? The politicians won't let us win. If the politicians won't let us win, then the private sector must take it in their own hands to do it.

"Indirectly, you might say, it was Congress that killed my two men," Posey continued. He made the point during that interview — and continues to make it when he faces questions about CMA motivations in Central America — that liberal elements in the U.S. Congress have cut off the flow of Central Intelligence Agency funds to the *contras* (Posey considers the generic term Marxist and prefers to call the anti-Sandinista forces "Freedom Fighters") which has made private sector aid a necessity.

The CMA leader said the whole situation disturbs him deeply. "It seems like most people have forgotten the truth," Posey said. "The heritage of Americans being patriotic and being proud of it has been rubbed in the dirt. Instead, you get these guys who cut and ran when duty called and they come home to get amnesty. And the guys who went to do their duty in Vietnam came home to be treated like some kind of war criminals.

"And darn few people seem to appreciate that Dana and Jim Powell laid down their lives for what they believe in, and got nothing for it but beans and rice and public scorn. It's just not fair."

Tom Posey is a man who believes strongly in the American heritage and sense of fair play. "There's something backwards about it, some screwed up values," he commented in reference to America's post-Vietnam social consciousness. "We have forgotten the truth somewhere along the way."

Posey's personal, private sector approach to the dilemma is the CMA, which evolved from informal discussions in a Decatur coffeeshop among four friends, all Vietnam veterans. The four-some had met at gun shows or through service in the Alabama National Guard. All were then — and continue to be — frustrated by repeated news stories about unchecked communist aggression around the globe.

"Over three or four years, friends and I had talked about this. We didn't know what to do because you couldn't join the military to go fight communism," said Posey, who joined the Marine Corps at age 17 and served as a machine gunner in Vietnam during the mid-1960s.

By July 1983, the informal group was ready to swing into action on a limited scale. "We decided we'd send equipment (to Central America) because the news media had shown us how the troops in El Salvador fighting the communists lacked so much in equipment," Posey remembered. "We started collecting what little bit we could. When (Korean Air Lines) flight 007 was shot down, it made us get on the



These two FDN armorers are holding from left, an AK-47 and two AKMs, captured from the Sandinistas. In the left foreground is a DShK-38 heavy machine gun. The other weapon is a B-10 82mm recoilless smoothbore.

stick a little bit harder."

At his own expense, Posey flew to El Salvador in October 1983 to "ask their government what kind of help they needed most that we could provide. Our initial goal was to outfit two companies of men."

In the meantime, President Reagan had ramrodded a foreign policy bill through Congress that included substantial American aid for the Salvadoran government in their fight against communist insurgents. He was not so lucky in his efforts to obtain continuing congressional support for anti-communist rebels in Nicaragua and the loose group of veterans — they still had not adopted a formal title — turned its attention to that embattled nation. Posey wrote a letter to Gen. Gustavo Alvarez Martinez, the since-relieved commander of the Honduran armed forces known for his hard-line anti-communist sentiments. Alvarez read Posey's letter requesting help in making contact with the Nicaraguan freedom fighters working out of Honduras and invited the group to visit his country.

They made their way to Tegucigalpa in January 1984, stopping on the way in San Salvador to touch base with officials Posey had contacted in October. "While we were in El Salvador," Posey recalled, "we kept getting asked, 'What's the name of your group?' At that point, we still didn't have one. We were just a group of men. We decided on CMA; we were civilians and we wanted to provide military assistance."

Honduran officials discreetly put Posey and the CMA in touch with FDN officials, including Adolfo Calero, the FDN com-

mander-in-chief, Calero's brother Mario, and Alfonso Callejas. During their stay, the group toured several FDN base camps along the Honduran-Nicaraguan border. Parker was particularly affected by what he saw there.

Although he was a battle-hardened, veteran Marine grunt with experience in such Vietnam hot spots as Khe Sanh who later became an Army Special Forces captain in the National Guard, he had never seen such bravery or dedication in the face of almost complete destitution. The *contras* had nothing with which to continue the fight but they expressed grim determination to carry on or die. "What Dana saw in Honduras during that January trip almost made him cry at times," Posey recalled. "The wounded and the kids: It hurt him that they were going through so much and knowing how much we have in the U.S. that we could send down there to help them."

According to Mario Calero, the FDN's primary spokesman in the U.S., as Parker prepared to leave New Orleans on his last trip to Honduras, he bought a whole stack of kids' masks depicting popular cartoon characters to give to the FDN children. One of the first of the children to jump up and down, begging Parker for a mask, was a 10-year-old boy who had survived 25 combat operations into Nicaragua.

As Spring 1984 crept into Alabama, CMA was blossoming along with the azaleas and dogwood. Posey resigned his seat on the local town council and had to somewhat curtail his activities as a Little League baseball coach. Making no attempt to disguise his organization's desire to help in the struggle against the spread of communism in Central America, Posey had placed ads in the local *Decatur Daily* in an effort to solicit supplies and money for anti-Sandinista forces in Nicaragua. The latter came in a lot slower than the former.

"We're definitely a non-profit organization," said Posey. He and wife Patsy run a small produce business started by his father in a tiny brick building hard by Decatur's railroad tracks and across from the Tennessee Valley Cotton Oil Mill. "If we're in it for profit, we're going the wrong way. Personally, I've already spent \$5,000 to \$10,000 of my own money on travel and equipment.

"I've sold guns and I've pawned guns," said Posey, an avid weapons collector and licensed firearms dealer. "I've borrowed money from the bank to help pay for this equipment because the individuals down there need it worse than I do."

Posey, a wiry, blue-eyed man with closely cropped hair, is normally soft-spoken but finds it hard to hide his anger when reminded of a story aired by a Huntsville TV station following Parker's death. The reporter suggested that the police detective had made a great deal of money for his work in Central America which enabled him to pay off a \$30,000 home mortgage.

According to Posey, Parker was actually working a second job in January and February of 1984, and selling off some of his own highly-prized gun collection, in order to meet expenses.

Parker had in fact paid off a \$30,000 mortgage, but the move was part of the financial agreement made with his former wife, Sharon. He paid off the note on their jointly-owned home and had it remortgaged in her name under a new loan.

While Parker may have been experiencing some financial difficulty, things were beginning to look much better for CMA. As word of the organization's activities spread their credibility grew. More Alabama chapters opened, and then a few got started in Tennessee. Significant amounts of donated and purchased equipment and supplies began to stockpile in Decatur. Posey and his men felt they could afford to sponsor a six-man CMA training team which would provide their military expertise to the FDN and deliver the badly-needed stores.

Posey, the linchpin of the organization, would have to stay behind in Alabama. He wanted to go very badly but his personal finances were strained to the limit. He simply could not afford to hire someone to deliver his vegetables to local markets while he was away from the store. Sadly, he approved the roster of six other CMA members heading for Honduras.

They were:

Parker, 36, who was on a two-week leave-of-absence from the Huntsville Police Department. The Green Beret reservist was easily the most physically fit of the group. At five-feet-six inches in height, the muscular 155-pounder could bench-press 370 pounds and ran three or four miles a day. He finished first in his Special Forces training class at Ft. Bragg and had maxed the Army physical fitness test at the Alabama Military Academy. While in



"Sophia," an FDN commando with 27 fire fights under his belt, holds a Russian RPD light machine gun. He became a confirmed anti-communist after the Sandinistas executed his mother, his father and two sisters.

Honduras, Parker would do his push-ups every morning with his buddy, Bill Courtney, a burly, barrel-chested Special Forces Reserve supply officer, sitting on his back. Another member noted his "extreme sense of duty."

William P. Courtney, 43, an Army Chief Warrant Officer and Vietnam veteran who holds a full-time civilian job with the 1st Bn., 20th Special Forces Group, Alabama National Guard. From his Huntsville armory office, Courtney oversees supply administration to Special Forces units there and in Decatur, Montgomery and Mobile. Courtney and Parker met in the Guard and had been very close friends for 10 years, learning to fly small, private fixed-wing aircraft together. The two were dubbed "the Bobsey Twins" by others in the group.

Walton "Cisco" Blanton of Sheffield, Ala., another Vietnam vet who served 10 years in the military, part of it in the same National Guard unit to which Courtney and Parker belonged. A civilian for the past five years, Blanton works hard to keep a low profile and helps care for an

elderly relative. He was the nominal leader of the CMA team on its ill-fated mission.

Cliff Albright of Memphis, a retired Republic Air Lines pilot and Vietnam veteran of the Army Airborne associated with a CMA chapter in Tennessee. He is probably better known as commander of the Phantom Division, Tennessee Airborne. Albright is also a master parachute rigger, jumpmaster and instructor. He traveled to El Salvador in August 1983 with a *Soldier of Fortune* training mission.

James Powell, a civilian flight instructor who served as an Army helicopter pilot in Vietnam where he was shot down three times. Back problems from his combat injuries had occasionally incapacitated him with excruciating pain. During the day-long, rollercoaster jeep trips from one FDN base camp to another, Powell's back sometimes hurt so badly he wept from pain. On those occasions, the driver would stop for a few minutes while an FDN medic massaged Powell's back until he could sit up again and continue the trip. After his death, Albright gave the cane Powell had used in Honduras to an FDN leader, who vowed to return it to the CMA in a victory ceremony in Managua.

Louis McKnight, who had been a friend of Powell's since the two went to high school together, according to Powell's mother, Rose. The Vietnam vet helicopter mechanic had more recently been a civi-



lian maintenance instructor at Hurlbert Air Force Base in Memphis.

Most team members rendezvoused in New Orleans, having been driven down by Posey in his van. After preparing ponchos, boots and other supplies for shipment in Powell's Cessna 206, they flew TACA Air Lines on 24 August to Honduras by way of El Salvador. The next day was spent at a main FDN resupply base outside Tegucigalpa, where they were briefed by Enrique Bermudez, FDN's chief of staff. Albright noted brand new FN-FAL assault rifles, used AK-47s, WWII-era Mausers of Argentine manufacture rechambered for 7.62mm, M-14s, G-3s, 81mm mortars with no ammo and U.S. and Dutch grenades.

On Sunday, 26 August, the six-man team, accompanied by Mario Calero and other FDN officials, moved out at 0700 in a three-jeep convoy for the first FDN camp, Vi Lodosa, which is located in Honduran territory adjacent to the Nicaraguan border. The nine-hour trip over treacherous mountain roads and cattle paths was bone-jarring for the CMA volunteers. Tropical rains had turned the road into a quagmire. Dozens of mud-slides and wash-outs regularly required the group to dismount and dig their vehicles out of the cloying muck. They arrived at their destination after dark in a pouring rain and got an introduction to "Commander



Mario Pozo stands by the Hughes 500 Defender helicopter which crashed two days later. This Honduran camp, Las Vegas, is almost within spitting distance of the Nicaraguan border. The FDN guerrilla sitting on the left is unidentified.

Mack," who leads about 1,200 FDN troops. They also got an omen.

Word reached the camp that FDN's ancient C-47 transport and resupply aircraft had been shot down and a Catholic priest arrived to hold a memorial mass for the victims. Adolfo Calero and other high-ranking FDN officials arrived and were mobbed by their troops, raising security concerns among the CMA members. "You know there have to be infiltrators," Courtney said. "They were getting 20 or 30 people a day at this location. In January they had only 4,000 troops and that had risen to 12,000. Everybody was crowding around and everybody had weapons and grenades. If you do away with their major leaders, there's nobody to take their place.

"Anyway, the priest had a cross he had been personally given by Pope John Paul II. He gave this cross to Adolfo and wished the FDN luck. Adolfo told the priest he would return the crucifix to him in Managua and everyone cheered," Courtney said. "It was a very moving scene."

At 0630 on Monday, 27 August, four of the CMA members departed the camp for a tour of FDN border outposts. While McKnight, Blanton and Courtney accepted FDN advice and mounted out on mules, Parker chose instead to strap on his web gear and walk with the troops. Albright and Powell remained at the camp to help repair vital support equipment such as generators and sewing machines. Tools for such work were ancient or nonexistent. "Their screwdrivers are in very bad shape and most of their armor work is done with old hammers and pliers,"

Albright said. The CMA team members suggested a solution for the FDN's lack of lubricant for weapons. They told maintenance men to save and seine old motor oil which can be mixed with kerosene to make an acceptable gun oil. Those who went on the road also had a rough time.

"It was very rugged territory," recalled Courtney, whose mule fell twice along the treacherous jungle trails. The group saw dug-in FDN mortar and machine gun positions overlooking Sandinista outposts just a short distance away. After lunch of beans and rice the group had planned to visit another border camp, but was forced by the rough ground to head back to Vi Lodosa.

Courtney recalled an incident on the journey which convinced him FDN warriors and supporting civilians are a hardy breed. "About 1500," he recalled, "two young girls about 13 or 14 came running by us on the trail, smiling at us despite the field packs they were carrying. I found out later that these two girls had fed us breakfast at the home base, had put up the flag and had run to our second stop to cook our lunch. They cleaned up lunch, and when they passed us on the trail in the afternoon, they were headed back to the base camp to fix our supper."

Back at the base camp, Albright and Powell examined and helped identify such captured weapons as Chinese 12.7mm machine guns, AKs of Russian, Korean, Czech and Chinese manufacture, Russian mortars and a grabbag of ammo from all parts of the world. Albright copied the serial number from a partially-detonated Russian rocket fired at the base camp. The remnant, with Soviet markings intact, was returned to the U.S. for further study by SOF staffers.

The recon party began to arrive back at the base camp at about 2030, Albright said, with Parker hoofing it and panting for breath, out front of the patrol with the

SHALL THEIR VALOR PASS UNHERALDED?

By William P. Cheshire

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Since it is unfashionable to bear arms against communist insurgents, the two Americans who lost their lives Sept. 1 during a clash with Sandinista troops in Nicaragua are unlikely to become American folk heroes. They will not be treated, I am confident, with the kind of awesome reverence once bestowed on, for example, members of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade.

The Abraham Lincoln Brigade, for those whose memories of the Spanish Civil War have dimmed, was comprised of American leftists who, in the interlude between the World Wars, went abroad to fight against Gen. Francisco Franco.

The civil war in Spain drew any number of such political and literary nabobs — some 2,500 Americans, all told, and thousands more from Europe. George Orwell was there, narrowly escaping (along with Willy Brandt, the future German chancellor) when the communists purged the revolutionary Marxist party, or POUM, in 1937-38.

Ernest Hemingway put in an appearance, too. (Though "fancying himself hard-boiled and experienced in the cynicism of war," says Paul Johnson in *Modern Times*, he was "easily duped.") Also novelist Andre Malraux and many other literary men and just plain swashbucklers, innocents for the most part, used without knowing it by Stalin's propagandists.

What is different about Dana H. Parker Jr. of Huntsville, Ala., and James P. Powell III of Memphis is the apparent absence of the kind of dewy-eyed romanticism that distinguished so many of the volunteers in Spain.

Both 36, the two men were veterans of Vietnam — disillusioned veterans, perhaps. Mr. Powell, a helicopter pilot, was shot down three times in 'Nam. Mr. Parker had been an enlisted man in the Marines. In Nicaragua, neither received "one penny" from the U.S. government or any other source, according to Tom Posey, who founded the group that took them to Central America.

Mr. Posey suggests an altruistic motive. Many of the Americans fighting in Nicaragua, says Mr. Posey, felt guilty about this country's failures in Vietnam and "decided to do something about fighting communism without ropes on us."

Some will dismiss Mr. Posey — Messrs. Parker and Powell, too — as



From left, Dana Parker, Comandante Mike Lima, Bill Courtney, Enrique Bermudez, unidentified American tourist with face blacked out for security reasons, unidentified FDN member, Cisco Blanton, Mario Calero and Comandante 26 in blue shirt.

calloused mercenaries, soldiers of fortune, nerveless men who kill for profit — or maybe sport. No doubt such men exist, but it is by no means clear that Messrs. Parker and Powell were of this number.

"These people, and the Americans I am with, make me proud to be here," Mr. Powell wrote in his notebook of his stay in Honduras. "I think of my son . . . my mother and father and all my friends coast to coast. They probably don't understand why I am here, I am sure. I am doing what I think is right!" Hardly the words of a bounty hunter.

Whether they were on a rescue mission, as some have suggested, or were part of an attack on a Sandinista military school at Santa Clara is unclear — and immaterial. Messrs. Parker and Powell were engaged in fighting communism, this time on the American continent — an endeavor that, in our century, no one should despise, however much one may question the efficacy of signing on with the *contras*.

War is not a pretty business, and the small-bore operation in Central America is no exception. I myself have observed the Sandinista military in the field — wide-eyed, threadbare *campesinos*, many of them barely in their teens, full of bravado, rice, and beans. Unless somebody held a gun to my head, I would lack the stomach to go

shoot at them.

Even so, these ragtag soldiers are the shock troops of what Ronald Reagan has correctly described as an Evil Empire — the equivalent of Hitler's — with footholds already in Cuba and Nicaragua and designs on the rest of the continent up to the Canadian border.

Thinking to defend their homeland, Messrs. Parker and Powell gambled their lives and lost, and I for one admire them for it.

The thought has sprung to mind before. It springs to mind again. What anti-communism needs most is not more money for the B-1 bomber — or even, when you come down to it, more heroes such as Dana Parker and James Powell. What anti-communism needs most is a "Papa" Hemingway to drum up the enthusiasm and esteem lavished on those who fought Stalin's battles in Spain. It would help, too, to have a Pablo Picasso to toss off the Free World's equivalent of "Guernica," showing the terrors of the Gulag.

Conservative writers have chummed up a zillion works of non-fiction, to the point that no serious person — at least no serious person with scruples — nowadays defends Marxist politics to a lettered adult. But fiction, art? Where is it?

"These are the times that try men's souls," wrote Tom Paine in *The American Crisis*, and a tiny nation, set upon by the mightiest empire in Europe, bent its back to the common purpose. The soul is tried again, but we have no Paine.

point man. "The group was staggered out on the trail pretty bad," he said. "By all estimates, including Commander Mack's, they covered over 35 miles that day. Dana did all of it on foot. He wouldn't let anybody leave him behind."

"Shit, that was tough," Parker exclaimed to Albright as he strode into camp. "I really admire those guys. They handled that terrain like it was nothing. They could soldier in any man's army." Cliff immediately recorded the observation verbatim in his notes.

A 28 August trip to Las Vegas, another border base camp for the FDN, was another back-breaking jeep ride over nearly-impassable mountain trails that brushed within 10 feet of the Nicaraguan border in places. Because of several recent border clashes with marauding Sandinista patrols, Contra troops in the area were on tense alert. Courtney was first to spot Sandinista troops rappelling from American-made Huey helicopters just across the border about a half-mile from the FDN patrol. It was either an exercise or a show of prowess for the benefit of the visiting CMA group.

"Tension heavy along border," Albright wrote in his notes. "Ambush likely. They know we are here. Trip very rough. Jim [Powell] has much pain again. But no trouble.... Ten-and-a-half hours on the road. Much military protocol at our arrival. Briefing by *Comandante 26*, *Comandante 82*, *Comandante Invisible*, who escaped a Sandinista jail, and *Comandante Mike Lima*, who has one crippled leg and only one arm, but will not give up the fight."

On Wednesday morning, 29 August, the CMA group was briefed at Las Vegas and given a camp tour. They noted the relative size of the installation which was much bigger than the FDN settlement at their first stop. Suggestions were made to improve various aspects of security. Parker pointed out that the FDN's flat-top bunkers were more vulnerable to the incoming 122mm fire. He showed them how to build A-frame bunkers that would disperse shrapnel along the sides instead of allowing it to come straight through and injure troops inside.

Although the FDN had claymores and antitank mines, no one had taught them how to use the passive weapons. Understandably skittish around high explosives, the FDN troopers had simply left the mines in storage. CMA volunteers spent time teaching mine nomenclature, operation and employment. Others organized courses in compass and land navigation, patrolling and night operations, and ambush techniques. FDN fighters, averaging about 16 or 17 years old, seemed hungry for the professional knowledge the Americans were dispensing free of charge.

On Thursday, 30 August, FDN pilot Mario Pozo clattered into Las Vegas and landed the well-worn Hughes 500 which was the FDN's only helicopter. It was a



Posey's Produce is definitely a "mom and pop" operation. Patsy and Tom Posey check orders before he leaves to make early-morning deliveries around Decatur, Ala. Photo: James L. Pate

momentous occasion and the troopers gathered around the helo in awe. It and the C-47 which had been shot down earlier were the FDN's only air support. The aircraft had been given to the Contras by the CIA and they were invaluable commodities. Congress had cut off financial support for the anti-Sandinista effort and there would be no replacements for any aircraft downed in the fighting. CMA volunteers noted former helo-pilot Powell's obvious excitement when Pozo set the FDN bird down. Despite a language barrier, the two chopper pilots quickly became friends.

While Powell began teaching Pozo rough-terrain landings and other combat-flying techniques, Blanton and Albright organized a mini-jump school for 10 crack FDN troops from a guerrilla special operations detachment. Two FDN students, including Commander Invisible, were able to make 1,700-foot jumps before the helicopter was summoned away on other business.

The helicopter was gone all of Friday, 30 August, but returned again on 1 September. Powell resumed teaching Pozo about combat flying and confined area landing techniques, spending a lot of time helping the FDN pilot learn how to hold a stationary hover. Seats were removed from the rear of the aircraft in an effort to rig it for stretchers and medevac missions. Rocket pods were attached and the CMA helo experts worked on a way to strap additional stretchers to them. One helo would have to perform myriad missions for the FDN.

It was a challenge for their ingenuity. "The helicopter did not have a sighting device, or marks on the windows, or anything," Courtney recalled. They began

experimenting with various air-to-ground sighting techniques. Parker assigned himself to help Powell and Pozo, and the trio worked at a practice LZ about 150-200 meters from an area Courtney was using for other training.

Before leaving for the day on 1 September, both Parker and Powell left their wallets and passports with Courtney. Powell told Courtney, "I want you to keep my bifold. Don't look in it, but if you need it, there's an address in it."

About 1400 hours, instead of landing off at a distance, Pozo brought his bird down about 25-30 meters from Courtney's infantry training area. "It came in hot and set down quick," Courtney said. "Parker jumped out and ran over and said, 'We've got an emergency. We've got to go.' Apparently they were in such a hurry, that's all they wanted to do, tell us they had to go somewhere."

Camp training continued for about another hour before Courtney and the other CMA volunteers *dismissed their* charges for the day. Another hour passed, and a young FDN trooper with a portable radio came into the camp and said a transmission from Radio Managua had reported an FDN air strike against a Sandinista training academy at Santa Clara, just inside Nicaragua. The broadcast indicated four aircraft participated in the strike and one had been shot down.

"We waited and waited and the helicopter still hadn't come back," said Courtney. "Then the radio said the aircraft that had been shot down had two bodies in it. After a period of time, they amended the report to say it was a helicopter. They said one of the people ... had jumped out as it was coming down and that he was a big, blond-headed American with a beard. We knew when they said that that it was Jim Powell. The radio said his body burst when it hit the ground."

"We continued to listen to the radio. The freedom fighters moved a 2,000-man contingent in to about five clicks from the helicopter crash in hopes that the third

person that they apparently didn't have would get away and would find his way back to friendly lines," said Courtney. "Capt. Mack established a picket line up there in hopes the third person would show up."

Many of the 11,000 Sandinista troops in the area swarmed around the crash site. In addition, Western intelligence sources confirmed information obtained by SOF that 300-500 Cuban troops were in the immediate vicinity, part of the 2,500-3,000 Cuban military advisers believed to be in Nicaragua. Despite Sandinista claims that the FDN air strike on Santa Clara killed only three children and a female nurse, Western and Central American intelligence sources agree that at least four to six Cubans were KIA in the raid, and a large number of Sandinista troops were also killed or wounded.

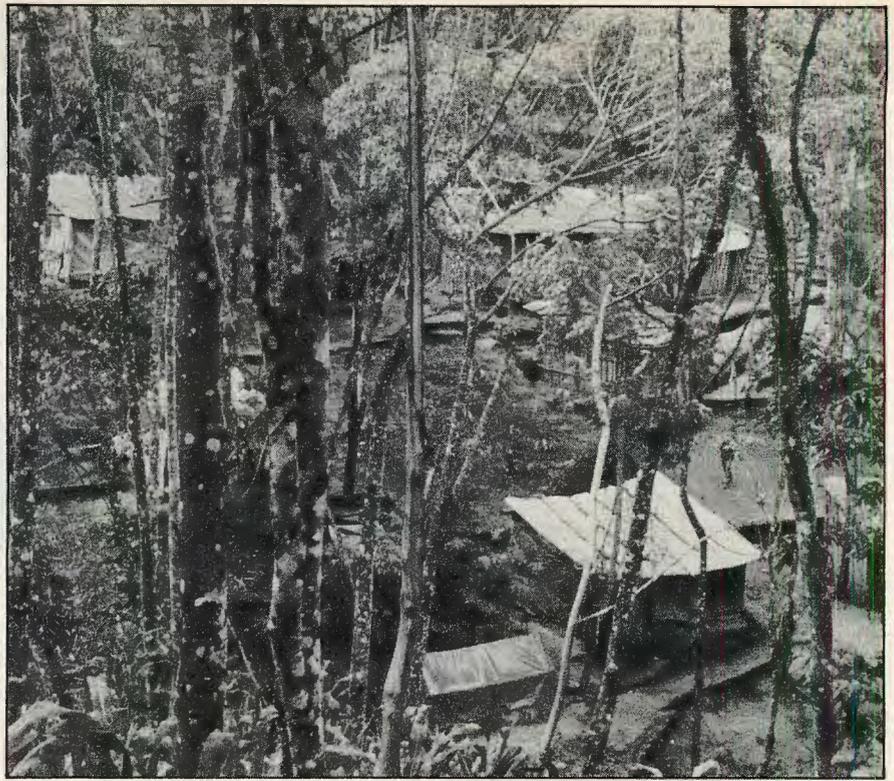
"The people back at the [FDN] base camp were dumbfounded," Courtney said. The Americans were in a state of semi-shock trying to decipher radio traffic from both sides of the border and determine exactly what had happened. "We kept hoping that the unaccounted-for person could have somehow escaped. We assumed it most likely would have been the man in the back of the chopper, probably Parker. We all knew he was in the best physical shape to make it out alive if he survived the crash.

"Nobody was hungry that night," Parker's buddy somberly recalled. "Everyone was kind of milling around in a stupor. We kept looking around, hoping maybe that he'd just walk into camp with that smile of his, or that someone would radio in to say he'd met the picket line and that they were bringing him in."

Courtney gathered up the wallets and passports he had been given by Parker and Powell and began to collect their gear. Among Powell's belongings he found a three-page journal of their trip.

The FDN leaders, positive the Sandinistas knew other U.S. personnel were just over the border and fearful of a reprisal strike, advised the remaining four CMA trainers to leave at first light on 2 September for Tegucigalpa. The group pulled out in a jeep convoy, still not knowing if Parker was alive, dead, captured, or what. They drove all day through the mountains, much of the time within a few yards of the border. Their FDN escorts were jumpy, the security alert was high and a Sandinista ambush was expected. None came. They arrived safe but exhausted in the Honduran capital about 2100.

The four CMA members were immediately taken to a safe house, a private residence, where they were told to store their gear and clean up. Pizza was brought in and the team members ate hungrily. Soon, they were told, "a gentleman" would arrive to see them. A short time later an official from the U.S. Consulate came in to tell them that a Honduran investigation into the incident would begin



at precisely noon the following day.

"The hint was very strong," Albright said, "that we should be airborne and out of the country by then. He didn't need to hit us over the head with a hammer for us to figure that out. The Hondurans obviously wanted us gone before they began their investigation."

Early the next morning, 3 September, Albright boarded a TACA Air Lines flight to Miami. Courtney, McKnight and Blanton flew back to New Orleans aboard Powell's Cessna 206. The group was met by Posey and Mario Calero, who had heard the news broadcasts. "They had one newscast on tape," Courtney said, "and the information we'd given the gentleman the night before in 'Teague' was in there. The White House had already confirmed that there were two Americans involved."

"If they've got this on today, they'll have the names on tomorrow," Courtney told the others. "We've got to get up there first and notify the family members."

A storm system prevented a Cessna flight from New Orleans to Huntsville. Courtney, Posey and Blanton immediately set out in Posey's van, driving all night. Courtney arrived at his Huntsville residence at about 0800 on 4 September to tell his wife the news. He then left to find Parker's ex-wife, Sharon. When Courtney arrived, Parker's in-laws were there with Parker's three-year-old daughter, but Sharon had left to take the six-year-old girl to register for her first day of school. Courtney broke the news to Sharon's parents. The father immediately left to bring his daughter and granddaughter back home. Once home in the garage, he told Sharon that her ex-husband, the man she

Hidden in the background of this FDN base camp is a "hospital," which is able to provide wounded freedom fighters with little more than first aid. Because of limited medevac capability, wounded guerrillas must reach the base camp under their own power or die alone in the jungle.

hoped to remarry, was dead.

Sharon burst into her parents house, hysterical. On confronting Courtney, he recalls, "she said some things that she didn't mean, things she later apologized for, like 'Why did you come back instead of him?'"

Courtney then went to the Huntsville Police Department to tell Parker's many friends and co-workers. Parker's police partner, Roger Taylor, left with Courtney to drive to Guntersville to break the sad story to Parker's sister, Sheila.

Courtney and Taylor entered her home and asked Sheila where her husband was. As if not hearing them, she stared blankly at them, asking, "Where's my brother?" They asked again for her husband, but sensing the tragedy, she only repeated, "Where's my brother?"

"He's not coming back," Taylor finally said.

Finally, after almost four weeks, the bodies came home, Parker's to be buried on a Huntsville hillside, as he had once requested, Powell to be laid to rest in Memphis. In the meantime, the families and the CMA had to endure the scrutiny of the government, the press and a largely unsympathetic public, who saw the dead men and their compatriots not as freedom fighters, but as some type of immoral,

Continued on page 122



COMBAT IN KUNAR

Commander Arab Breaks an Uneasy Truce

by Mark Warman

EVIL blossoms of light from the muzzle of a recoilless gun pierced the inky black of the night. Following an ear-splitting explosion, flames erupted from a bunker to our right front. The wily rebels of the mujahideen had pre-sighted the weapon just before sundown in view of any Afghan Army look-outs who were professional enough to scan the high ground with binoculars. But the soldiers were busy contemplating an evening of celebration in Chowki on this night in August 1984.

Now they were paying for the distraction. Cackling into the night air the rebel gunners banged off another round and brewed up a second bunker to the left front. It too had been pre-selected and ranged during their daylight recon of this area that had been left in relative peace and security over the past year.

A second mujahideen formation, armed with RPGs and an odd lot of rifles, moved under cover of the recoilless gunfire to assault government troops in the town. Over the rattle of small-arms fire an 82mm mortar coughed out rounds aimed at an ammo dump on the outskirts of Chowki.

LONG RANGE REPORTER

Guided tours of liberated Afghanistan are common enough, so stories from the sharp end stand out. Mark Warman's stories get noticed, because he does his research accompanying mujahideen assassination missions into Afghanistan's capital (see "Kabul's Urban Guerrillas," SOF, Nov. '82) or interviewing a resistance commander as he directs the shelling of an Afghan Army outpost.

Veteran correspondent for *The London Sunday Times*, *The London Observer* and the now-defunct *Arabia*, Warman rejoins SOF to take you back to the battle lines of Afghanistan.

Happy holy warrior walks through liberated zone of Kunar. Photo: Mark Warman



I thought the mujahideen were being a bit brash for an attack staged by so few men with so little ammo. They did not seem at all concerned. I watched as an AGS-17 spat two- and three-round bursts of 30mm HE grenades at us from the slope of a hill just 200 meters to our right. The shrapnel spread by their impact would have torn hell out of us if we had been where the Afghan Army gunner presumed we would be. Fortunately, we weren't.

Mohammad Arab and I sat comfortably on the roof of a distant house watching the fight unfold and trying to follow the action in the glow of muzzle flashes. By Afghan standards we were safe and the mujahideen laughed loudly when I ducked a long stream of green tracer curving in our direction from the confused defenders of Chowki. Like most of the minor skirmishes between the mujahideen and the Afghan Army in this area, the battle at Chowki was inconclusive. It simply continued full-tilt until the mujahideen finally ran out of ammunition.

When that happened, Mohammad Arab led his men to a refugee camp in Pakistan where they waited for another ammunition shipment. That would take about a month so the war in the Kunar area of Afghanistan went on hold until around the middle of September. It was no big deal for mujahideen leader Mohammad Arab. He had spent the last week of July preparing for battle in his Kunar Valley home ground. The valley stretches north from Jalalabad, parallel to the Pakistan border, between 15 and 20 kilometers inside Afghanistan. The Kunar River which cleaves through the length of the valley flows fast and wide through a complex maze of irrigation ditches. Mohammad Arab loves the area but he hates the Afghan Army troops and their Russian advisers who occupy the many villages of the Kunar.

He comes by his feelings honestly. The burly, 32-year-old Pathan was once a government customs officer working the Afghan end of the Khyber Pass. In the Afghan Army he drove a

T-54 tank. He became angry, disenchanted and finally rebellious when the Russians invaded his country.

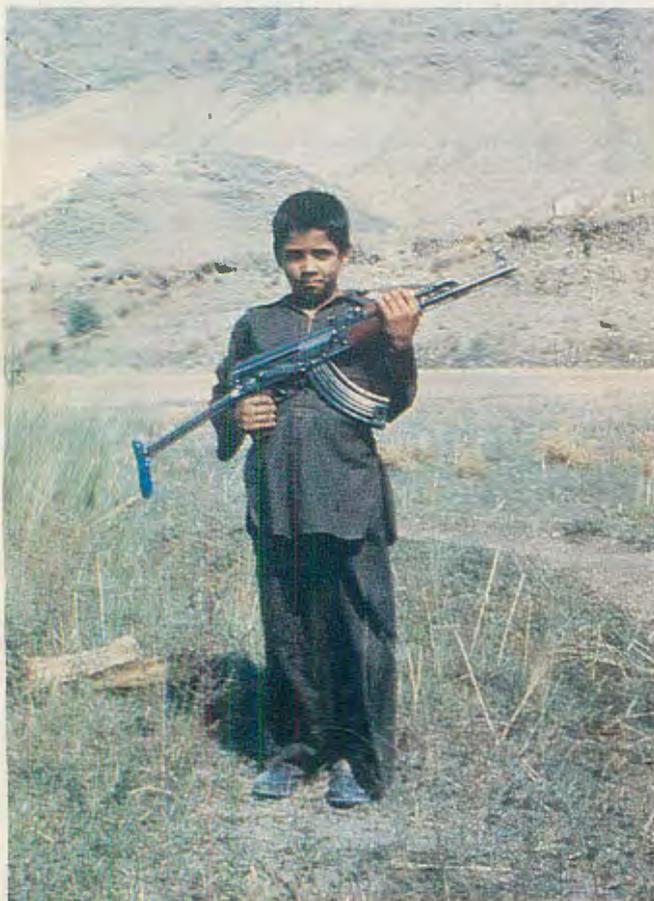
Arab currently commands the mujahideen loyal to the Yunis Khalis faction of the exile *Hezb' Islami* Party. Khalis is regarded by many Afghans as a man of action. He regularly exposes himself to danger inside Afghanistan, which makes him a marked departure from other Afghan political leaders who range from a former car dealer to a Khomeini-like Islamic zealot.

Khalis recently withdrew from the Islamic Alliance which included the Gulbuddin faction of *Hezb' Islami* and *Jamiat-I-Islami*, charging widespread corruption. He is unlikely to join Islamic Unity — the other major resistance coalition — because of the connection with Afghanistan's former monarch, Mohammad Zahir Shah. Khalis blames the king for originally letting the Russians gain influence in his country. Men like Mohammad Arab tend to agree and gladly carry on the fight in Khalis' name.

In 1979 Arab and Aqa Mohammad began armed resistance to the communist government of their country led by Nur Mohammad Taraki. They were the only two avowed mujahideen in the Kunar area but that didn't come as a surprise to anyone. Kunar residents and their immediate neighbors to the north in Nuristan have long been known for strong resistance to foreign invasion or interference in their affairs. Alexander the Great suffered defeat in this area and as recently as 1946 Kunar was a center of resistance to the king's attempts to introduce national conscription.

But the king is long gone and the Soviets and Afghan government troops are causing trouble in Kabul. The Russians and their puppets actually occupy relatively little of the remote Afghan hinterlands but they have all the modern technology to deny these areas to the Freedom Fighters, using fixed-wing attack aircraft and deadly helicopter gunships. Naturally, they concentrate on the border areas through which pass the essential com-

"Give me a gun so I can fight." Young and old alike plead for weapons to wage *Jihad* . Photo: Mark Warman



Mujahid landing craft on the Kunar: eight tires, one rope and a brushwood deck. Photo: Mark Warman



THE HILL TRIBES

Afghanistan is a natural fortress defended by natural soldiers. Potential conquerors of Asia have always stumbled over this block. The Soviet Union is just the latest example.

From the Amu Darya to the Indus and from the Pamir Mountains to the deserts of Iran, Afghanistan is physically hostile. Mountains over 25,000 feet, passes over 14,000 feet and waterless deserts are more difficult to defeat than many armies. Yet it is the people who inhabit this natural fortress that compose Afghanistan's strongest bulwark.

These hard lands have bred hard people. Living at a double crossroads — between Central Asia and the Indus Valley, between the Iranian plateau and the Far East — Afghans have fought many invaders. And because Afghans are a mixture of ethnic groups, they fight each other when there are no foreigners around to incur their wrath.

In the West we have come to refer to them as "Afghans" (a word coined by Iranians) but they go by much more ancient titles such as *Tadzhik*, *Durrani*, *Pushtun*, *Uzbek*, *Turkmen*, *Ghaljis*, *Khakhai*. More often Afghans use tribal names, calling themselves *Yusufzai*, *Waziris*, *Afridis*, *Khorait*, *Abshahiel*, *Mahsuds* or *Zadrans*.

The Afghans can be split into four major groups. 1) The Eastern Afghans (the *Khakhi* tribes like the *Yusufzai*) who live in northern Pakistan from Peshawar up to the borders of China and Russia. 2) The Western Afghans (the *Durrani* and *Ghaljis*) inhabit the southwestern area and are nomadic. 3) The minority groups of Turks and Mongols (*Tadzhiks*, *Hazara*, *Uzbeks*, *Turkmen*) who are generally located north of Kabul and in the center of the country. 4) The hill tribes, called the *Karlanri Pathans*, like the *Waziris*, *Mahsuds*, *Zadrans*, *Khataks*, etc. who are located in the south

and east, along both sides of the current border with Pakistan.

The problem of identifying who the Afghans are is complicated by language. The tribes living in the northeast and the southwest speak *Pushtu*, an Indo-Iranian language and closely related to Persian. *Dari*, or *Farsi*, which is descended from Persian, is also spoken commonly in Afghanistan. The *Durrani*s, even though *Pushtu* in origin, usually speak *Dari*.

The hill tribes, the people that we typically refer to as *Pathans*, are probably hold-outs from the original stock of Indo-Europeans who came into the area around 1500 B.C. Herodotus, the Greek historian, mentions a people called at various places in his chronicles the *Paktiuke*, *Paktues* and *Paktuan*. They lived near India and fought as allies of the ancient Persians.

It is the hill tribes which have fought so hard to keep alive the famous code of the Northwest Frontier, *Pukhtunwali*, which demands courage, hospitality to guests or unarmed men and keeps alive the system of blood feuds which keeps the political pot boiling in Afghanistan.

The hill tribes, by the names we know them today, were written about the first time by Babur, Mughal Emperor from 1482-1530, the conqueror of India, a descendant of both Tamerlane and Genghis Khan. In Babur's memoirs he describes fierce tribesmen (like the *Waziris*) who blocked the passes leading down into India and blocked his campaigns to the south. They resolutely refused to pay taxes despite his many expeditions into their country.

To this day the hill tribes don't pay taxes. The Pakistanis have given the tribes an autonomous area. There life goes on as it always has.

The communists in Kabul are being taught the lesson learned by previous potential conquerors. The *Pathan* hill tribes don't surrender their independence. — *Jim Graves*



munications, supplies and reinforcements for the mujahideen.

Despite all that, Commander Arab and his band of 200 armed mujahideen have opened an eight-kilometer gap in the Afghan Army's Kunar Valley defenses. They control four major villages and both banks of the river. The main road through the valley is impassable to all but the most heavily armed and escorted Soviet convoys.

The resistance makes undramatic, plodding progress in eastern Afghanistan. Their buddies further south are doing better. Mujahideen have successfully maintained a siege around the government garrison town of Zazi. Helicopter is the only means of resupply for the hard-pressed troops in the town. On the road to Ghazni, a major population center in eastern Afghanistan, the

rebels run regular truck convoys which government troops try unsuccessfully to chase down or ambush. Bit by bit, the Afghans of the resistance are wresting control of their country from Russian hands.

Commander Arab was inspired by such successes when he returned to Kunar in July. He crossed the border to a small staging area at the foot of the Mitay Mountain in Pakistan and was unconcerned by the sight of two wounded warriors who had been evacuated from the Kunar by donkey and were waiting for a bus to take them to a hospital. The attending medic — a former petroleum engineer and proud graduate of a three-month Red Cross first-aid course — had provided the standard mujahideen remedy for any and all wounds or injuries: an application of

A TURBULENT TRUCE IN THE PANJSHER

Ahmad Shah Massood, commander of the *Jamiat-I-Islami* forces in the Panjsher Valley, made a truce with the Soviets in December 1982. In early 1983, the world found out about it. Wild speculation followed shock throughout Afghanistan and in free-world circles. Was it a sell-out?

Given the nature of the conflict in the Panjsher and the commander of the forces in the area, no one could be sure. Commander Massood and his Tadjik Freedom Fighters of the Panjsher had run Afghan Army troops out of the valley, and between 1979 and 1982 fought off six separate Russian assaults. That didn't seem like the track record of a man who would suddenly go soft on the Soviet occupation forces. Still no one could say for certain what prompted the ceasefire in one of the most tactically significant areas of Afghanistan.

The Panjsher, a narrow, fertile valley starting just north of Kabul and running generally southwest to northeast, was a perfect guerrilla stronghold. From the valley, Massood's forces were able to strike convoys coming from the USSR through the Salang Tunnel (the only road into Kabul from the north), Bagram Air Base (the Soviets' principal air facility) and even Kabul itself.

Massood, a 30-year-old, Dari- (Afghan dialect for Farsi) and French-speaking former engineering student turned guerrilla chieftain and philosopher, was also a natural. Western journalists who had visited Massood in his Panjsher redoubt filled columns with speculation about his disturbing and unexpected agreement with the Russians.

The best available evidence indicates Massood either agreed not to attack the communists anywhere in Afghanistan or promised not to attack the major communist base at Roka near the mouth of the Panjsher and along the roads coming out of the Salang Tunnel. In return the Soviets likely agreed to end the bombing of the Panjsher and make no attempts to establish a government presence in the valley beyond Roka.

Whatever the actual terms of the agreement, it was greeted with immediate and justified suspicion by the other mujahideen resistance groups. Rumors circulated in the bazaar indicating the Russians had bought Massood. Supporting this thesis were statements by *Jamiat-I-Islami* Commander Zabiullah in Mazar-I-Sharif (See "Afghan Raiders On Russia's Border," SOF, September '84) and Commander Abdul Haq, who operates in Kabul Province. Zabiullah indicated he had refused money offered for a nonaggression pact with the communists and Abdul Haq claimed the USSR had offered him \$400,000 to quit attacking the Kabul power plants and transmission lines.

Other mujahideen leaders complained Massood's treaty would allow the Russians to redeploy units protecting Bagram and the Salang Tunnel approaches to other areas. That prediction came to pass quickly. A Soviet unit ambushed near Urgun on 10 May 1983 by the National



Shah Ahmad Masood (center, smiling) made a controversial non-aggression pact with the Soviets. Photo: AP/Wide World

Islamic Front of Afghanistan had originally been deployed in the Panjsher facing Massood's troops. The Russians were also able to safely move convoys into the area to support their 1983 summer offensive.

Given such tactical set-backs for the resistance movement, why would Massood do it? His supporters claim it was all subterfuge.

"We knew it would be a propaganda and political loss for us," said *Jamiat-I-Islami* spokesman Masood Khalili, "but Massood wanted the military advantage.

"He needed time to train men, harvest crops (which we had not really been able to do since 1979), resupply and plan for the war. Our people were not ready or prepared for this war when it started in 1979 and after three years we began to realize we had made some mistakes. In the first three years we thought we could defeat the Soviets with bravery. But can you really beat the Soviets with bravery? Can you defeat the USSR with tribal warfare? How long can bravery last?

"Massood realized the only way we could defeat the USSR was by learning scientific guerrilla warfare. He constantly pressures me to send him more books. He realized that in the long run we had to have a systematic approach, a program to win. Our aid is limited and improperly channeled and the resistance is just not as effective as it should be. Massood wanted to build the proper kind of army and then launch a selective campaign using hide and hit tactics."

Suddenly Massood's willingness to negotiate with the Russians takes on new meaning to the mujahideen. Spokesman Khalili continued.

"We can ambush almost any convoy coming through the Salang Tunnel, but why do it? Not all of them are worth ambushing. Massood wants to hit specific convoys. If a convoy comes through the Salang Tunnel with something you don't need, why hit it? But if you need RPGs and the convoy has a shipment of RPGs, then you hit it."

Khalili claims, and other sources in Pakistan confirm, that

gentian violet, a non-sterile gauze dressing and some rare antibiotics. Arab considered the wounded men lucky. At least they'd be safe from marauding Soviet helicopters for a while.

Resupplied and fortified, Arab moved his mujahideen force — ranks swelled by one British journalist — downslope, away from the sanctuary of Pakistan. He was headed on a course through the Shonkle Valley to the Kunar River.

Thirty armed men in Mohammad Arab's group stopped for the night in the village of Shekhal on the northern slopes of the valley. They could have reached the destination in another day's march but there was trouble here. It took most of the day and much of Commander Arab's diplomatic skill to settle it.

A tribal feud had broken out between the villagers of Shekhal

"Massood did not allow his men to hang their Kalashnikovs up on a nail during the truce period." The Panjsher fighters ventured outside their valley to help other resistance forces . . . which may be why the truce is no longer in effect.

Massood's men fought in the shadow of other mujahideen formations until the Spring of 1984 but they did not directly hamper Soviet activity. They kept their bargain. The rumor in Pakistan in May was that the Soviets and Kabul communists had negotiated with Massood right up to the day the truce broke down.

Khalili says Massood was merely stalling for time. He had intelligence which predicted an assault on the Panjsher. Massood evacuated the civilians in early March and most of the troops were able to hide in side-valley caves when the assaults came. Massood had expected the Russians to use gas (they did), so his troops had gas masks. Massood also asked for and received an emergency shipment of anti-tank mines to thwart Soviet armor during the negotiation period. Finally, he resumed the guerrilla campaign against Salang Tunnel approaches starting on 18 April.

Soviet retaliation began on 21 April. Three days of high-altitude carpet bombing was followed by a similar period of air-dispersed gas attacks. On the sixth day after the truce breakdown, 20,000 Soviet troops were lifted into the Panjsher Valley by Mi-24 helicopters. Afghan Army units came on APCs and trucks and they suffered heavy casualties from the crop of 1,600 anti-personnel and anti-tank mines Massood planted on the Panjsher approach routes.

The Russians eventually overwhelmed organized resistance in the Panjsher but it was a hollow victory. Pushing Massood's entrenched defenders out of the valley took an enormous toll in men and equipment lost. Meanwhile, Massood appears to have escaped with most of his men. He is now reported to be operating from other valleys beyond the Panjsher.

Russians being Russians, there was one other tactic tried to defeat Massood in the Panjsher before committing the main body of their assault force. In the first week of the attack the Kabul government announced that it had killed or captured Massood. At different times they claimed both.

They *did* try to assassinate Massood. Three hit-teams penetrated the Panjsher before the attack. Fortunately for Massood, the communist Afghan killers included one Tadzhiik from the Panjsher.

His team got within 10 yards of Massood but the Tadzhiik informed. His companions and the other two teams were captured. The Tadzhiik who changed his mind told Massood that Babrak Karmal, President of Afghanistan, had given him the pistol with which he was to shoot Massood. Karmal promised a provincial governorship if Massood died.

The Tadzhiik may have figured he had to be alive to collect. He wouldn't live long in the Panjsher after assassinating Massood.

His bargain, like Massood's controversial truce with the Russians, was doomed to be broken. — Jim Graves

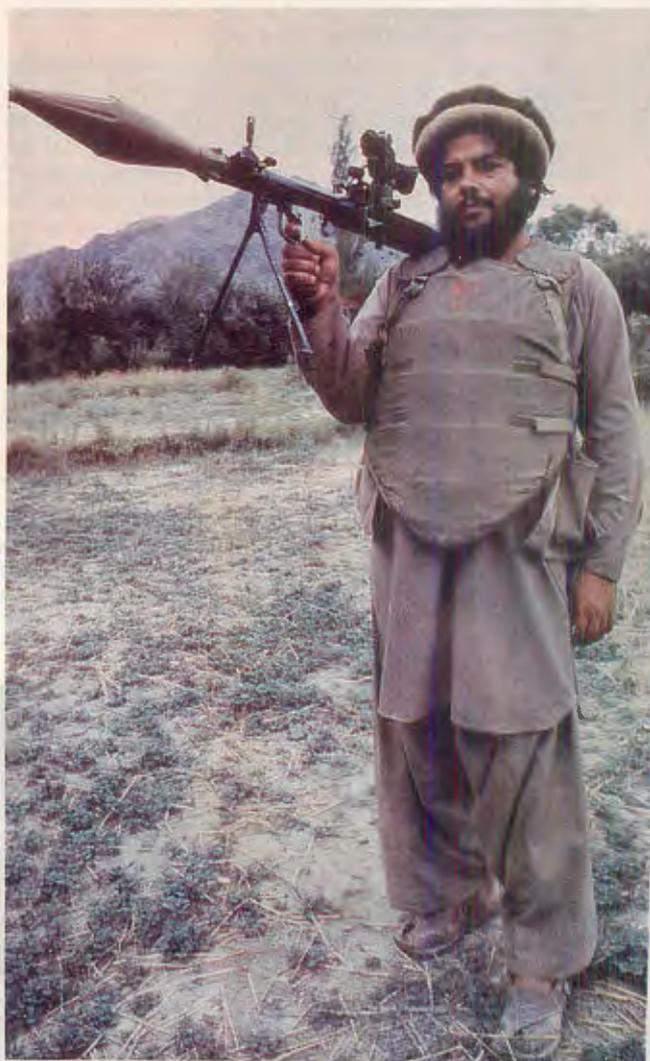
and the inhabitants of Gargo, six kilometers across the valley. Two men were dead on each side. Since Mohammad Arab has 20 armed men on permanent station in each village he was obligated to arrange a ceasefire. Unlike many of the ideologically-intolerant Afghan leaders, Arab is well-read in the theory of guerrilla warfare. He knows the villagers are the water in which his mujahideen fish must swim.

After seven hours of see-saw negotiation an agreement was finally reached. Each side pledged five rifles — valuable commodities in occupied Afghanistan — to keep the peace. The rifles would be awarded to the injured party if shooting started again.

Feuds are endemic to Afghanistan but they are not confined to rural tribesmen. Peshawar-based political parties frequently decide on the enemy of the day depending on the status of such disputes. If the argument is heated enough, the military arms of the political parties may take to shooting each other rather than the Russians.

Hekmatyar Gulbuddin — the most extreme of the Afghan fundamentalists — once closed a pass to the Panjsher, vital for resupply of Ahmad Shah Massood's mujahideen formations, as a result of a feud. It remained closed until the 1984 Soviet major offensive in the Panjsher, when public opinion forced Gulbuddin's *Hezb' Islami* forces to allow Massood's supplies through the pass. As late as year's end, sources in Peshawar indicated the vital pass was closed again and the people tasked with resupplying Massood are forced to take a longer route to reach his camps.

Captured Soviet body armor (see SOF's scoop on Soviet body armor in May '84, p. 70) protects Mohammad Zaffar, mujahid RPG specialist. Photo: Mark Warman



But the feud in Shekhal was not so serious and we moved on to the village of Malagoro in time to spend the evening on the balcony of a mosque. As the mujahideen cleaned their weapons, mosque attendants scurried about picking up gun-oil polluted gravel and throwing it down into the valley below. Half Mohammad Arab's men carried AKM folding-stock Kalashnikovs while

the other half doggedly stuck with bolt-action .303 Lee-Enfields. They also had two RPG-7s, one captured from the Russians and another of Chinese manufacture. A captured, Chinese-made 82mm B-10 recoilless gun would be introduced on this mission. Somewhere along our route, Commander Arab's men would stop to collect a cache of other weapons including 200 rifles, six

THE AFGHAN FREEDOM FIGHTERS' ORGANIZATION

A single, unified Afghan resistance front might drive the Russians from Afghanistan. Unfortunately, that potential is a virtual impossibility given the inevitable division of the Freedom Fighter factions along familial, tribal, ethnic, linguistic, religious and political lines.

The anti-communist revolt started in 1978. Nuristani took up arms against the government of President Noor Mohammad Taraki who had ordered radical reforms in traditional Afghan education, marriage customs, religion and agriculture.

By early 1979 there were literally scores of individual mujahideen groups, or fronts, in the countryside, who would kill any communists who came to their land. They called the war a *jihad*. All three terms — mujahideen, jihad and land (as it applies in Afghanistan) — are mostly misunderstood in the West.

A *jihad* translates as "holy war." But Moslems clarify it as "the struggle to advance Islam." A *mujahid* is a Moslem who fights in *jihad*. Under their definition an Afghan who provides food for a passing fighter is also *mujahid*, as is an Afghan working in the Middle East who contributes money or supports the struggle by word or deed.

The concept of land means something different to most Afghans than it does to most Westerners. When a *Tadzhik* from Bazarak village in the Panjsher Valley says he's going to drive the Russians from the land, he's talking about driving them from Bazarak. That's not to indicate he would not also walk down the valley five kilometers to help out the *Tadzhiks* in Roka with their communist problem. If the weather's nice, he has enough bullets and there are enough spoils to go around, he might even walk 35 kilometers to the Salang Road and help the *Tadzhiks* ambush Russian convoys.

Once he's taken care of all the Russians in Parwan Province, the *jihad* has been won as far as he's concerned. If the Russians are still active in Paktia, the *Pushtuns* will take care of that. It's an entirely different land, after all.



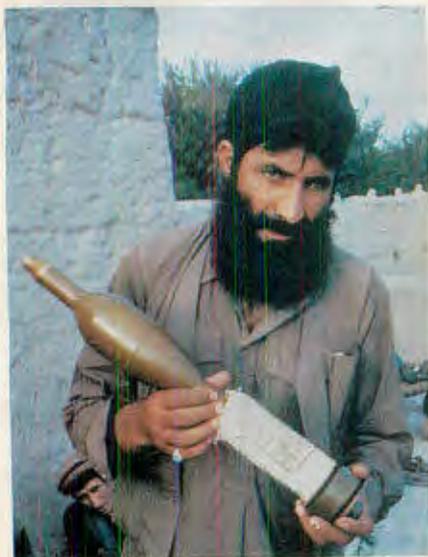
Afghans are relatively secure in many areas. Here they drink tea in staging area just inside Afghanistan. Photo: SOF

In mid-1979 that mentality began to change and six mujahideen fronts emerged inside Pakistan, first at Miran Shah and later in Peshawar. These groups tried to broaden resistance goals and minimize prejudice and feuds which crippled the *jihad*.

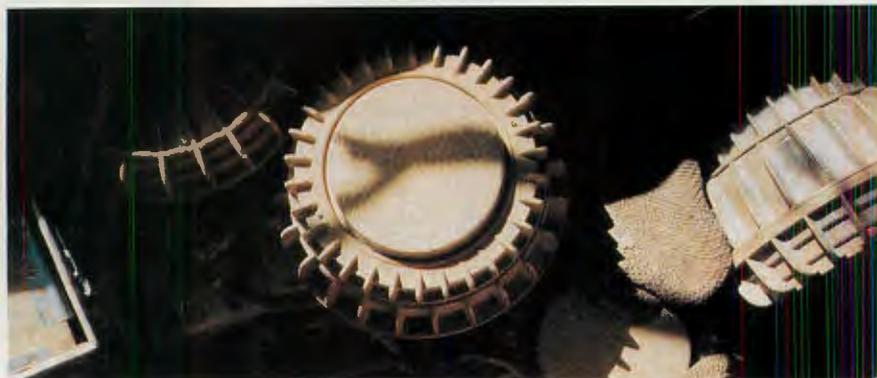
Today the resistance is divided into two major groups: the fundamentalists and the traditionalists.

The three fundamentalists are:

- Hezb' Islami: Led by Hekmatyar Gulbuddin, 43. One of the largest groups and perhaps the one best connected to rich Middle Easterners. Through his reported contacts in the Moslem Brotherhood (a secret society which originated in Egypt) Gulbuddin maintains those contacts. When Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was president of Pakistan he supported Gulbuddin's political party which called for the formation of a true Islamic state in Afghanistan modeled after Iran. Pakistani



LEFT: Communists help when the Free World fails: Commander Mohammad Arab holds Chinese 82mm round. Photo: Mark Warman. BELOW: Foreign aid takes the form of anti-armor mines. Photo: SOF. RIGHT: Suspicion, walls and bolted doors characterize Peshawar political HQs for the resistance fronts in Pakistan. But mujahideen in the field begin to cast differences aside to kill invaders. Photo: SOF



more RPG-7s, an 82mm mortar and a Dashika (Afghan word from DShK-38) 12.7mm heavy machine gun. The plan was to use the firepower in an all-out attack on complacent Afghan Army troops occupying the Kunar River town of Chowki.

We moved out early next morning in groups of two and three. At the mouth of the Shonkle, where it joins the Kunar Valley, an

abandoned government bunker and trench complex is under observation from an OP on Kuligram Mountain five kilometers to the south. Afghan Army FOs can call down 82mm mortar fire on any groups of mujahideen they spot coming out of Shonkle

Continued on page 112

authorities continue that support. Gulbuddin is opposed to the traditional system of power in Afghanistan — the *mullahs* (village religious leaders) and *maliks* or *khans* (tribal chiefs). He is a controversial leader, suspected by the other groups of sometimes working for the Soviets. It is claimed that he was a member of the Parcham faction of the Afghan communist party.

- **Hezb' Islami Afghanistan:** Led by Maulavi Mohammad Yonis Khalis, 63. Islamic fundamentalist but not of the Gulbuddin type. This group is strongest in *Pushu*-speaking areas along the border, especially in Nangarhar Province. Considered to be one of the better fighting organizations. It has fought with Gulbuddin's group.

- **Jamiat-I-Islami:** Led by Professor Burhanuddin Rabbini, 51, a former religious lecturer on the Kabul University faculty. Jamiat is primarily made up of the three million *Tadzhiks* who live in northern Afghanistan and is strongest in Badakshan (where Rabbini is from), Kunduz, Balkh, Kapisa, Takhar and Baghlan. Rabbini is well connected in the Middle East. His organization has had pitched battles with Gulbuddin.

The traditionalists are:

- **National Islamic Front of Afghanistan:** Led by Sayyed Pir Gailani, head of the *Qadiri Sufi* sect who commands a large traditional following among the *Pushtuns*, particularly in southern and eastern Afghanistan (Wardak, Paktia, Ghazni, Logar and Nangarhar). His organization is trying to build its strength in the north. Of all the groups, Gailani's is the best connected in the West since many of his leaders were educated there. He is also a supporter of former King Zahir Shah, currently living in Italy.

- **Harakat Islami Afghanistan:** Led by Maulavi Mohammad Nabi Mohammadi, 63. Mohammadi's group is nationalist even though it is an organization dominated by the *mullahs*, the village religious leaders. These *mullahs* are not backers of the revolutionary fundamentalism of Iran. Harakat is strongest in Loghar, Kabul, Kandahar, Ghazni and Kunduz and has also fought Gulbuddin's men.

- **Afghan National Liberation Front:** Led by Sibghatullah Mojaddedi, 58, a former professor at Kabul University. He

has a strong traditional following among the *Pushtuns* because he comes from the *Shor Bazaar* sect, but his movement is nationalist in scope.

The fundamentalists and the traditionalists formed two working groups in 1982, the Alliance and the Unity, respectively. The two coalitions have been able to cooperate in some areas but not to the extent that the six separate fronts have lost their autonomy or identities. For example, contributions delivered to one of the fronts are considered for the specific use of that front unless the contribution is clearly identified as an Alliance or Unity contribution. The Alliance has been less successful than the Unity in presenting a united front since Gulbuddin's group is widely distrusted in mujahideen circles.

It is unlikely that any of the six major leaders will be able to bring into being a single organization representing all Afghans. Reports of petty internecine squabbles still emanate from Peshawar but they are countered by other tales of mujahideen ignoring politics and banding together to fight the *jihad*. The fighters inside seem to have less concern about the political and religious problems of some distant future when Afghanistan is free. Their concern is the Russians who are in their country right now. The message going back to Peshawar from the field seems to be "quit fighting, work together and get more guns, ammunition and food out to the front."

Interestingly enough the message may be having an effect on events at resistance headquarters in Pakistan. The Peshawar Fronts have toned down their previously boisterous, sometimes-violent bickering to *sotto voce* grumbling.

All Afghans are aware that a strong, charismatic leader, emerging to form one organization of Afghan Freedom Fighters, would be able to find new sources of funding and resources for their struggle. Western observers and Afghans who are not committed to one of the six groups think the only possible solution to the impasse in Peshawar is for some commander to emerge from inside Afghanistan who through his reputation as a fighter can *bring the Fronts* together.

Frankly, it's a long shot.

—Jim Graves



SINCE the British strolled off the Road to Mandalay and granted Burma her independence in 1948, the Southeast Asian nation has been racked by 35 years of armed struggle for power and dominance. It's a confusing situation for natives as well as observers who try vainly to keep track of who's killing whom in Burma.

The major fighting is essentially between the forces of the central government in Rangoon and a plethora of opposition formations. Currently fighting for independence from government control are 10 ethnic armies, two communist armies, several "opium armies" of Shan drug warlords, and a few Koumintang Nationalist armies, remnants of the forces that crossed the Burmese border to escape the Chinese communist victory in 1949.

While it gets extremely complicated keeping up with it all, the situation basically involves the military forces of Rangoon facing the rest of the armies and fighting on various fronts. The opposition is not as formidable as it seems since the Burmese government's enemies spend much of their time fighting each other.

The strongest and most familiar force fighting the Burmese central government is an alliance of ethnic armies called the *National Democratic Front (NDF)*. Formed in 1975, the NDF is now comprised of eight ethnic armies: The *Karen National Liberation Army*, the *Karenni Army*, the *Mon Liberation Army*, the *Arakan Liberation Army*, the *Shan State Army*, the *Kachin Independence Army*, the *Wa National Army*, the *Pa-o National Army*, and the *Lahu State Liberation Army*. Another non-aligned ethnic army, the *Palaung State Liberation Army*, operates in Burma's northern Shan States.

While these formations are clearly divided along ethnic lines, the issues that frequently lead to violence involve much more than tribal or territorial loyalties. Burma's Shan States, the primary opium producing areas of Southeast Asia's notorious "Golden Triangle," are home to several private

armies fighting over the lucrative raw dope trade. The largest of these is the *Shan United Army* commanded by the drug warlord Khun Sa. There are others organized to protect their interest in opium production and trade including most notably the *Shan United Revolutionary Army*, composed of Nationalist Chinese who fled to Burma in 1949.

Like most struggling Third World nations, Burma is not without her communist movements and influence. Two communist armies operate in the Chinese and Laotian border areas. The *Burmese Communist Party*, loosely supported by China, is the largest. The *Communist Party of Burma*, a smaller and more recent arrival, is supported by Vietnam. The potential for trouble is clear.

Fighting this hodgepodge of different armies and warlords are the Burmese Armed Forces. Comprised of a large well-trained army and a small navy and air force, the Burmese government can field about 180,000 troops over which there is no civilian control.

Burma's iron-fisted ruler Ne Win is the current military dictator. He seized power in a military coup in 1962 and abolished the parliamentary government established after independence. Calling his new doctrine the "Burmese Way to Socialism," Ne Win imposed a roughshod military dictatorship complete with reeducation camps, secret police, controlled press, communes, work quotas, ration cards and the abolition of private property.

And he instituted a policy called "greater Burmese chauvinism" which eventually sparked violence and resistance to government control in the country. In simple language, Ne Win's policy means that ethnic minorities are neglected, oppressed or otherwise hassled by the Burmese majority. Political dissent is outlawed by decree from Rangoon and suppressed by the Burmese secret police. They don't have much trouble collecting intelligence on subversive activities. East German specialists have trained



the Burmese secret police in brutally efficient interrogation methods.

Torture is the name of the game. Saw Haryuh, one of the commanders of the National Democratic Front's military wing, tells gruesome stories of brutal electric shock torture he endured as a prisoner of the Burmese security forces. Imprisoned because of alleged "dissident attitudes" even before he joined the NDF, Saw Haryuh also indicates he withstood water tortures as well as microwave and infrared tortures where energy waves are focused on a prisoner's head, heating up his brain and skull until the pain becomes unbearable. I heard other testimony describing rebel POWs being skinned alive by Burmese security forces and ethnic women being raped and beaten to death by Burmese soldiers.

Tentacles of Ne Win's oppressive rule

SOF FEATURE

RESISTING RANGOON

Who's Who in Burma

Text & Photos by Mark Johnson





ChiCom weapons captured from the Burmese Communist Party are a welcome addition to the guerrilla's arsenal. This KNLA soldier casually shoulders a Chinese Type 56 LMG.

between the Salween and Moi Rivers in eastern Burma.

Despite the hardships of fighting a better-equipped force, the Karen have not lost motivation and clung to their moral standards for the most part. Although opium trade would provide a lucrative and badly-needed source of income to support their struggle, the largely Christian Karen leadership prohibits drug trafficking across the borders in their area. Meanwhile, foreign aid to the Karen is minimal. They rely primarily on a five percent tax levied on smugglers plying a contraband trade between Thailand and Burma to fuel their continuing war.

Practically a nation unto themselves, the Karen have their own flag, language, schools, hospitals, democratic government and army. The army is seasoned, formidable and considered by many observers to be the best guerrilla formation in Southeast Asia. It boasts an estimated 6,000 to 10,000 troops under arms. Most are volunteers who enlist for periods from just over a year to a lifetime. Pay for KNLA troopers is lousy. They receive only rice, salt, uniforms and weapons in exchange for long, often savage years of jungle combat.

Among the Karen, the military sets the tempo for civilian life. Males are forbidden to marry until they have spent five years in the army. That is not as draconian as it seems; the military is a way of life for most males in Karen society. Many junior KNLA officers have 20 years in uniform and some senior officers boast 25 years of combat experience.

Necessity is the mother of invention in a guerrilla army and the KNLA has managed to give birth to a booming weapons black market in Thailand which provides them with guns captured from Burmese or communist forces as well as effective ordnance created in jungle workshops. Karen armorers claim to make their own projectiles for 81, 82, and 60mm mortars. Effective mines are made from glass bottles or bamboo. Heavier weapons are more difficult to obtain. A few heavy machine guns of Korean War vintage serve as the KNLA's primary anti-aircraft resource.

THE KARENNI ARMY (KA)

Called the Karenni or Red Karen (a description based upon the color of their native dress) the anti-communist Karenni control parts of Kayah State north of the White Karen strongholds. They are fighting to keep the independence of their territory which they call Karenni State claiming their

Although barely old enough to play with toy guns, these Karen kids have taken up arms against the government in Rangoon. Like their parents, they use any arms they can find. From left they are, an M1 carbine, an M16 and a Soviet SKS.

have tightened around virtually all levels of Burmese life. "National Solidarity Associations" function as local enforcement agencies on the village level. They watch for "dissident attitudes" and "counterrevolutionary tendencies" in much the same way as do the "bloc committees" in Cuba and other communist countries.

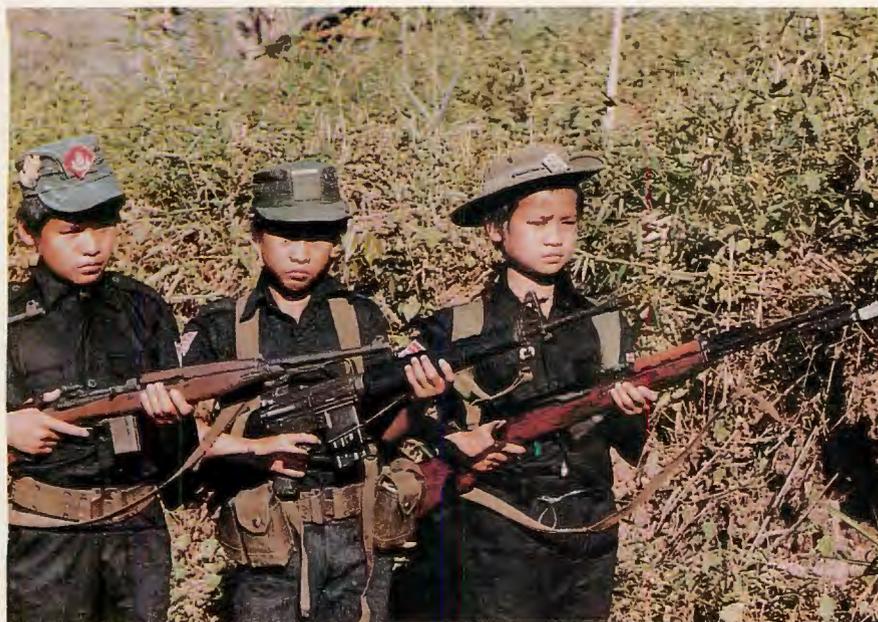
All this has resulted in a host of enemies arranged in a bewildering array of armies lined up in rebellion against Rangoon. Basically, the situation shakes out like this:

THE KAREN NATIONAL LIBERATION ARMY (KNLA)

Sometimes called the "White Karen" or "Karen Pyu" because of the color of their traditional costume, this largely Christian anti-communist ethnic minority is concen-

trated in the mountains of eastern Burma flanking the Thai border. A few villages can also be found sprinkled in the Irrawaddy River delta area to the west.

The Karen's armed struggle began in 1948 and for years they effectively kept the Burmese government troops confined to the area around the capital. During the early years when the Karen were kings of Burmese turf, the Rangoon bureaucracy was referred to as the "seven-mile government." The Karen had government forces so hamstrung that they were unable to project power much beyond the outskirts of Rangoon. Since 1971 when massive foreign aid began rolling in from various communist countries, the Burmese Army has managed to push Karen influence back to a line



rights to independence were acknowledged by the British and Burmese in an 1875 treaty which has been ignored by the Rangoon government. They have their own language, flag, and democratic government. Largely Christian, they abstain from opium trafficking but are poorer and less powerful than their White Karen allies to the south.

The Karenni army and militia are the muscle of the Red Karen movement. About 1,000 men under arms continue to harass sporadic Burmese patrols into their territory. With access to only limited funds, the KA is forced to obtain weapons from any source possible. The black market and captured Burmese or communist arms provide most of the arsenal.

THE MON LIBERATION ARMY (MLA)

Controlling the territory south of the White Karen strongholds, the Mon prowl the rugged jungles on the Burmese side of the Isthmus of Kra. The Mon are one of the oldest peoples in Burma. Between the fifth and ninth centuries, they controlled all of Burma. The strength of their forces is unknown but they are clearly not as powerful as the Karen forces to their north of their native lands.

THE PA-O NATIONAL ARMY (PNA)

Concentrated mainly in the hills near Taungyi in the Shan States north of the Karenni, the PNA has an estimated force of 5,000 men. Their language is closely related to the Karenni. Fighting for their independence they have sometimes made temporary alliances with the Burmese Communist Party to obtain weapons. At present they have split from any BCP connections and have joined the NDF.

THE SHAN STATE ARMY (SSA)

A powerful force in Burma, the SSA boasts an estimated 5,000 to 10,000 men concentrated east of the Salween River in the central Shan States. In the past the SSA



has provided a buffer against the expansion of the Burmese Communist Party into central Burma. Although the SSA and BCP have formed defense pacts in the past to enable the SSA to get ChiCom weapons to fight the Rangoon forces, the SSA has abrogated these agreements because of communist arrogance and ideological

interference with Shan religious practices. The SSA is indirectly involved with opium traffickers which they tax to provide revenue to buy arms.

THE WA NATIONAL ARMY (WNA)

Thought to be the direct descendants of the aboriginal people of Burma, the Wa are wedged into wild rain-forest areas on the

A RETURN TO SOUTHEAST ASIA

After spending three years in Vietnam as a soldier, a return to Southeast Asia was the last thing Mark Johnson expected. But that's exactly what happened. Intrigued by the ongoing guerrilla conflict in Burma, Johnson turned freelance writer and headed overseas.

While in Chiang Mai in northern Thailand, Johnson linked up with a Chinese jade smuggler who provided him with contacts in the National Democratic Front. Once inside Burma the rest was up to him.

On the banks of the Salween. Author (kneeling at center) poses with a group of Karenni fighters. Their weapons are whatever they can get — M1 carbines, AK-47s, HK G3s, an M-79 grenade launcher, even an old shotgun.





Most of the different Burmese resistance movements have their own unit patches. Top: Karenni Army shoulder insignia. Center: Karen National Liberation Army patch (worn on both sleeves). Bottom: Two different versions of the Mon Liberation Army insignia.

ideological communism and find themselves mostly used as mercenaries by the BCP.

Recently a large faction of southern Wa has split away from the BCP and joined with the National Democratic Front. Called the Wa National Army, this faction boasts a strength of some 5,000 well-armed soldiers who resist the Burmese Army incursions into their traditional strongholds.

Former British colonialists called them the "wild Wa" since they were formerly headhunters with a reputation for being extremely fierce in battle. As my guide put it, "The Wa are not afraid to die."

THE ARAKAN LIBERATION ARMY (ALA)

As they are fairly isolated in the traditional lands of western Burma, the ALA is a mystery to most observers. Their territory runs from the Bay of Bengal to the mountains which rise out of the western Irrawaddy River valley.

A group of ALA soldiers traversed Burma to join the NDF forces as an ideological contribution from the Arakanese people to the NDF forces in their fight with the Rangoon government. After walking 30 days to reach the Karen stronghold of Maw Po Kay, they dug in beside other NDF contingents to help fend off assaults by some 3,000 Burmese troops who besieged the border stronghold.

THE KACHIN INDEPENDENCE ARMY (KIA)

Thought to be one of the stronger ethnic armies, this hardy group lives in the rugged mountains of northern Burma. Separated from the rest of Burma by massive rock pinnacles which extend to peaks of 19,000 feet along the mountain range, the KIA have also remained a relatively obscure force.

Kachin were used effectively by the allies in the China-Burma-India theater to support British and American commandos sabotaging the Japanese Army in WWII. A friendly exterior that belied a ruthless knack for destroying the enemy earned them the nickname "amiable assassins."

The name still applies and the Kachin have proved to be as stubborn and difficult in combat as the terrain of their native mountain homeland. The Burmese Army has tried unsuccessfully to suppress the Kachin rebellion for many years. Fielding about 3,000 soldiers, the Kachin are the third largest insurgent group in Burma.

THE LAHU STATE LIBERATION ARMY (LSLA)

A relatively minor group with little effect

Determination and his M16 are all this KNLA soldier needs to fight government troops.



Accommodations in a guerrilla camp. No frills but they are hard for the Burmese Army to reach.

on the situation in Burma, the LSLA probably has no more than 300 fighting men. A recent addition to the NDF, the LSLA previously played only a small role in the separatist movement. In February 1984, the LSLA gave in to Rangoon's forceful prodding. Their surrender marked the end of an 11-year-long struggle which never quite got off the ground. The LSLA's surrender will not have any impact on the NDF's fight for freedom.

THE BURMESE COMMUNIST FORCES

The Burmese Communist Party has ridden the rollercoaster of changing power and influence in the nation. While not aligned with — and in most cases hostile to — the ethnic armies of the NDF, the BCP was once the strongest military power outside Rangoon. In the 1970s they had nearly 17,000 regulars under arms with a reinforcing militia of 10,000. But the changing winds of fortune *blew badly for* the communists. By 1980 a rift had opened in the BCP's relations with their mentors in Peking. The rift quickly became a gaping chasm and military aid from China slowed to a trickle. The BCP's military arm dwindled to less than 10,000 men by 1981. It probably remains around that figure today.

There are two major reasons for the break with China's communist power structure. The first involves pure politics. The BCP supported the Gang of Four in its ideological struggle against Deng Xiaoping. The Gang of Four lost.

Meanwhile, Vietnamese expansionism throughout Southeast Asia has shifted China's attention away from prime concerns with sponsoring Third World communist revolutions. In order to gain support for a united front in Southeast Asia against the Vietnamese, Peking has decided to rethink its foreign policy. A small movement like the BCP simply doesn't merit the same attention as Vietnamese aggression in the Chinese backyard.

Burmese border with China. The Wa, who speak Chinese and Burmese as well as their own language, have been heavily recruited in the past by the BCP. Those who volunteer to soldier for the communists have been primarily seeking an economic escape from extreme poverty and a hand-to-mouth existence. The Wa have not bought



BURMA'S MYSTERIOUS MILITARY MACHINE

The present confusion that reigns in Burma stems from more than just the bewildering array of rebel forces fighting the government. Burma's post-war cloak of self-imposed isolationism has made it difficult to get a handle on the composition and true capabilities of the Burmese Army. Regarded as somewhat of a pariah by Southeast Asian neighbors, Burma's government has done little to counter that image. Most Westerners don't know much about Burma's military and few regard it as a potent power among Asian armies.

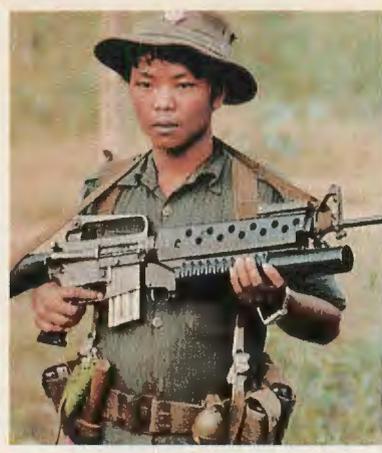
The formations funded by the Rangoon government have plenty of combat experience. Fierce fighting with a collection of enemies since before WWII and the present bout with rebel ethnic armies has kept them honed.

The roots of the modern Burmese defense establishment lie in WWII. The disarray left in the wake of the advancing Japanese tide prompted creation of the Burma Independence Army (BIA). Formed in late 1941 under Japanese guidance, the BIA developed the basis for the modern Burmese political and military system with an original "Thirty Comrades" calling the shots.

After Britain abandoned most of her former colonies following the war, Burma gained independence in 1948. Committed to a nonaligned foreign policy, Burma trundled through years of consolidation in the 1950s. In 1958, a split within the government precipitated a political crisis. Reconciliation seemed impossible and in September of that year the military took control of the country. Led by Ne Win, one of the original Thirty Comrades, the military set up a caretaker government with the limited goal of providing order until elections could be held. Early in 1960, elections put popular candidate U Nu at the head of Burma's reform government but his administration proved mostly ineffectual.

Ne Win again intervened. A coup in March 1962 set aside the constitution and established a new revolutionary government. He has been in power ever since and has attempted a thorough and radical transformation of Burmese society under a program called "The Burmese Way to Socialism." Led by a new elite of senior military leaders, the program rejects Western parliamentary democracy in favor of authoritarian political control through a single party system. Although Burma has had a constitution since 1974, real political power as well as control of the armed forces remained in the grip of Ne Win and his close supporters; most of them former military officers.

Because of Burma's non-aligned for-



Not all the ethnic armies' equipment is obsolete. This young KNLA trooper shows off his M16 and M203 grenade launcher.

eign policy, external defense is not a major preoccupation of the Burmese Army. India and Thailand are benevolent neighbors, Laos has internal problems and China, despite continuing problems with Burma, chooses to retain cordial relations with Ne Win.

Maintaining internal security is the Burmese Army's principal task. Burma has no formal military treaties with any other nation and does not allow foreign troops to enter her territories. Aid and advice have been solicited occasionally from the British, Yugoslavs, Russians and Chinese, but the policy of the army is to rely on its own system of training and obtaining arms. When weapons are needed, the army procures them from abroad for cash.

Largely a light infantry force, the Burmese Army has retained the British regimental system. Heavy weapons support for the 115 infantry battalions formed into six divisions is provided by five field artillery regiments, one anti-aircraft regiment and two armored regiments.

The bulk of the 180,000-man army is ethnic Burmese. The remainder is a mixture of the major ethnic groups in Burma. It has been official policy to man all military units with a mixture of Burmese and ethnic peoples, but the old British system lingers and units are still segregated according to cultural groups. Formed into battalions, they are the *Kachin Rifles*, five battalions; *Chin Rifles*, four battalions; *Shan Rifles*, one battalion and the *Kayah Rifles*, one battalion.

Each battalion is organized into four rifle companies of three platoons, plus a support company with mortar, machine gun and recoilless rifle platoons. An administration company provides the inevitable logistic tail. Full-strength battalions are listed at 27 officers and 723 enlisted men but they rarely muster more than 500 men. Three or four battalions

form a Tactical Operations Command; three TOCs form a division. Artillery and armored units are deployed only as required.

Despite the gravity of the military situation inside Burma, service in the armed forces remains voluntary. Pay is not as high as in civilian jobs, but the army offers free rations, clothing, accommodations and medical care. In a country with a standard of living as low as Burma's, there is little difficulty in recruiting officers or men.

There are virtually no reserves for the army. Called territorials (*sitwundans*), the reserves numbered about 14 battalions at independence but most have gradually been absorbed into regular formations.

Equipment is largely of British and American patterns and mostly obsolete. Some is being replaced by locally made small arms and heavy equipment from abroad. The H&K G3 is manufactured in Burma and is replacing musty old WWII rifles carried by many infantrymen. Vietnam-era M-79 grenade launchers provide explosive punch.

Artillery is mostly ancient U.S. 105mm howitzers and 100 or so 75mm Yugoslav mountain guns. British Humber armored cars and Ferret scout cars comprise Burma's only armor strength but armor does not play a major strategic role given the country's dense vegetation.

The air force is small and geared mostly toward aerial resupply missions. Ten ground attack fighters, 28 transports and 58 helicopters are flown and maintained by 9,000 Burmese airmen.

The military tradition is strong in Burma. During the colonial years, the British chose to believe that the Burmese did not make good soldiers. Such arrogance led the British to neglect the inclusion of an apolitical military in the administrative apparatus they bequeathed to the Burmese at independence.

Tribal rivalries have kept Burma in turmoil for centuries. Fueling that fire is Ne Win's Burmese Way to Socialism which is essentially a bland blend of Marxism and Buddhist ethics guiding a military regime in the attempt to force a martial ideology on its subjects. Because Burma is a country with such a large population of diverse ethnic groups, the program has run into stiff opposition.

In the form of enraged minorities clamoring for autonomy, Burma's rebellion has become significant among her neighbors who don't want the fighting to spread across their borders. In Rangoon, a continuing blind belief that Burma can ignore the mounting pressures of a hostile world has created a cloud of complacency that keeps the country's leaders from finding a realistic solution to the dilemma.

— Dale Andrade



KNLA officer keeps contact with his patrols in the bush. Limited commo equipment hinders the guerrilla's ability to mount complex operations.

Another reason for decreasing Chinese support of the BCP involves economics. When it comes to money in many worldwide enterprises, the end justifies the means. Burma has a ready supply of raw heroin and the communists have no moral qualms about trading in it. Heroin has become a new source of income and that reality has forced the communists to change their tactics.

The BCP has not mounted any military operations against the Burmese Army for the past two years. A behind-the-scenes truce with Rangoon has left the Burmese Army free to concentrate on the piecemeal

dismemberment of scattered hill tribes and efforts to deal with other NDF formations.

With firm faith in their Leninist doctrine, the BCP is satisfied to sit back to wait for the outcome of Burma's continuing internecine struggle. Rangoon tactical planners hope to eliminate the ethnic armies one by one and if they can pull it off, the BCP will undoubtedly step in to fill the vacuum.

The wild card in the jumbled deck of Burma is expanding Vietnamese influence. Hanoi's puppet *Communist Party of Burma (CPB)*, is playing the Marxist hand in the Burmese poker game. It is difficult to get a line on the influence of the CPB because it

operates along the remote Laotian border area of Burma where strangers are not usually welcome.

During the dry season of 1984, the Burmese Army launched an unprecedented offensive against the ethnic tribes living in the untamed wilderness of eastern Burma. The resultant combat operations have locked the NDF formations into a violent, no-holds-barred contest with the Burmese Army. Some effective alliances have been made, but fire fights generally develop between small, independent units and army patrols depending on who gets ambushed or sniped in the dense jungle.

The offensive is the biggest challenge to survival in the NDF's 35-year fight with various Rangoon governments. In January 1984, the Burmese Army's 44th Division with 10,000 combat troops using American helicopters, 120mm mortars and 105mm howitzers came knocking at the door of the Karen stronghold of Meh Ta Wah.

It should have been the death-blow for the Karen resistance, but sheer tenacity and courage allowed them to hold out against overwhelming odds. Contrary to many reports from the area, the pressure applied by the Burmese Army has not caused NDF resistance to collapse. Leaders of Burma's ethnic armies insist they will continue to fight until the government agrees to grant them the independence they feel is their right. ✖

WITH THE KARENNI GUERRILLAS ALONG THE SALWEEN RIVER

The woman finished her work in the shade of a thatched hut. Handing a rumpled OD fatigue shirt to Maj. Htoo, she retreated into the beckoning cool of the hut. Turning to me, Maj. Htoo handed over the shirt on which his wife had sewn two Karenni Army shoulder patches. "Here," he grinned up at me. "Now if the Burmese catch you they will surely kill you."

Two days of painful trekking through rugged mountains covered with dense jungle had brought me to this Karenni stronghold in eastern Burma. A local guide led me from Thailand through triple-canopy jungle down to a lush river valley. We caught a ride on a *hang yao* (long-tailed boat) for the final leg into a Karenni tribal territory.

The oppressive heat of the Asian dry season along with the lull of the rippling brown water made me drowsy and before I realized it we had arrived. Our boat nosed the shore with a gentle bump. As I sat on the riverbank brushing clouds

of darting gnats from my face, I couldn't help having second thoughts about my trip. I was waiting for another boat that would take me to what the resistance fighters in this area consider the "front lines." Why risk my life to tell people about this struggle? With nuclear saber-rattling filling the world's headlines, who would care about this nasty little jungle war? And then I got my personal answer.

As I waited for my ride, the riverbank quickly filled with refugees. Karenni women and children who had fled the Burmese Army's genocidal operations in the south were on their way to safety where Red Karen formations could provide some measure of security. They sat stoically on their possessions awaiting boats that would take them upstream. War and death was an everyday reality to them.

A voice from the water jolted me back to my own reality. It was Maj. Htoo. "We go now," he said as a *hang yao* bearing four Karenni soldiers, each armed with a different weapon, approached the rickety wharf. I scrambled aboard.

The silent voyage took us down the river, snaking through jungled mountains smothered by lime-green thickets of bamboo and soaring tropical hardwoods. Exotic birds flew across our path and crocodiles slithered into the water. Except for an occasional thatch lean-to on some lazy river bend, the banks of our watery highway were uninhabited.

But there was little opportunity to enjoy the scenery. Ahead the river split into two blind channels separated by a solid rock cliff. At the last moment a narrow opening appeared. Accelerating into an "S" turn in the river, the boatman deftly threaded the craft through the eye in the cliff. The glassy water abruptly transformed into a foaming cauldron. The boat plunged down a harrowing chute of white water. Any miscalculation and it was all over.

"We lose boat and three guns here before," bellowed Maj. Htoo over the roar of the rapids. "It is the worst place on the river."

Our boatman tamed it this time. I turned around and gave him a thumbs

Continued on page 130



DIVE ON THE ANDREA DORIA

At War or Underwater, the Rush Remains

Text & Photos by Gary Gentile

ICY fingers of Atlantic seawater pressed hard at my joints like a surgeon searching for a pulse. Mine was racing and I could clearly hear the thud of my heartbeat over the roar of regulator exhaust. Even under the tremendous pressure at this depth, it was hard not to hyperventilate. We had descended calmly through the murky depths when suddenly it loomed up out of the

wavering shadows on the silty bottom.

Even in her watery grave she was vast, impressive and ominous. Endless tiers of brass portholes, overgrown with flowering sea anemones, gaped along the curve of her massive hull. A funeral shroud of seaweed covered the railing where rich passengers once stood to wave farewell or greeting in the many ports she made. Only the smooth teak deck, holystoned to a rocky sheen by generations of sweating sailors, seemed to have resisted the ravages of her long burial at sea.

Still, as I hung suspended by my buoyancy compensator, there was no mistaking the hulking form of the *Andrea Doria*. I waited in reverence while my dive partner overcame his own awe and considered the chain of events that led me to descend on this sunken ship, one of the most fabled among divers from around the world.

When I took up diving as a hobby I had never heard of the *Andrea Doria*. I wasn't following a lifelong ambition, nor did I know the grandeur, the sense of accomplishment that came with the sport. Diving became my escape from a humdrum lifestyle — and from certain memories of worse times.

Listening to the hollow whoosh and roar of my regulator, I remembered another day as I prepared for an undersea escape. A buddy noticed the white sheen of shrapnel scars and asked me if my fascination with diving somehow stemmed from my experi-

It was a harrowing dive for all of us. But shaking afterwards with a post-trauma emotional reaction similar to the same thing I felt in Vietnam was maybe the reason I did it in the first place. Maybe it was something to replace that feeling, to encounter the edge of the envelope again.



The author, Gary Gentile, in diving gear aboard the dive boat.

VETERAN DIVER

Gary Gentile is a Vietnam veteran whose wide-ranging experience lets him cover what he does best — outdoor activities such as SCUBA diving, mountain climbing, backpacking, and canoeing. His service career in Vietnam consisted of service with the 25th Inf. Div., Third Brigade, and the Fourth Inf. Div. in Pleiku. He is presently writing a book tracing the development of a draft-age teenager in Vietnam.





ences in Vietnam. I had to think about that long and hard.

I flashed back to those long, difficult days spent in the jungle near Duc Pho: days of oppressive heat, insatiable insects, hunger, thirst, aching muscles and enemy contact. I remembered how alive I felt when a fire fight finally ended. Was I seeking somehow to regain that feeling by challenging myself and the elements of nature as a SCUBA diver?

Perhaps. Maybe I was looking for the same old rush I had felt in Vietnam. Maybe the surging adrenalin had somehow hooked me, causing me to want more and more. Maybe that was what had brought me to this place 200 feet below the surging surface of the Atlantic.

But I had been here before. In fact, I had made a half-dozen previous dives on the ill-fated *Andrea Doria* just to look around and chase the old feeling of excitement and adventure. This time I was after a prize: fine European china from the liner's first-class dining room.

Other divers with big bucks and helium-oxygen mixed gas rigs could go after the purser's safe and make a media event out of the recovery and the long-awaited, anticlimatic opening, but I wanted something more personal: something like gold embossed dishes with the name "Italia" inscribed to prove what I had accomplished on less money and more guts.

That's the sort of thinking that led me to begin planning this dramatic dive. Unlike previous dives on the wreck, we would not have millions of dollars worth of life-support equipment and trained back-up personnel. Ours would be a strictly shoestring operation, dependent entirely on guts, tenacity — and luck. We would use double tanks, each holding 82 cubic feet of air and breathe through single-hose regulators. Dives would be limited to 20 minutes each, with decompression done in the open ocean — minus protection from marauding sharks and without immediate decompression support if something went wrong. Our hired boat would have to be anchored in precisely the right spot on the churning surface and be able to remain stationary with solid mooring. In the end, all those considerations meant sacrificing the safety margin of recon dives to pinpoint a safe entry area to the 700-foot-long vessel. It also meant diving with someone I could trust.

I picked Steve Gatto, an eager and competent young diver who had packed an impressive amount of expertise into three short years of underwater experience. He had done a fair number of deep dives under my instruction but our expedition would mark his first descent on something as deep and

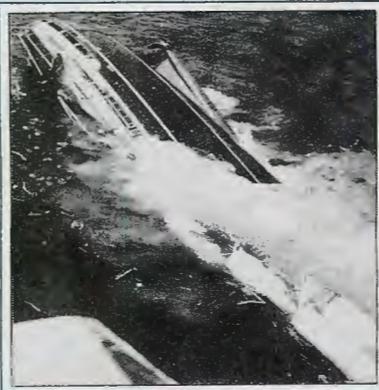
The moment of truth: Steve Gatto shows me his air gauge on the decompression line. I offered to buddy-breathe with him but we were both low. Steve rose to the surface and threw down a spare tank before the nitrogen bubbles had time to surface in his bloodstream.





Two china angels shortly after their recovery. Deep inside the hull, my thin shaft of light showed nothing but slimy seaweed waving through the reddish cast of rusting iron.

A little cleaning revealed the chain link design, crown and Italia crest in this wine glass from the *Andrea Doria*. Before the dive, I wondered if I was challenging myself to find that same feeling I sensed after a Vietnam fire fight.



Overturned lifeboats and debris from the deck float clear of the luxury liner *Andrea Doria* early on the morning of 26 July 1956 as the Italian ship takes its final plunge into the deep waters off the coast of Massachusetts. Photo: AP/Wide World

SINKING THE UNSINKABLE

Unsinkable ships: men have always tried to build them. Sometimes — when ego and technology combine to make them think they can fool Mother Nature — men announce to the world that they have finally built the unsinkable ship. It never proves to be true.

The ill-fated *Andrea Doria* — pride of the Italia line — is a case in point. By 1953 standards her builders had employed the latest technology in an effort to make the *Andrea Doria* unsinkable. They hyped that aspect of her construction to reassure passengers who would sail in her across the Atlantic for lucrative passage fees. True, the ship was a marvel of modern marine science, but the builders should have known better than to bill her as unsinkable. Most of them were alive and kicking when the

unsinkable *Titanic* went to the bottom in 1912 with all 22 of her watertight compartments flooded. The *Titanic* disaster claimed more than half of her 2,200 passengers when she collided with an iceberg in thick fog. The *Andrea Doria* sinking was less costly. Of the 1,700 passengers and crew aboard only 52 lost their lives.

On the night of 28 July 1956, during the *Andrea Doria*'s highly-publicized 100th crossing of the Atlantic, her officers drove her through a vagrant patch of pea-soup fog with brash confidence. Her radar showed an approaching vessel some 16 miles away but the instruments did not allow the officers on the bridge to gauge the relative movement of the oncoming vessel.

On the bridge of the *Stockholm* watch-standers also noticed a blip on their radar. Traveling under a perfectly clear and starlit sky in their sector of the sea, they could not understand why lookouts couldn't spot what the scope said was there. As a precaution, both ships began evasive maneuvers. Unfortunately, they swerved directly into each other's path. By the time each ship was visible to the other a collision was inevitable.

Just after 2300 the *Stockholm*'s bow pierced the *Andrea Doria*'s starboard side opening a gaping wound. Icy Atlantic waters began to rush in and passengers were tossed from their beds. Valiant rescue efforts by the crews of the *Ile de France* and other ships which answered the SOS, saved most of the passengers and crew from the stricken liner. The following morning the unsinkable *Andrea Doria* slipped quietly, almost gracefully, beneath the calm surface of the Atlantic and eventually came to rest in 200 feet of water.

potentially dangerous as the sunken *Andrea Doria*.

When Summer brought warm weather to the Atlantic coast, we chartered a boat for the three-day run to the wreck site. The weather soured shortly after we left Montauk on the eastern tip of Long Island. We rolled and shuddered with the 42-foot boat and realized if a freak storm made conditions any worse we would be in serious trouble so far from a sheltered harbor.

Once over the wreck the pre-dive preliminaries proved deceptively simple. Estimating the *Andrea Doria*'s final resting place beneath our keel, we dropped buoys forward and aft, hoping to hit the wreck. Steve and I bounded over a gunwale and dropped into the murky depths letting our weight-belts drag us toward the bottom. We clutched an anchor line from the support boat which we would secure to the sunken ship for stability. The hulk loomed rapidly out of the dark below us and we touched down on the hull at 170 feet, just below the once proud vessel's promenade deck. Sweeping my diving light in a circle to get my bearings, I recognized the deserted "winter garden" just aft of the bridge wing and a large, acetylene-cut opening through which a more famous team of divers had removed the *Andrea Doria*'s safe. The temptation to simply swim through the gash into the heart of the ship was nearly overwhelming but I stuck doggedly to our carefully-prepared dive plan. If things went right, Steve and I would enter the *Andrea Doria* for the first time on the next descent.

Topside, the situation was deteriorating. A revised weather forecast for this portion of the Atlantic warned of thunderstorms headed our way. Rain presented no problem, but strong winds would whip the seas into a treacherous cauldron. The charter boat skipper indicated he might have to pull anchor and head for a lee shore if the predicted weather front materialized. On our tight budget, that would mean the end of our quest for some of the Italia line's fine table service.

Veteran divers realize they are always at the mercy of the elements. It's a lot like being in the infantry, I realized as we gathered in the clammy cabin to discuss alternatives. Outside squalls hissed and swept the seas with solid sheets of rain. Wave action had increased to three-to-five feet and rollers were cresting white spume all around us. The boat rocked from side to side with a sickening motion as the pounding of the waves increased. It was not an ideal time to enter the water on a dangerous dive that would require steady surface support.

We were stymied — 200 feet short of our goal. I poured over the U.S. Navy Standard Air Decompression Table, working out repetitive dive and decompression times. A shorter surface interval would give us 19 minutes of bottom time at a maximum depth of 190 feet and require a 44-minute decompression stop. Since my information indicated the most likely location of the china at

around 180 feet, I felt we would have a comfortable safety margin. To ensure we were working on valid assumptions, we'd have to do a quick recon dive — right now before the weather got worse.

Steve and I made a final equipment check. With the boat rocking and bobbing like a cork, we climbed into our gear, dropped into the frothy water and swam to the anchor line. At 10 feet it was eerily calm. Synchronizing our air and depth gauges we exchanged reassuring hand signals and kicked down toward the wreck of the *Andrea Doria*. A solid knot of tension gripped my stomach just as it had so many times before when I stepped out of cover and began a slow, cautious walk across an open rice paddy. Good. As it had in Vietnam, the painful knot would remind me to stay alert.

Just below the surface the waters of the Atlantic had been clear and warm. As we dropped through successive thermoclines and plankton layers, visibility worsened and a bone-numbing chill crept through the insulation of our dry-suits. The storm-darkened sky did not allow much light to penetrate at these depths and we were in absolute darkness when we finally landed on the wreck. In the glare of our lights, the ragged wound in *Andrea Doria's* hull yawned like a monstrous mouth ready to swallow us.

Staring fixedly along the thin shaft of my light I could see nothing but slimy seaweed waving through the reddish cast of rusting iron. Visibility inside the ship would be 10 feet or less. This was going to be tough on the nerves.

The *Andrea Doria* is on the bottom resting on her side. That position puts everything 90 degrees out of phase for divers who can retain their orientation to up and down. The deck and overheads would be vertical surfaces and the bulkheads would all be horizontal. We entered trying to retain a mental picture of the situation.

I dropped straight down, dragging one hand along the smooth linoleum deck to slow and control my descent into the ship's interior. Across from me an access panel to the liner's electrical system beckoned like the mouth of a cave. I fought off the temptation to investigate and shifted my gaze to a spider-web of broken pipes and torn cables which extended from a piece of grillwork. A

During a previous dive on the wreck a shark got too close for comfort, and too aggressive to be ignored. A diver had to deal with the marauder using a compressed-air spear gun.



diver tangled in that mess would become another victim of the wreck of the *Andrea Doria*.

We simply let our weights drag us straight down into the bowels of the wreck. There were no reference points or marking rounds from an artillery battery to pinpoint our location as there had been in the jungle. We swam abreast into the gloom trying not to notice that the opening through which we had entered was shrinking rapidly above us. The cold blackness seemed to squeeze in on us causing the first needles of panic from sensory deprivation. Our lights simply would not penetrate to display anything more than an eerie green dot.

A steady pounding in my ears was becoming quite distracting. Was it simply equalization to compensate for increasing depth or the first signs of deadly nitrogen narcosis? I shrugged it off as I used to ignore annoying mosquitoes or leeches in Southeast Asia.

A glance at my diver's watch told me we had been inside the wreck for only three minutes. Despite our efforts to keep kicking to a minimum, our exhaust bubbles were dislodging rust and particulate matter from bulkheads. It descended on us in a thick, solid cloud. Like a driver on a dusty road, we had to keep moving just to stay ahead of the silt.

At five precious minutes in the interior of the *Andrea Doria* we passed over debris that had fallen from a first-class cabin: huge sheets of bathroom tile, wooden paneling, a red-backed chair, and a jumble of broken fluorescent tubes.

Finally something at the edge of our light caught my eye. A glimmer of white. The edge of a plate poked up out of the cloying silt. Tenderly I reached for it and the dish came free easily in a swirl of thick mud. Pooling our meager light we noted the gold-leaf trim and the crown logo. The word "Italia" was proudly emblazoned on the bottom. We had found the first evidence of our buried treasure.

Another plate gleamed in the light five feet ahead. Like donkeys mindlessly following following a carrot on a stick we were lured deeper into heart of the *Andrea Doria*. Dinner plates, cups, saucers, bowls and pie plates began to appear everywhere we looked. It seemed like a gigantic garage sale and we poked through the debris hungrily like tightly-budgeted shoppers on a spree.

It was hard to concentrate on anything but breathing and plucking the prized porcelain out of the muck but I realized we were running out of time. I diverted attention to my gauge panel by bringing it up close to my face mask. The readings on the dials didn't seem to make any sense. Inside the mask I felt my mouth mold into a foolish grin. I recognized the symptoms. Narcosis. My eyes were seeing the readings but my brain refused to interpret them correctly.

Forcing concentration, I lifted the panel and took another look. We were 14 minutes into the dive, which meant that we had to be out of the corridor and starting our descent



ABOVE: During the hour-long decompression, there was time for a look at china hanging in a goodie bag from diver Steve Gatto's arm. On my ascent from the hull, 210 feet below, we kept a constant watch for sharks. Fortunately, none approached. We were armed only with diving knives. BELOW: We spent a lot of time studying gauges to check proper depth and time during the lengthy decompression on the anchor line. The spool of line clipped to our belts was an emergency decompression reel to be used in case the anchor line breaks or cannot be found.





in no more than five minutes. The gauges also said I had 1,000 pounds of air remaining in my tanks. It was only a third of what I had brought from the surface but within safety limits for the ascent and decompression stop.

Then the reading on my depth gauge finally registered and sent my heart thumping. The needle rested firmly on the 210-foot mark. Somehow we had misjudged the location of the china cache and failed to notice it when we descended beyond the depth on which we had computed the available bottom time. The treasure we could lift from this recon dive would have to suffice. We had to hurry out and up if we wanted to keep success from turning to tragedy.

In the muck and darkness I could not see the mesh bag hanging from my wrist lanyard. Feeling for the metal hoop I unclipped it and began to rapidly stuff plates and other flatware inside. Steve and I grabbed for whatever was in sight before it could be obscured by the cloud of silt that surrounded us.

Fighting off the giddiness of threatening narcosis I rechecked the gauges and discovered we were due to begin our escape from the clutches of the *Andrea Doria* and return to the surface. We turned and used our buoyancy compensators to ascend slightly into clearer water. I put a reassuring hand on the linoleum deck again and pushed upward toward the exit hole. After covering the 75 feet I computed should put us at the exit, I encountered only a solid steel bulkhead.

The sheer terror of a hopeless situation gripped me with icy fingers. Not after surviving Vietnam and countless dangerous dives, I thought. Surely I won't be trapped to die in an underwater tomb. Frantically I groped around me and felt only rusty steel.

I fought off the panic. Calm down and reason it out, I thought, breathing deeply through my regulator. Descending several feet I discovered the bulkhead which had us trapped had a rounded lip. A hatch. Passing under it hesitantly, I swept my light around and discovered a trail of portholes. Little green dots of faint light shone through the shroud of darkness to point the way to safety.

Meanwhile, our treasure was becoming a burden. To offset the weight of the china I injected air into my dry-suit, but I still had to kick furiously to reach the elongated opening that beckoned to us.

By the time I swam through it I was gasping for air and needed a moment to regain control of my breathing. We had escaped the *Andrea Doria* but there was 170 feet of water between us and the safety of our boat.

Preoccupied with my own problems, I suddenly realized I had lost sight of Steve. Sweeping my light back onto the wreck I could just make out his form in the murky water. He was struggling with his own bag of china. Working quickly, I slipped the mesh bag off my wrist and let it fall to the

Continued on page 108



ABOVE: Five precious minutes inside the *Andrea Doria* we passed over debris that had fallen when it was rammed by the Swedish ship, *Stockholm*. Despite time constraints, it was hard to resist playing with the faucet of a bathtub in the corridor leading to the dining room. BELOW: I'd made half a dozen dives to the ill-fated *Andrea Doria* just to look around. This time I was after a prize: fine European china from the first-class dining room.

Colorful, flowering anemones surround a square hatch on the boat deck. Inside at the treasures we coveted, tempting us to descend only a few more feet into the murky bowels.



On the upper hull, porthole glass is covered with marine growth. Inside looking out, there appears to be no escape from the maze of passageways and blackened portholes.



‘‘HELL’S BELLES!’’

Is This Any Way to Run an R&R?

by CPT James M. Perry, USA, Ret.

THERE came a time in 1959 when Bull Simons relaxed his order limiting travel between A-Teams in Laos. We’d been so few when we first came in, we were almost family. Now, with the first six months of Operation White Star completed, most were going home to Ft. Bragg. I had volunteered for yet another six-month tour and Capt. White in Luang Prabang had just come over.

‘‘I’m going up and see what sort of news Ed brought in from Bragg,’’ I told my Team Sergeant. ‘‘You hold things down until the new XO gets in.’’

‘‘Don’t forget to get your ashes hauled,’’ he winked. I laughed. But he was hitting closer to home than he knew.

‘‘If I wanted to do that,’’ I huffed back defensively, ‘‘I’d stay right here in Pakse.’’

But Pakse, a Mekong rivertown of about 500, was poor hunting ground. Luang Prabang, the religious capital of Laos, was much larger. White had sparked my interest in a visit when we last talked on the radio.

‘‘The Lao Battalion moved out last week. We’ve got all the cathouses to ourselves.’’

‘‘I’ll try and catch the first Air America in there,’’ I said, my blood already racing. ‘‘You guys just don’t wear it all out. Bush living down here’s driving me nuts!’’

He laughed.

‘‘Grab Johnny Li’s plane. He comes in every Wednesday.’’

Li, in the opinion of most, was the best C-47 pilot in Laos. I had pulled a lot of right seat time with him and had a few anxious moments doing it. But he never got caught in a blind canyon. He knew the central highlands like the back of his hand. He was always cool, the quintessential bush-pilot type. I don’t think he ever even scratched the paint on an Air America plane. Still, riding with him was sometimes hard on the nerves.

As usual, he was punctual with his landing at Pakse. He dropped the plane down on the 6,000-foot macadam strip right on time. It sagged with the weight of 20 or so pallets of rice.

‘‘We’ve got a drop on the Jars first,’’ he told me. ‘‘I should make Prabang about 1400 hours. You still wanna ride?’’ I nodded. He cocked an eyebrow in the direction of the sagging C-47.

‘‘I could use you in the door . . . help kick a couple of bundles.’’

‘‘Damn, John,’’ I said, ‘‘the last time I kicked bundles for you, you almost dumped my ass outta the door!’’

‘‘Wear a parachute,’’ he said, and that’s the way we took off, him in the left seat and me sitting next to him draped in a ratty old Irvin rig that the Lao’s had provided for all their troops riding Air America aircraft.

We were over the *Plaines des Jarres* in an hour or so. Named the Plain of Jars because of the many odd-shaped calcific mounds that grow out of the ground. They closely resemble inverted *klong* jars of the type used in Thailand to store water. I never got around to taking a real good look at one of them, but from the air, they sometimes ran for miles.

Plain of Jars is a misnomer, they were anything but flat. It was rolling hill country three or four thousand feet high and only a few clicks from Xieng Khouang, a Pathet Lao stronghold. The communists had a nasty habit of shooting at anything that looked American. We circled for our first drop.

Kicking a free drop isn’t all that complicated. It just takes a lot of nerve and sweat hanging there on a thin safety strap while you half-dangle in an 80-knot slipstream.

The pallets contained loosely filled bags of rice with no cargo chute, and the secret

for getting them safely on the ground was to come in low and slow and sort of skid the stuff into an intended area. It didn’t always work that way. Bags would burst, spreading rice all over the plain like a freak snow flurry. No problem. Women and children were out there immediately, their little brooms going, and I suppose they always salvaged enough to make it worth the effort.

Knowing that a supply plane would inevitably come, the Bad Guys always staked out remote Army outposts, waiting for the drone of distant propellers. Kickers in the door were prime sniper targets. Survival often depended on that weird ESP that airmen have about danger. With no external stimulus, deciding when to stick your head out and when to pull it depends on a sixth sense.

We circled the outpost several times, waiting for the recognition signal. It came in the form of hand smoke, two greens. The Crew Chief pushed his lip mike to one side and yelled in my ear.

‘‘We’ve gotta shove this stuff closer to the door!’’

‘‘Stand by!’’ someone else yelled, ‘‘this is a drop run!’’

I probably got too close to the threshold. The Chief jerked me back.

‘‘Asshole!’’ he screamed, ‘‘the last guy got it in the head!’’

‘‘Head I don’t mind. It’s quick. But with my luck, they’ll get both of these.’’ He dropped his hands to his testicles and fingered them to reassure himself they were still there. In mimic, I dropped a hand to mine. The thought of losing even one chilled me.

There were two small hills to the north of the outpost. Li couldn’t avoid passing over either of them. I watched with apprehension as he let the bird sink lower to the ground, almost enough to shave off their tops. But it was better than jinking up the canyon floor, flaps and gear down, then slamming the cargo against the side of the DZ.

‘‘Oh Boy!’’ the Chief yelled, ‘‘this is gonna be a good one!’’ The green light winked on.

‘‘Shove ’em!’’

We heaved and the pallets went spinning off into the void. AK-47 fire rattled around the open door, a few rounds getting inside. I found myself on the floor almost instantly,

HELL’S BELLS!

Capt. Jim Perry’s military career spanned 24 years and two services, the U.S. Army and the Marine Corps. In the Army he served with the Special Forces where he taught High-Altitude, Low-Opening parachute tactics and served three stints under the watchful eye of Bull Simons.

One of those Green Beret assignments was operation White Star. ‘‘Hell’s Belles!’’ continues Perry’s ongoing chronicle of his Laotian adventures. Other episodes are ‘‘Bull in Indochina Shop,’’ ‘‘White Star Warriors,’’ ‘‘Fire in the Hole!’’ and ‘‘Another Bridge on the River Kwai’’ (SOF, January, April, May and October ’84).



hands wrapped around my head, sweating. Li pulled the ship up sharply and we made enough altitude to avoid any more small arms fire. He circled the outpost once and everyone below waved. It had been a good drop.

The rest of the drops were pretty much the same, each pallet spanking the ground at just the right angle. Each pallet opened like a blossoming flower, sprinkling its bags to the ground like falling petals. I felt good, and I might've congratulated Johnny on his expertise if I hadn't found him beneath an engine at Luang Prabang picking weeds out of the oil cooler. He apparently wasn't disturbed.

"Gotta learn not to skim that hill so close," was all he said. But he fingered a rather large twig, turning it over in his hands several times. He had that far-off gaze in his eyes.

"You know," he said, tucking his chin in a couple of times. "One day one of these things is going to get me." It eventually did. I heard he burned in 1964, dropping cargo to the Hmoung Secret Army. He didn't have a co-pilot with him.

Ed White met me at the plane with a bottle of Jack Daniels in one hand. I took a mighty swig, coughed, and he slapped me on the back.

"Kicking bundles, huh?"

"Scared the shit outta me, he did." I took another long drag on the bottle, then wrapped my arms around Ed. It was like coming back to civilization.

"Let's go find a cathouse," I said as we walked to his Jeep. He laughed. Ed White and I had struggled through a hell of a lot of field training back at Bragg. It doesn't take too much of that before you find you're almost like brothers.

"Hey, cool it! We'll get a bath at the team house, snort a couple, and go out after dark." He glanced around, perhaps a little furtively.

"The Bull comes in here and can't find me at the desk, my ass is grass."

"He's coming in?" I asked, with the same apprehension that I usually felt during one of his unannounced visits to Pakse. Ed spoke softly, almost into a cupped hand.

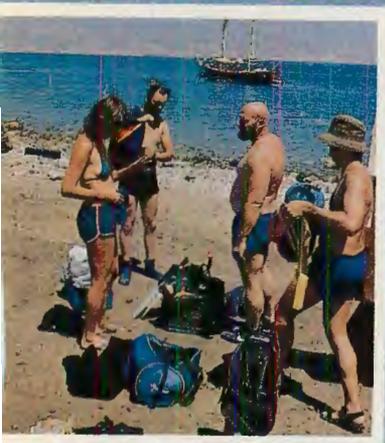
"He likes cathouses too," he whispered.

Ed's team house was spacious. It was a Taj Mahal compared to mine in Pakse: radio room, weapons room, supply area, two huge showers. I was so short of room in mine that we had to bathe outside, dipping water from the *klong* jar and still trying to cover our nakedness with one hand. The Lao were very sensitive about nakedness. I never saw anything wrong with that, but it isn't easy to cover everything with one hand while you scrub with the other.

The news from Bragg wasn't all that exciting. The Special Warfare Center was expanding rapidly. They'd already added another Group, the Third. Our Group, the 77th, had been redesignated simply the 7th. Col. Blackburn was still the Center CO.

Continued on page 128

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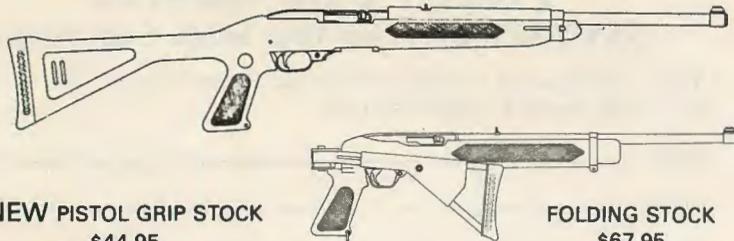
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ANDREA DORIA

Continued on page 101

surface of the hull. Swimming down to get a grip on Steve's arm, I dragged him out and onto the upper surface of the *Andrea Doria's* hull. By now we were in a real time crunch. Grabbing my bag on the fly I kicked toward the anchor line that led to the surface following Steve's no-nonsense lead.

Kicking slowly for the surface, we forced ourselves to maintain the prescribed ascent rate of 60 feet per minute. In less than three minutes I checked my depth gauge and halted at 40 feet. Steve hung suspended above me fumbling with the white plastic slate on which he had noted the decompression requirement for exceptional exposure.

We had no way of knowing it just then, but our Skipper was having an equally harrowing time on the surface. The seas were pounding his craft relentlessly. Extra tanks, dive gear, and crewmen were crashing around on the slippery deck. Under the roiling surface we found ourselves being jerked around on the anchor cable like subway strap-hangers on a rough stretch of track. The deep swells made maintaining proper decompression depth impossible.

Steve was unable to hold the slate still enough for me to read all he had written. The big numerals 56 — our total required decompression time — were all I could make out as the slate bounced before my eyes. I would just have to follow Steve's lead.

We were still at the 30-foot stop when he suddenly pointed to his air gauge and drew a gloved hand across his throat. He was low on air. I looked at my own gauge and nodded. Our main tanks were almost empty. We quickly switched to the small Pony emergency tanks which contained an additional 20 cubic feet of life-sustaining air.

I looked around for the spare bottle that was supposed to be hanging in the water according to our plan. The Skipper must have pulled it up when weather conditions got really bad on the surface. The rough seas made it difficult for us to control our breathing rates in order to conserve air. We still had 10 minutes of decompression to go when Steve signalled that he was leaving. Desperate for company, I offered to buddy-breathe with him. He shook his head when I held out my regulator and was gone before I could argue. He was sacrificing himself to try and save me. Within minutes of reaching the surface without the necessary decompression he could be lying on the deck crippled with the bends. Despite that, he chose to take the chance rather than rob me of precious air.

He disappeared into the churning waves and I was alone with my jumbled thoughts. The dive had gotten away from us and we had been plagued by variables either unconsidered or beyond our control. It occurred to me that I might have finally stretched the edge of the envelope once too often. Previous dangers flashed in my mind as if to



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convince me this situation was not so bad.

I remembered the dive during which I had been circled by a seven-foot blue shark for 45 frightening minutes. It came closer with each pass, fixing me with an evil eye and a dark, fathomless glare. And then it attacked.

As the shark stretched its jaws and made the final charge I spread my legs wide and it passed right under my crotch. Angry at missing a meal, the big blue turned and made another run at me. Before he could reach me he was distracted by a shiny object in the water above us. He rammed his snout against the propellor shaft of our dive boat, then backed off and made another lunge at lunch. By that time I had reached the ladder and put the steel rungs safely between us.

With a sudden shudder I realized it could happen again. The sharks that guard the *Andrea Doria* are fair-sized blues. While they aren't known as man-eaters, they are certainly aggressive. My only defensive weapon as I hung helpless waiting for decompression was a dive knife.

I was still dwelling on the possibility of shark attack when a sudden splashing above me caused me to recoil in panic. Fortunately the blue sharks stayed below and it was only a spare air tank descending from the surface. It jerked to an abrupt halt at the end of a nylon tether. Steve followed it down with another hastily-donned set of tanks on his back. Not only did we now have ample air, but Steve had spent such a short time on the surface that nitrogen bubbles had not had a chance to form in his bloodstream.

Several minutes later we were both on the boat, exhausted and exhilarated at the same time. The anchor line was severed by an anxious crewman and we were underway for a safe port.

It had been a harrowing dive and I shook with the same post-trauma emotional reaction I had felt after a fire fight in Vietnam. Maybe that's why I took the risk in the first place, I thought. Maybe it was all about conquering fear and reveling in the euphoria of survival against the odds.

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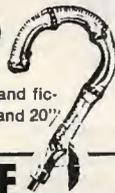
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COMBAT IN KUNAR

Continued from page 89

Valley. The crews will generally only engage hard targets or large formations which is the reason we were divided into fireteam-size elements for the crossing.

Three Soviet mortars once controlled the slopes of Kuligram. Now there are only two. Mohammad Arab gleefully takes the credit for that reduction. He noticed that the government troops set the mortars in at the same locations every morning. That gave him the where for an attack and a dud mortar round gave him the how.

With typical Afghan panache, Arab collected an 82mm round that had glanced off a rock and failed to explode. Carefully padded, the used round was sent back up the hill in the hands of two Afghan guerrillas. Quickly locating one of the recurring mortar positions on the high-ground, the mujahideen buried the live round in the middle of the pit, fuse up with the detonator covered by a couple of inches of loose dirt. Government soldiers returned to the pit the next day to find a large formation of mujahideen offering an enticing target. In their haste to emplace and engage they dropped the heavy mortar baseplate directly on the buried round and wound up out of the fight for good.



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Moving along the valley in twos and threes, we reassembled at Barabat, a deserted village. The former inhabitants are either dead or refugees in Pakistan. I spent nine days in Barabat with 30 of Arab's men. We were joined at one point by a smaller group of armed men from a different party.

Three kilometers upstream the town of Pashad is held by 500 assorted militia and Khalq/Parcham party members. Five kilometers south, 50 government troops and 100 militia are dug in on the sides of Kuli-gram Mountain. The nearest Soviet base is 18 kilometers north at Chagha Serai: 900 Russian troops and about seven helicopters are under the command of a colonel from Soviet Tadzhikistan named Bhaktia.

"His father was a Moslem," said one mujahid scornfully.

Passage of time during the slow days at Barabat was marked by overflights by Soviet choppers clattering from Jalalabad about 45 kilometers south to Chagha Serai just beyond our position to the north. Helicopter resupply is an expensive way to support outposts in a country the size of Afghanistan. Trucks would be cheaper, but the Soviets would have to expend the troops to secure every foot of mountain road to have any confidence that convoys would get through the mujahideen gauntlet. Choppers seem to be the best bet under the circumstances but they must fly heavily-armed and the weight of weapons drastically reduces their payloads. All that means to the mujahideen is that they can count on seeing a lot of Russian aircraft in eastern Afghanistan.

When I visited Kunar the first time in 1981 my escort made me put on soft-soled shoes and we crept across the valley at night. From our daytime hiding-places along the spines of high ridges, I could look down on the helicopters through the blur of their rotors as they hugged the valley floor.

These days the mujahideen make the crossing in broad daylight and the cruising helicopters fly at altitudes well out of rifle range. The river crossing is still hazardous. Rebel warriors are sometimes in the open for up to half an hour. But the "Mujahideen Navy" is attempting to solve that problem.

Back in 1981, river crossings were made via crude clumps of inflated goat skins lashed together to form a raft. Now the mujahideen have managed to come up with eight truck-tire innertubes tied with nylon line and decked with branches for camouflage. It's a great improvement which allows for much more efficient movement of men and materiel across the Kunar River but the mujahideen still have not got it quite right. They apparently did not foresee the need for paddles.

During our crossing, Arab's men flailed at the water with sticks and we crabbed slowly sideways while the raft, heavily loaded with men and weapons, rushed

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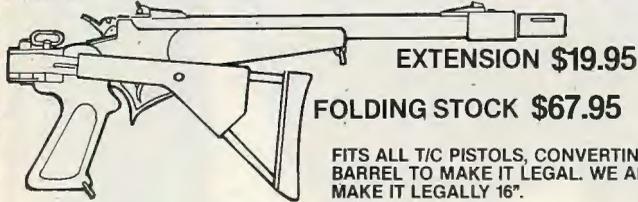
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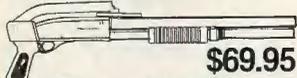
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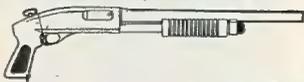


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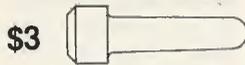
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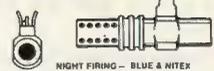
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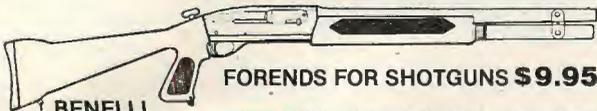


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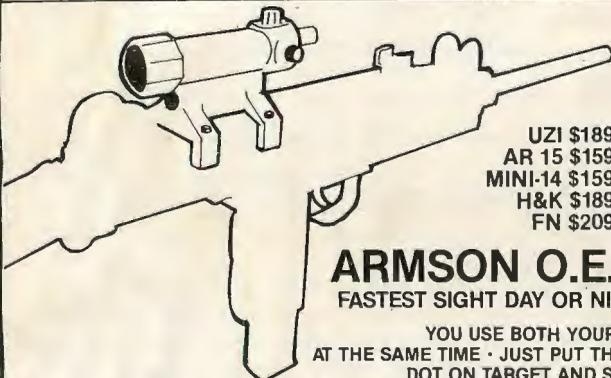
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downstream driven by a strong current. Finally reaching the far shore, we unloaded and dismantled the raft. By dusk we were on the road north and walked past the wreckage of a T-72 tank, two APCs and several trucks, remnants of a Soviet convoy ambushed in May when the garrison at Chagha Serai was changed.

In Mohammad Arab's home village of Khortke the residents say that after the ambush Russian troops hurled grenades into homes along the road, killing and maiming civilians. They also machine-gunned livestock. Khortke is tenuously held by 50 armed mujahideen. A fortified position on a hillside just 300 meters away is held by 100 government troops.

Still, we ate an uninterrupted traditional Afghan dinner in a courtyard surrounded by sheep, goats, dogs, cows and chickens. As we ate, a government DShK-38 across the river sporadically returned sniper fire from the surrounding hills. My hosts told me a distant rumble was a village near Jalalabad being bombed.

South of Khortke on the west bank of the river, mujahideen control two more villages and nine kilometers of road leading to Chowki, which is held by no less than 300 government troops, 500 militia and 200 armed Khalq/Parcham party members. We were nearing the target planned for a 3 August attack after dark. Mohammad Arab's group of 30 mujahi-

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been gathered at dusk to confirm the plan of attack. They split into three units and moved out through rice fields surrounding the town.

Chowki had not been attacked for a year and no one expected trouble. A celebration in the town following a government ceremony awarded the defenders a night off from security duties. At a prearranged time, the recoilless gun crew cut loose and the year of tranquility for Chowki ended. As supplies burned and bunkers crumbled under mujahideen fire, Kabul government troops rushed to their positions to return fire.

That was entirely expected by the rebel attackers. A second mujahideen unit, armed with RPGs and rifles, poured fire into the areas between buildings to cut off the defenders' access to their positions. The Afghan Army garrison commander hesitated to order a counterattack since he could not be sure how many rebels were involved or in reserve. To add to the general confusion, a mujahideen crew chimed in to drop mortar rounds on the government ammunition dump beyond the town.

Desperate, confused and facing a long, dangerous night with no chance of Russian reinforcement until morning, the Afghan Army simply opted to hide behind a heavy, inaccurate volume of fire. The battle at Chowki lasted for three hours. The mujahideen broke contact and we pulled back toward the Kunar River.

By 0300 we were asleep in an open-air mosque beside the river. At 0500 — as usual — the mujahideen were wakened by the voice of Gul Mahomet. Like all sergeants the world over he pulled them out of the sack and encouraged them to be alert and careful that day. In typical Afghan fashion he also interspersed prayers with his exhortations.

But above the sound of his voice the crackle of small-arms fire could still be heard coming from Chowki. Firing continued until the arrival of two Mi-24 gunships around 0830. They buzzed in a protective pattern over the town, flying cover for two Mi-8 troop-carriers which landed quickly and discharged Soviet soldiers.

Firing in Chowki intensified and area farmers later told mujahideen that they had seen a group of men pursued out of town and shot down along the river bank. The speculation is that arguments over failure to properly defend the town broke out between Khalq and Parcham party members. Shots were fired and finally Soviet troops were airlifted in to restore order.

On his way back up the Shonkle Valley headed for Pakistan, Mohammad Arab stopped to pray in the mosque at Malagoro. The villagers wanted a meeting and he reluctantly postponed his departure. For two hours I listened while the 30-odd leading citizens held their *jirga*.

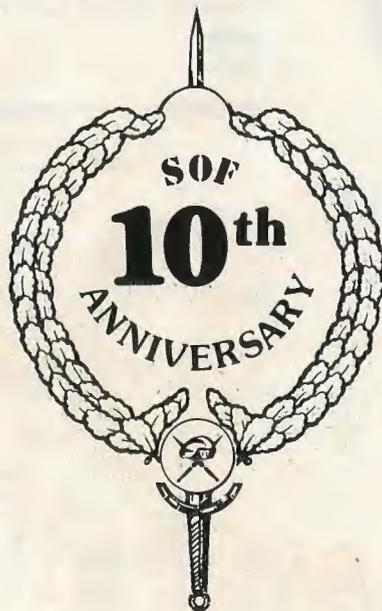
Repeatedly they begged for weapons so they could join the *jihad*. They asked for 800 rifles, a request that Mohammad Arab was quite unable to meet. He promised them 10 with a caution that delivery might take weeks or months to filter through the political parties in Peshawar and into Afghanistan.

This year the CIA chose *Time Magazine* to be the recipient of their annual background briefing on how arms are reaching the Afghans. *Time* was told of a network of educated refugees, trained as freight forwarding agents, who allegedly expedite the movement of weapons through Pakistan's ports. Perhaps, but in five years of reporting this war I have seen little to substantiate the claim.

The main source of mujahideen weapons is certainly foreign nations, but the Russians also provide a great deal of arms and ammunition to the mujahideen who simply take them away from deserting government soldiers or pick them up from casualties on the battlefield. Most of the Kalashnikov ammunition I saw on this trip was Chinese.

Mohammad Arab could find 1,200 men of fighting age to take guns tomorrow... if he had the weapons. He already has more volunteers than he can use but he is hamstrung by lack of materiel. And he is only one of many mujahideen commanders experiencing the same problem.

A few days after I left his country, Mohammad Arab cabled me. He had received word of the result of his attack on Chowki. Without suffering a single mujahideen casualty, his unit had managed to kill five government soldiers, including a senior military representative from Kabul. Four militiamen also died in the attack and six more were wounded. Communists killed by other communists in the subsequent feud were not counted. ✕



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GOLDEN TEMPLE BATTLE

Continued from page 74

organization to have a correspondent in Amritsar during the battle. The AP reported their correspondent personally checked police and crematory records to find more than 1,000 Sikhs and 220 government fatalities. A local physician tasked with conducting the post-mortem examinations agreed with a Sikh Deputy Police Superintendent in the area who said 17 of the Sikh corpses they examined had been shot in the head after their hands had been tied behind their backs. Those bodies had been unceremoniously dumped in the lake surrounding the sacred Golden Temple of the Sikhs.

Sikh families were not allowed to reclaim the bodies of the dead. All the defenders who died at the Golden Temple fight were labeled "unidentified" and tossed on Indian Army trucks for mass cremation. The military spine of a proud people had been snapped. Only time will tell if the Sikhs can emerge from the ashes of the Golden Temple in the land of the Punjab. ✕

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India's high-altitude soldiers, wearing white winter clothes, march under tropical sunshine as they participate in the parade celebrating the 18th Indian Republic Day anniversary in New Delhi. The soldiers are stationed in the border area to stand watch in the dizzy heights of Ladakh against communist Chinese on top of ice-capped mountains.

craft, as well as ammunition and ordinance that it supplies to other Third World countries. In her short 37-year independence from the colonial grip of the United Kingdom, India has managed to assimilate a kaleidoscope of races and religions into a military force instructed to guard its borders and quell civil disobedience. The military is also an important political tool of India's central government.

Shortly after independence in 1947, India waged a bloody war with neighboring Pakistan. Tension then developed between India and China and in 1962 China penetrated deeply into Indian territory which brought the veteran

army into action. India was again at war with Pakistan in 1965 and 1971. These skirmishes and border disputes have kept the Indian Army hard, lean and battle-ready. Arms shipments from the USSR and the United States have kept its arsenals stocked.

India's 3.1 percent expenditure of her GNP on defense represents a substantial chunk of the national budget. In 1982, India shelled out \$5.26 billion on defense, a \$2.2 billion increase since 1978. Faced with a nuclear-armed China across the Himalayas, there is no incentive for India to discontinue its investment in both nuclear and non-nuclear defense.

Total armed forces equal 1,104,000, out of a population of 688,600,000. The army comprises the foundation of the military with 944,000 active troops and 200,000 reservists. The Indian Navy musters 45,000 sailors and 2,000 men in the naval air arm. The air force, with 113,000 men, the Border Security Force of 85,000 men, and other paramilitary forces with 175,000 troops, complete the count.

Since independence, India has turned progressively to the Soviet Union, forging a relationship based on a general coincidence of perspectives, such as their mutual proximity to the PRC. Soviet military assistance to India began about 1960, and accelerated after 1965. That aid includes training Indian military personnel in the Soviet Union, and provision of a wide variety of arms including tanks, artillery, aircraft and ships. In August 1971, India and Russia signed a 20-year "Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation." Officially, India sits on the international fence, claiming to be non-aligned which allows her government to request — and regularly receive — additional aid from the United States.

U.S. aid under the Military Assistance Program amounted to \$90.3 million from 1950-1967. Aid from America was mainly grants on favorable credit terms. American military equipment sold or given to India has included transport aircraft, air defense detection and control equipment, and light weapons for mountain operations. Indo-U.S. relations were strained in the 1971 Bangladesh crisis, but since then both countries have maintained open communication based along lines of mutual interest.

India's military is called on to keep order inside her borders much more often than it is called upon to protect those borders. Despite that and given the fact that India shares borders with Bangladesh, Burma, Pakistan, the People's Republic of China, Nepal and Bhutan, the Indian government feels a need to keep its military strong and modern. It also feels it is necessary to maintain its alliances with the two superpowers.

— Ben Brannock



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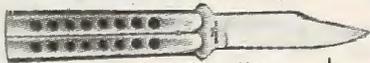
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CMA

Continued from page 82

greedy, blood-thirsty miscreants. The term "mercenary" was bandied about with heartless abandon. The charges and other vicious innuendoes ripped at the guts of the team members who knew and respected the two fallen men and their motivations.

"A mercenary to me is a soldier who fights strictly for money, not out of any sense of duty, and who doesn't care where the money comes from or what the cause is," said Posey. "It burns me up because we are not mercenaries. We are not for hire. We're together to fight communism before it comes to the United States. We've drawn our line and that line happens to be in Central America. We're offering our knowledge and expertise and what little material support we can to those who need it who are themselves fighting for the survival of something we believe very strongly in: freedom."

Courtney, who used to accompany Parker on police patrol two or three nights a week as an auxiliary deputy, delivered a tribute to his fallen friend. "He cared greatly about what people thought about him. He wanted to make a good impression. He always wanted to do the best job possible and he desperately wanted people to think he was the right kind of person. And, by God, he was the right kind of person."

As for the many detractors who have tried to impugn the character and dignity of men like Tom Posey and his CMA freedom fighters, the people who know them best, their neighbors and fellow citizens, can only scratch their heads and wonder.

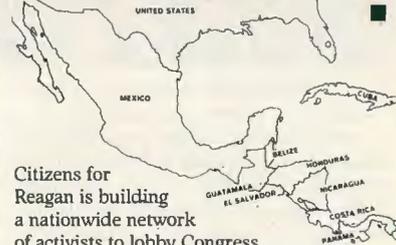
"I've known Posey about 10 years," said Winford Turner, a *New York Times* employee who lives in Decatur and is regional editor of the *Times-Daily*, in nearby Florence. "If anything, Tom is too honest, if that's possible. He hates communism, no doubt about that. And if he says he is doing this because of his hatred of communism, I have to believe him. I've seen him spend his own money for other things he believes in, many times. He's got a very good reputation in the community."

Posey "has been quite open about" CMA and its goal, said Morgan County Sheriff Buford Burgess. "We were just very saddened that some of our local people had been killed." As for anyone in CMA being a mercenary, Sheriff Burgess said, "I don't see how anyone could be in it for personal gain when you're putting your life on the line. Judging from what I know, they certainly haven't raised enough money for anyone to get rich on. Posey hasn't violated any laws, local or federal, as far as I know, and he certainly hasn't bothered anybody around here."

The effect of the resultant publicity hasn't been all bad for CMA. A weary Tom Posey is quick to admit that. His

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phone rings constantly now, and he and his wife are the only staff available to answer the many calls and letters. Inquiries have poured in from every state in the union except Hawaii.

"The U.S. and America deserve a victory over communism," declares Posey. "And we're all Americans, don't forget that; whether we live in Canada or Nicaragua or Brazil. I'm not talking about Grenada, which was a small operation. I'm talking about a major victory in which the communists can be the ones for a change who have to go home and lick their wounds. Since World War II, over 40 countries have fallen to communism, and how many have they lost besides little Grenada?"

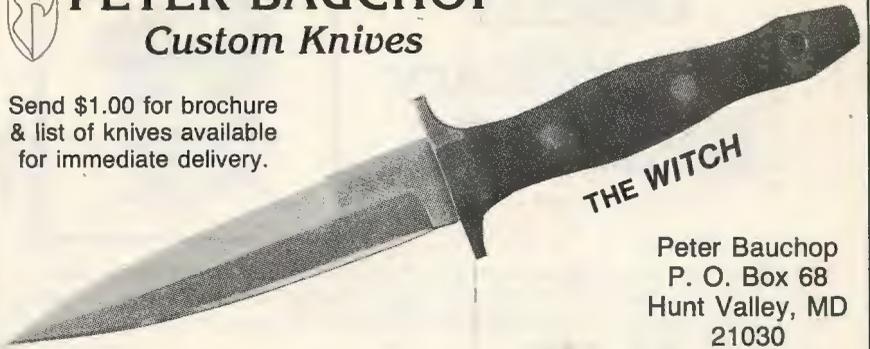
"But once they lose a major country ... the poor people like those in Nicaragua will know that communism can be beat, and those in other countries will take heart and rise up to fight for freedom and overthrow the communists," said Posey.

"They're our allies now, but in the 1930s, most people in the U.S. thought Japan was a friendly nation until 7 December 1941, when they bombed the hell out of us. Are we going to have to wait until Russia bombs us before this country wakes up and realizes that those communists are our sworn enemies? So I say anything that can be done right now to stop the spread of communism, I think America ought to do it." ✕



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MIDDLE EAST UPDATE

Continued from page 59

Embassy annex as well as the Marine's Battalion Landing Team headquarters. Despite such blatant effronteries, the American government has written the situation in Lebanon off as a hopeless melange of factional disputes. The party line from Washington declares that Lebanon is in the throes of a civil war and America will not again interfere in the nation's internal affairs.

It all sounds very good — *terrific*, in fact, from a liberal perspective, but it won't wash and it leaves the innocent people of Lebanon in a dangerous lurch.

You can't convince the Eid family in Mtouille, a small village of 110 houses in the hills about 12 miles east of Jieh, that they are facing civil war. For more than 100 years, the entire population of Mtouille has been Eid family members and Christians. In July 1984 when I visited George Eid, a tall, skinny attorney, most of his family village had been destroyed. Only 20 houses were still inhabited.

The Druze started shelling Mtouille on 6 May 1983. After bombarding the village for about a week, 300 Druze from the Kamal-Jumblatt Brigade, personally led by Kamil Mahmoud, the unit commander, surrounded the village in preparation for the final assault. Eid family members, without the support of Israel, the United States, the Lebanese Army or anyone else, fought them off successfully. The Lebanese Forces (LF) militia sent so-called Special Forces personnel and LRRP teams from Beirut to the area but they initially held in positions five kilometers southwest of Mtouille.

The Eids were still going it alone when the Druze overran some of their positions, almost capturing the church in the center of the village. One 70-year-old Eid shot and killed two Druze with an ancient carbine. The LRRPs rushed to the scene and launched a counterattack against the Druze flank while the LF Special Forces troopers reinforced the Eids and fought house-to-house inside Mtouille, killing almost 50 Druze including three company commanders and Kamil Mahmoud himself.

Five Eids were killed in the fighting. The Druze began retreating but 40-50 remained encircled inside the village. Suddenly, the Israeli Army appeared, stopped the fighting and escorted the Druze from the village. Meanwhile, the LF LRRPs had captured an M113 APC with Israeli markings and some unique folding RPGs from the retreating Druze. The Israelis demanded that they take the APC even though it was damaged but the LRRPs refused to release it. Finally, after some bitter argument the armored vehicle was stripped and returned to the IDF. The Israelis withdrew from Mtouille taking both the Lebanese Forces and the Druze with them. The Eids were left to bury



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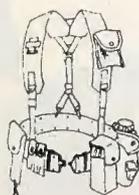
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- Suspenders** - Black nylon, LC-1 style **\$11.50**
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- Compass/1st Aid Pouch** - Black nylon, LC-1 style **\$3.00**
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- Canteen w/cover** - Black plastic 1 qt. canteen w/black nylon LC-1 style padded cover/carrier. **\$8.25** Note: above Belt and Canteen also avail. in olive; other items available in olive or camo.
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their dead, rebuild their shattered village and contemplate the "civil war" in which they had been attacked by Syrian-supplied formations and then rescued by troops armed and equipped by Israel.

And the craziness continues. At Baiquon, a village on the next major hilltop some two miles east of Mtoulle, villagers tell horror stories about the Christian families who were murdered in early 1984 by Amal guerrillas using weapons brought into Lebanon from Iran. Prior to that in 1977 at Mazraat ech Chouf, approximately five miles north-east of Mtoulle, the Druze guerrillas turned their Syrian-supplied guns on the Christian third of the village population. It was one of a series of foreign-directed Druze attacks on the Christians in various parts of Lebanon.

It was all supposedly retaliation for a car bomb attack against the Beirut residence of Kamal Jumblatt, father of Walid and then leader of the Druze. Kamal was not very popular with the Christian community in Lebanon as he openly supported the PLO (for which he was awarded the Lenin Peace Prize) during the fighting in 1975 and 1976. He also openly associated with and advised Yasser Arafat, leader of the PLO, and Abdel Halim Khaddam, Syria's Minister of Foreign Affairs. Innocent citizens of the Lebanese countryside find it hard to fit these situations involving foreign interests into the definition of a "civil war."

Clearly, religious affiliations continue to define most of the frontline positions in the Jieh-southern Shouf area. Syria, Iran, Israel and other foreign powers are playing several ends against the middle and using factions — divided along lines of religion — to fight for their interests in Lebanon. The people taking the worst beating are Christians such as the residents of Mghairiye, located five miles east of the Mediterranean sea coast and five miles west of Mtoulle. The town once had 400 Christians living in peace with the 7,000 Sunni Moslems. In late May 1983, Druze militiamen entered the town forcing all the Christians to flee.

Just a half-mile west, Majdalouna, a town of some 700 predominantly-Christian residents, was also attacked by the Druze in May 1983. It is still the scene of continual fierce fighting with Druze and Christians firmly entrenched in positions on the outskirts of town. By July 1984, the civilian population of Majdalouna had dwindled to less than 100 people. All this does not mean the Lebanese Forces have not extracted an appropriate pound of flesh from Moslem tormentors.

At Joun, a town on the road between Sidon and Jezzine (site of a major Syrian Army base until June 1982), there remains a mix of Christians and Moslems. Christians comprise approximately two-thirds of the population with Shi'ite Moslems in the minority. Despite tight control by Christian militiamen under the banner of the Lebanese Forces, Shia are still living and working in Joun. Hani Azzi openly admitted that some Shia have been persecuted and some of their homes destroyed.

"After what the Druze and Amal did to our people (Christians) in other villages, some of our fighters were determined to seek revenge," he said. "You must understand, they are just simple peasants and farmers who were very angry. We stopped them before they did too much damage. We do not hate the Shia. We want them to stay in their homes. We must learn to live together." If Lebanon is experiencing civil war then men like Azzi would like for towns such as Joun to be their Appomatox.

Despite such examples of moderate success at living together, the Christians continue to hold grudges and retaliate when the opportunity presents itself. At Borjein, a small Moslem-Christian village about four miles inland from the center of Jieh, the predominantly Moslem population was forced to flee after Christian militiamen destroyed most of their family homes. The militiamen are in clear control at Borjein but life remains dicey for Christian families of the village.

A large number of Lebanese Forces militiamen staff the area command post located on the outskirts of the town but Druze, Shi'ite and Sunni militia units are nearby and a state of siege exists. Things are not much better anywhere in this turbulent area of Lebanon's coastal plain. Only a mile east of Borjein, Lebanese troops man outposts in the hills near the tiny village of Ain el Houre. Another mile south at Daraiya, Arab Liberation Front (Sunni Moslem) guerrillas rule the turf. Between the two villages is a shattered wasteland that regularly becomes a shooting gallery.

The current situation in Lebanon tends to pivot around troop dispositions in this area. Daraiya is tactically significant because it guards the main road which starts at the coast in the Jieh area and runs east through Chhime and then north through Barouk (where the Israelis still have an observation and radar post), Ain Zhalta, and Ain Dara before connecting just east of Sofar (a major Syrian Army base) with the Beirut-Damascus highway. Just north of that junction, the headquarters of the Druze/PSP militias is located at Hammana which coincidentally is scheduled to be the base for the Lebanese Army's new all-Druze 11th Brigade. The highway from Hammana south through Barouk to Chhime is the primary supply route to Druze militiamen on the outskirts of Majdalouna. Just west of Chhime is the junction with the secondary road which goes through Mghairiye and Majdalouna. Chhime is a large Sunni Muslim town guarded by the ALF and Druze militias.

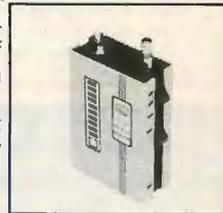
Despite the fact that the Druze/PSP militias are openly armed and backed by Syria, the Israeli Army maintains friendly relations with them. Christians in Lebanon attribute that to a sizable Druze population in Israel and the special status they enjoy. Druze are the only religious group other than Jews, allowed to serve in the Israeli Defense Forces. Supposedly, there are more than 5,000 Druze in the IDF — many

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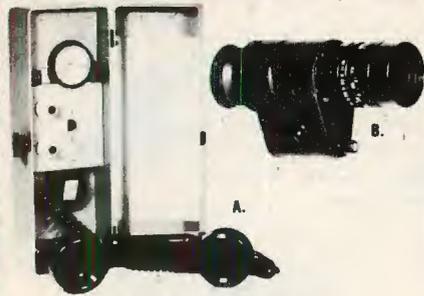
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Continued from page 13

MONUMENT FOR MARIO...

Sirs:
After reading the article in September SOF about the death of that brave young soldier Jose Mario Viatoro I could delay no longer in gathering up these dusty items of web gear and equipment I've been able to save or scrounge over the years.

I hope the people of those countries in Central America who are actively fighting communism may possibly have some use for these things.

And I hope that perhaps they may be used to avenge the death of Mario.

Arthur R. Thomas
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Your welcome contributions are on their way to El Salvador along with several hundred pounds of similar items. The story of Mario's death is tragic but you can rest assured his friends and fellow freedom fighters will not let the communist guerrillas get away with it.
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COLT CHRONICLER...

Sirs:
I am writing a history of the GI .45 Automatic Pistol in combat, from WWI through to the present day, as seen through the eyes of those who used the weapon.

With this in mind, I would be glad to hear from veterans and ex-servicemen who were issued the pistol and who have any interesting memories of using it, whether in action or on the firing range.

Photographs will be especially welcome and any received will be copied and returned at once. Any information used in the book will be credited and all letters will be answered promptly. My address is 40 Belmont Park, Lewisham, London, SE13, England.

Tony Walker

Readers, please respond. It sounds like a worthy project and there must be some vets out there who — unlike ourselves — managed to hit the broad side of a barn with the .45. — Eds.

AN AUSSIE CONNECTION...

Sirs:
Having read in "FLAK" March '84 issue of SOF about being banned in Australia, thought you may be pleased to hear that your magazine is welcome in this country despite efforts to stop us from reading it.

The bookstore where I get my copy of SOF — when I can — sells it at \$6 Aus., and seals it in plastic with an "R" certificate, which is "Porno" mark in this state.

Having done two turns in the Australian military forces, I like to keep up to date on weapons and world trouble spots, . . . despite our enlightened leaders attempt to curb our last few remaining freedoms.

D.J. McAuliffe
Australia

Good on you, mate. Keep reading and perhaps the demand for SOF will inspire the censors to wake up.
— Eds.

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HELL'S BELLES

Continued from page 103

There was word on the wind that they were finally going to give us our Green Berets, but to us here in Laos it didn't matter. The Bull had already taken care of that. He skip-ped over into Bangkok, bought a whole bundle of them, designed a patch that included the Erwan symbol and a couple of lightning bolts, then passed them out.

"If we're gonna get killed as Green Berets," he breathed, "we're gonna wear 'em." I lost mine somewhere, probably up on the *Plaines des Boleven*, but that's a whole different story. I loved that cocky little skimmer and that horsey little patch. It put a curl in our tails.

By 1800, Ed and I were deep in it. We stopped off at a little Chinese spit-stop and had some *egg foo yung*. I couldn't get that in Pakse. No Chinese restaurants. We lived mostly on a diet of beans and spaghetti. If we ate out, it was *chateaubriand et pommes frites*, meat and potatoes. The salads were plentiful and always fresh, thanks to Jean Cadeaux, a *metis planteur* who grew beautiful vegetables up on the Plateau.

In another hour, we were weaving our way into the midst of the cathouses.

"Whore" is not a good definitive term for a Lao prostitute. She's much, much more than that. Women are subservient in Laos, just as they are in most other parts of the Orient. She's petite and sweet smelling. She rubs your sore shoulders, working cocoa butter into that swelling ache at the back of your neck, and she coos softly into your ear. It doesn't make any difference that you can't understand what she's saying. It just sounds good, reassuring. Not like the Butterflies on Tu Do Street in Saigon a few years later, calling out raucously from the other side of a sweating bar.

The Hell's Belles cathouse — named that by some former team member who had already gone home — had a dimly-lit interior. There was a table or two here and there, a couch, a few chairs. In one corner, they'd spread lamb skins around and dropped a few soft pillows there. I plopped. A pretty little thing, probably no more than 16, sat beside me, working in that ginger and cocoa butter. I might've been in heaven if it hadn't been for an excess of Old Jack. I was out like a light in 10 minutes.

Things happen fast in the mysterious Orient. In one moment, all of the gods descend from on high and you are at peace. In the next moment, the gods fold up their tents and the devils take over. That's what happened in the Hell's Belles.

The first few rounds flew over my head. I was awake and sober in seconds. Someone with an AK was trying to take the place apart. The first burst of fire had eclipsed the

lights, and that soft-lit interior was now a black hole. I wriggled back into the deepest corner I could find and clung there. I could hear Ed screaming.

"Pathets!" he yelled. "The whole fucking room is full of Pathets!"

In that day and time, we rarely went armed. If you carried anything, it was a blue-steel, four-inch S&W .38. Americans didn't walk around with a rifle slung from their shoulder. Anyway, who's going to drag an M16 into a whorehouse? Our only chance at survival now was to get out, through any hole possible, and with as much alacrity as we could display.

"The wall!" Ed yelled. "Head for the wall!"

The gunner was either looking for a target or changing magazines. I could see him, dim and shadowy, at the other end of the room. The pretty little girl tugged at my sleeve.

"Pai," she said softly, "Go. This way." We crawled. I supposed Ed was trying to do the same thing on the other side of the room.

We slithered through a venting slit, a cut in the concrete block that eliminates the need for windows. Windows in Laos were not common. The monsoons drive down too hard and the French devised a way to get the same effect by cutting venting slips at the base of the building so the cool air that circulated was as stimulating as a fan.

The vent we found was small, but she got through first, and I followed, tearing the skin off the back of my neck getting

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through. The brick wall, eight feet or higher, loomed before me.

"Pai!" she said again, this time with more urgency, and she pointed at the top of the yawning wall. I *paied*, went like hell, grabbing onto anything that jugged out, pulling myself painfully to the top. I wrapped my hands around the crest of the wall and screamed. Broken glass, buried there to provide a barrier, was chopping my palms to pieces.

The gunner inside the Hell's Belles was back at his dirty work. The AK rattled—he seemed bent on shooting the place to pieces, targets or not. But he could stop that at any moment, step outside, and sweep me off the wall with a single burst.

That's why pain doesn't get in your way when someone is busy trying to make a sieve out of your rear end. I went up and over and down the other side, dropping to the ground with no more sweat left in me. Then I ran.

Someone got into the Hell's Belles with an equalizer and sent the Pathet to Paradise. Some said he was just mad, hopped up on opium and off his nut. I say he was a Pathet out to kill a couple of Green Berets. And if he wasn't a Pathet, where did he get an AK? They dragged him out into the street and dumped him in the sloppy gutter, and he was still lying there the next morning when Ed and I went back to see the damage he'd done.

Doc Barker sewed up my hands so that several months later, hardly a scar remained. The Bull in Vientiane, getting the message by Ed's radio of what had happened, was in Luang Prabang on the next available plane. I hung my head, sitting in the chair before him, while I gave him a verbal after-action report.

"Did you get your piece of tail?" he asked softly. I shook my head no. He clucked his tongue.

"Shame . . . damned shame," he said, the empathy in his voice reaching out. "Well, you get on down to Pakse and when the chance comes, visit me in Vientiane." He might've even winked slightly.

"We've got a few cathouses there, too."

Ed and I said goodbye at Johnny Li's C-47. It was loaded with rice pallets.

"Gotta drop on the Jars first," he said. "I should make Pakse late this afternoon. You wanna shove bundles for me?"

I held out the two bandaged hands.

"Sorry, John, out of action."

He smiled, curling it at the corner of his mouth. I thought it was more of a sneer.

"No sweat," he said, "you can sit the right seat. I need somebody for the flaps and gear."

And that's the way we went, him behind the yoke and me in the right seat, the same ratty old Irvin parachute wrapped around my shoulders.

I hoped the AK gunners at the Hmoung army outpost had given up and gone home . . . or maybe to Hanoi for a little R&R. ☒

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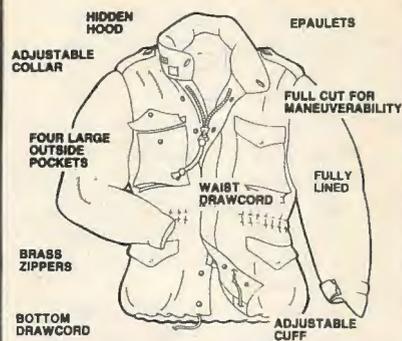
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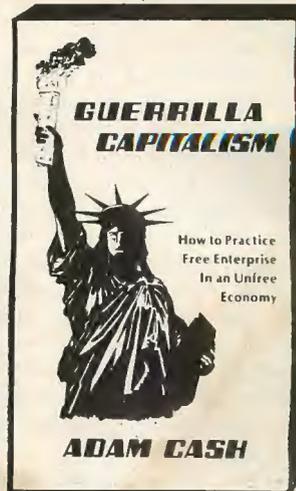
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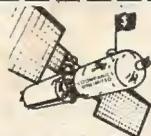
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RESISTING RANGOON

Continued from page 95

up. "Dee maak!" (Very good.) Chomping on his cigar he broke into a big grin.

Suddenly the elephant grass that cloaked the bank parted to reveal four armed men. They stepped onto the sandbar at the river's edge, weapons slung over their shoulders. I was grasping desperately for a rifle when I noticed that no one else in the boat was startled. Greetings crossed the water as we headed for shore.

"We stop here; wait until dark," Maj. Htoo told the gathering. "We must pass Burmese base near Salween River. We go by very quietly after dark. Time to eat."

Mounds of bananas, rice, wild boar and pumpkin arranged on a large banana leaf made up our feast for the evening. Everyone dug in with their fingers and when dinner was over the fun began. Sections of green bamboo stalk filled with a potent local brew circulated through the circle of seated warriors. Maj. Htoo leaned toward me with a wry grin, "Karenni whiskey. Very good. You drink."

Down the hatch. It was like swallowing a mouthful of molten lava. My eyes watered and the breath rushed from my lungs. I recovered but deemed it much more likely that I'd die of poisoning before the Burmese Army ever had a chance to draw a bead on me.

"Karenni people make the best whiskey in all Burma. Made from rice," Maj. Htoo chuckled.

You bet.

Underway with hangovers the next day we traveled until our boat finally shot out of the rapids and into the wide Salween River. It was near dusk and a thin sliver of waxing moon silhouetted the Burmese mountains. The engine coughed and sputtered into silence. Searching for a landmark in the inky dark, the helmsman hissed a warning for silence. A Burmese Army camp was nearby. The muffled metallic clink of chambering rounds was the only response from the Karenni fighters. We glided past into the night until the sound of more rapids disturbed the stillness on the Salween.

The half light of approaching dawn revealed another stretch of rapids. The roar of the water would cover the sound of our passage along this dangerous stretch where the Burmese Army held control. I no longer doubted the expert piloting of the Karenni boatmen and we were soon into the safety of calmer water. At least it seemed safe after the rollercoaster ride over the rapids, but that was before the gunfire erupted.

Muzzle flashes from the hazy outline of the far bank marked the locations of an ambush party. Rounds slapped the



This child reflects upon his people's fight for freedom. Someday he too will take this SKS into battle.

water near our craft. Contact. The Burmese Army was familiar with this infiltration route and had stationed an OP along the riverbank.

With violent jerks on the starter, our helmsman forced the engine to life and we roared away from the inaccurate, sporadic fire. To provide some concealment during our escape, we nosed into the shadowy darkness along the opposite bank.

"The Burmese have no gods" stated Maj. Htoo matter of factly. "Their bullets cannot hit us." As evidence of Karenni invincibility from the godless Burmese a quick check for casualties revealed no one hurt. My adrenalin rush subsided as we searched the passing shore for the next guerrilla camp.

Later that night I lay on a mat in camp. Maj. Htoo gave me a briefing on the situation in his area. "Burmese very mad," he stated. "Two weeks before

we ambush two companies, kill 15 Burmese, capture many weapons. Many Burmese soldiers in area. Two days before they take six men from this village. Force them to work. Before there was a large village near here. Burmese burn village. Destroy over 100 houses."

He pondered this carefully before continuing. "Burmese never patrol under company strength and local people always alert us to their presence." Maj. Htoo's face beamed with pride as he spoke of the people's loyalty to his cause. "Main problem," he continued thoughtfully, "is getting weapons and ammo for people who want to fight Burmese."

About 50 additional Karenni guerrillas materialized out of the morning fog to join us the next day. Despite an incredible hodgepodge of weapons, they looked lethal. I identified M16s, M14s; M1s, AKs, BARs and H&K G3s as well as a few M-79 Bloopers, LAWs and ChiCom and American grenades strapped to their bodies.

Maj. Htoo debriefed the officers and

their men. With a battered pencil he methodically recorded their statements in a small notebook. They had been operating in this area for some time and experienced several short, sharp contacts with the Burmese Army.

We piled back into the boat and continued our trek to reach Karenni area headquarters. A brilliant morning sun streamed through the jungle canopy and beat down on us with a stupefying effect. Progress would be slow. Maj. Htoo sent flanking patrols along the bank ahead of the boats. He was taking no chances. The ambush of the night before was still on everyone's mind.

After hours on the river, we finally turned onto a tributary that took us deeper into the jungle. A few more miles and another Karenni stronghold materialized in the jungle mist. We were home.

Several days later at the village headman's house I sat cross-legged on the floor with several Karenni leaders. A low table was covered with local fare: Fresh rice, pork, fish, vegetables, curried meats and potent Karenni whiskey. Battle was far from our minds but the weapons propped against walls served as a reminder of why we were here.

Maj. Htoo's clear voice broke the thoughtful silence. "The Karenni people are not fighting for a new independence. We have always had our independence — for hundreds of years. We are fighting to preserve our autonomy from the Burmese aggressor."

The strains of religious hymns, a haunting melody of accordion and high-pitched voices drifted up from the church in the village below. Karenni women and children sat in a tight group on the fringes of light radiating from a kerosene lamp. Glancing to the open balcony and beyond to the jungle mountains bathed in tropical moonlight I wished the Karenni success against the great odds they face. It seemed the least I could do.

— Mark Johnson



M16A2

Continued from page 69

zines.

We had only nine mags with which to conduct the entire 6,000-rd. test and the swirling dust played hell with them. Yet, the bolt-over-base malfunctions ceased when defective magazines were isolated and withdrawn from the test cycle.

As a practical matter, our test indicated shooters should never load M16 magazines to more than capacity and stick with Colt-manufactured mags rather than substitutes such as Adventure Line models.

Further, to avoid magazine stoppages, disassemble all mags; clean them thoroughly, and lightly lubricate the follower spring after you have stretched it by hand. If a magazine continues to cause problems, trash it or sell it at a gun show to someone you don't know. A new 30-round magazine with an improved magazine follower is now in production, according to Colt, but something more drastic than a change in magazine followers is required. The M16A2 needs and deserves an entirely new magazine system.

Incidentally, after these bolt-over-base failures the rifle fed, fired, extracted and ejected every bent cartridge when it was

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recycled from a reliable magazine.

More findings from our SOF test: Sometime after round 4,000 three of the four rear retaining tabs on the aluminum heat shields under the handguards broke away. It did not affect the rifle's operation or handling characteristics. The rifle was almost too hot to hold at the end of every cycle in the test. Also, at the end of the test, the plastic nub at the end of the buffer was splayed and cracked and appeared close to failure.

SOF Senior Editor Bill Guthrie and I were both able to consistently place all three shots of a burst into a standard military silhouette target at 50 meters from the

standing position without a sling. This is the maximum distance point targets should be engaged with three-shot bursts. Riflemen should be trained and ordered to fire their rifles semiautomatic only. Now that we once more have a true SAW at the section level — the M249 — the rifleman's requirement to provide intensive supporting fire is diminished and three-shot bursts should be restricted to close-range — like "they're coming over the wall" — emergency use only.

Two of the test participants, Jason Kokalis and Patrick Martin, are left-handed. After more than 1,000 rounds apiece, they learned to appreciate the

case deflector installed for their 20 percent of the world's population.

The new, all-checked buttplate met with mixed reaction. Two testers felt it improved the handling characteristics, prevented stock slippage and increased stability, especially in the three-shot burst sequences. Two felt it cut too sharply into shoulders protected only by a T-shirt because of the broiling desert sun.

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Lower head position allows more secure stock-weld (or spot-weld), since the cheek must be lifted off the stock when aiming through any scope mounted on an M16's carrying handle. This may also be attributable to the lengthened stock which allows a more comfortable stock-weld for most shooters.

Acclaim for the new rear-adjustable sight system was universal. Vertical adjustment is what is most often needed for field marksmanship and the old 'A1's elevation by turning the front sight never was acceptable. Neither is holdover: Kentucky windage went out with the Kentucky rifle.

In general, reaction to the M16A2 was positive — even ecstatic. Everyone felt it was a quantum leap forward. USMC Commandant Gen. Paul X. Kelley has stated, "We think that in the M16A2 we have come as close to perfection as you can come in a rifle." I think he is correct.

A civilian semiauto version of the M16A2 is now available. Called the AR-15A2 Sporter, it differs from its military counterpart in the following ways. The old style rear sights have been retained. There is no forward bolt assist or case deflector. It is being issued with the older dust cover. The geometry of the rear portion of the lower receiver remains the same as before. There is, of course, no selective fire option. As with the earlier AR-15 semiauto rifle, the lower and upper receivers are connected at the forward end by two screws instead of a push-pin — a condescension to the BATF, as it supposedly inhibits attaching a full-auto lower receiver to an AR-15 upper receiver assembly. Inquiries concerning the AR-15A2 Sporter should be directed to Robert C. Platkin, Manager of Marketing, Colt Industries — Firearms Division (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 1868, Hartford, CT 06101). ☒

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BACK TO THE BUSH

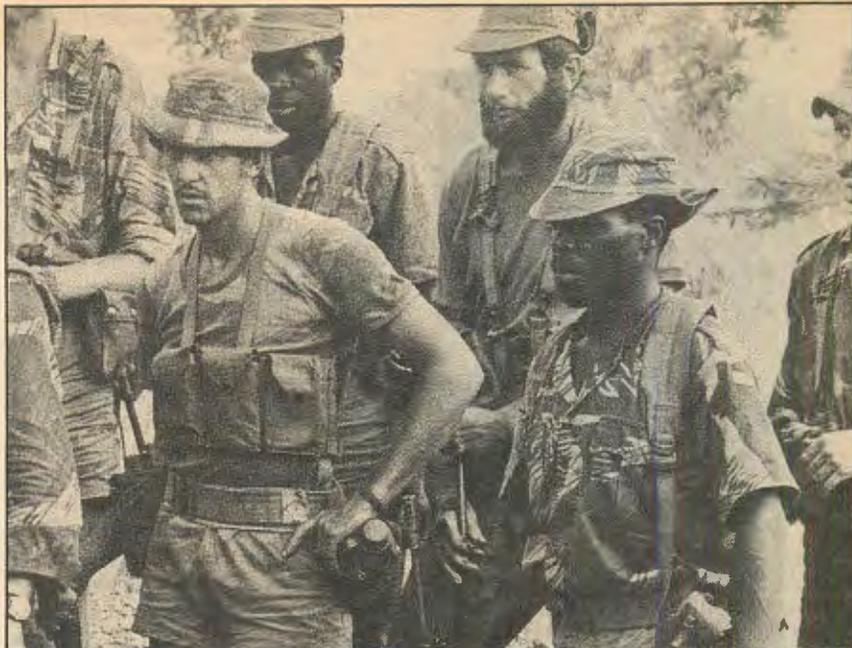
Continued from page 44

Scottish warrior. The beer and the audience were working on Mad Jim. I decided to stick around and pass the peanuts since I was new and inexperienced at the soldier trade.

It all began, Mad Jim related, in a pleasant little village in northern Scotland. By the age of 13 it was quite clear to anyone who cared to notice that Burnett's academic performance was bound to be abysmal. He was an embarrassment to his family, having served one term in Borstal (juvenile reformatory) for a continuing rampage of petty crimes. Little Jimmy Burnett — with very little resistance from his family — split from hearth and home.

"Was off to see the world, wasn't I? Soon's I figured where a hairy-assed, talented type like myself belonged, I brought home the recruiting forms for me folks to sign. The old man, bless his bleedin' heart, couldn't get to a pen fast enough, but me mum blubbed for fuckin' hours. She's a treasure really, the old cow, loves me like I was pie and gravy; reckoned if she bawled for a bit I'd see the error of me ways and troop off back to lessons with me mittful of chicken sandwiches and history books.

"Well, that's not for me, is it? So I told her if she wouldn't sign, I was gonna start using some of the tricks I picked up in Borstal."



Mad Jim Burnett would have felt at home with these Selous Scouts troopers waiting to go on maneuvers in 1977. During Rhodesian war RLI fire force, his unit, spent six weeks in the field, 10 days out, seven days a week for as long as a man could stand it.

It was a cunning ploy aimed straight at the heart of poor Mum's battered maternal instincts. She was already well advised that the only thing really taught in Borstal was how to rob banks and Pakistani grocery stores. Perhaps the prospect of having a bank robber for a son seemed unpleasant at the time, but in the long run he would at least have stayed dry in the rain. He would also have had cause to shoot fewer people.

The British Army took Burnett to its cold heart and nurtured him. As a *Boy Soldier*, he was carefully molded by perhaps the most effective system ever devised for converting young, impressionable lads into useful psychopaths. Their grateful ward was putty, not yet old enough or drunk enough to experiment with disobedience; he was ripening in the fold, where no one, not even Mum, could alter his destiny.

His lethal apprenticeship finally over, the promising graduate was posted first to Hong Kong, Eastern hub of decadent commercialism, and last bastion of what remained of "The Empire."

"The Empire, mate, was built around the holes of sweet native wenches. It's heathen maidens what brought ships halfway around the world to colonize the wilderness, not curried meat and smelly beaver palts." Travel, clearly, was broadening his horizons, investing him with insights he would certainly not have gained in the conservative confines of the classroom.

After Hong Kong came ski training in Norway, *bierfests* in Germany, and two fiery tours in Northern Ireland. But Mad

Jim was growing bored with it all. "No women and children, know what I mean?"

Rhodesia beckoned and Burnett wound up in Africa plying his trade as an infantryman. In the two years Burnett and I served together in the Rhodesian Light Infantry, there was little alternative but to get to know the man. He was fascinating. The longer you lived in his shadow, observing his point-blank approach to life, the more Burnett began to appear sort of, well... human. His animal instincts — and the actions they usually prompted — were a serious social defect. He let his opinions of anything and everything be known at once, in uncompromising terms for the rest of the world to accept or condemn as it pleased. Despite all that, Burnett evinced a strong affinity for other humans. Black, white, oriental, occidental, it didn't matter. He was horny.

"When I was growin' up," he whispered warmly, "Me mum used to keep the liver hid in the neighbour's icebox, or I'd of fucked it."

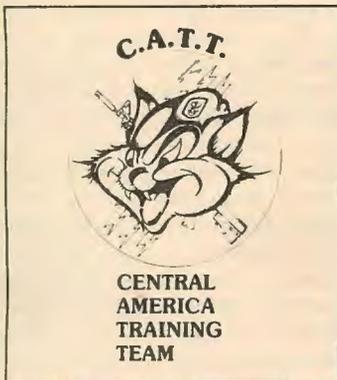
He pawed at his crotch.

"Did I tell you the time I was in a stick with Color Bradburne? Was just after I'd got to the Commando and it were so damn busy they put the old man back in the sticks to help out. Course, we've got to go para because he gets fuckin' vertigo in the choppers, don't he. I don't mind though. Airborne Ranger, love to jump."

I was well aware of Burnett's passion for operational parachute jumps. I'd endured my share of hours with him in the Dak. Once the bird was in the air you could have buggered him with a garden hose and he wouldn't have flinched or been even remotely aware his shorts were torn. It was either paralysis or ecstasy. Burnett was too contrary to let you know which.

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Selous Scout rests before 1977 battle. Although Mugabe leads Zimbabwe's masses down the road of more war, massive government corruption and a failing economy, Coleman believes the fight for Rhodesia was worth it.

"Anyway, we've just cleared this *kraal*, you see, and Color's got his little mob of locals all bunched together outside one of the huts. Women and children mostly, 'cause the men are all hiding with their rifles, aren't they? I've had a really good day now, slotted my first gook, put up a good show, and I reckon I've earned a bit of reward. So I wanders over to Color — real easy like — and I ask him, 'Say, Color, what's the story with loot around here? Can a fellow just help himself or whatever?'"

"'Why sure,'" says he. 'Got no objections to a bit of harmless pilfering. Just what've you got in mind, lad?' Real fatherly like, Color is, you know.

"Well, I casts me eyes on this young black female he's got sitting there in front of the hut and I gives him a knowing wink. 'Sort of fancy that one there, don't I?'"

"Oh, you should have seen him, mate. Guess that's not what he figured to hear from one of his little soldiers. 'We don't do that sort of thing here!' he shouts at me. 'I'll have your balls in butter, you cunt, if I ever catch you mounting the smelly locals. You got no chance with me, trooper, no chance!' Called me a heathen bastard and a baby-diddler and a few more besides, but there weren't no call, really. I was only asking. That's just how honest and polite I am. Next time I won't ask."

If Burnett had chosen any other line of work, he would have been dragged away long ago, hissing and spitting, to a containment area for the socially deranged. In the army, he was a treasure. In combat, his performance was priceless.

Virtually all men are intrigued, at some time, by the legendary glamor of battle. Most of them get over that crap quickly once exposed to the foul reality

of dismembered bodies and personal terror. Some few — very few — relish it and seek it at every opportunity. That explains Burnett's presence in Rhodesia even after all he'd been through as a British soldier.

Air Rhodesia winged north out of Salisbury at least once every day. Any imposters, there only to wave at TV cameras or collect war stories for girlfriends, soon found pressing reasons to leave for cooler climates. Most who called themselves "mercenaries" did just that. Burnett stayed and strutted.

He thrived in the heat, pressure and violence of the Rhodesian war. RLI Fire Force duty was six weeks in, 10 days out, seven days a week for as long as a man could stand it. Two or three times a day the choppers and Dakotas lifted their loads from the forward airfields into God-only-knew what fresh insanity. Each mission was different; each demanded an entirely fresh set of rules. The strain was incredible and RLI troopies — particularly Burnett — found relief where and when they could. When the African night closed in and the chopper jockies flatly refused to fly except in emergencies, the bar was open. So long as a man was spared the nuisance of the guard roster, last drinks were at his own discretion. . . he had simply to be primed for duty the next day. RLI duty grew hair on a man's ass like grass on a golf green. Mad Jim's looked like the 18th at La Costa.

Near the end of the war, when Com-Ops (Combined Operations) felt a need to enhance rookie training by rotating a few authentic bush-beasts into the instructor staff, Burnett drew first duty. He seemed ideally suited to the task. A handful of choice degenerates dispensing justice and wisdom to the pimpled masses. Something in his murky soul responded to the corruption of the innocent. There were incidents, of course: the deliberate stabbing of a recruit with a bayonet (charges dismissed), drunken yodelling after lights-out (dismissed for lack of evidence since Burnett had led an entire crew in full voice). And then the war ended.

In the sudden cessation of hostilities, all of us faced the uncomfortable likelihood of mass execution or at least wholesale unemployment at the hands of the new government. It seemed like a sensible time to sleep with boots on and not shout too loudly about "slotting gooks by the boatload." But that was never Burnett's style. I slipped away to South Africa and lost contact with Mad Jim.

And then I happened into a bar full of South African Defense Force troopers. He was upstairs, some friends told me, with a girl and a mate. I looked into the room and saw Mad Jim, stripped of his SADF uniform and intent on forcing his ample attentions on the semi-conscious

girlfriend of an old Irish mate from Rhodesia days. Burnett had often commented on the Irish who he called "heavy drinkers and bad-tempered all." I feared Jim would get to see some of the latter evil until the Irishman belched resoundingly and slid from view behind an overturned coffee table. His lady was somewhat better off and not totally unaware of what the semi-naked madman groping at her crotch was after. Her protests were becoming increasingly vocal.

"Burnett," she screamed, "they can put you away for what you're planning to do, you turd."

Mad Jim was typically unaffected. "Shush, mate, or you'll wake the Irish. If you'd any respect for the man at all, you wouldn't want him to see his girlfriend in this awful state. Just get the car running and take the beer out of the refrigerator. Chrissake, if me mum'd worn her knickers this tight it's damned certain I'd have been born five years younger."

And damned certain this time Mad Jim wasn't going to be cheated out of his reward over a polite formality like asking.

— William Norris



BATTLE BLADES

Continued from page 16

double-strand Texas barbed wire with ease. More revealing in a different way is the absolutely devastating way this cutter parts even fine chicken wire. Fine wire is sometimes more difficult to cut because it is so fine, and it takes a wire-cutter that is made with close tolerances to cut it in many cases.

That fact didn't dawn on me when I first began to test the AK bayonet's wire cutting capacity. I wondered why the blade of the bayonet was made out of precision ground stock. That's expensive and unnecessary in a bayonet. And I wasn't examining ordinary knife steel. The blade had been constructed of a grade of steel and a degree of hardness and temper that is neither needed nor desirable in a knife. This steel is of a level of hardness and abrasion resistance that is only employed in tools that are designed and intended to cut metal. That marks the main reason why Ivan or his cousins can't sharpen their AK bayonets in the field. The metal is so hard and tough that neither a file nor hand-held sharpening stone will cut it. Add that conclusion to the fact that the bevvels employed for both the cutting edge and the clip are so severe that they would not cut flesh with any degree of effectiveness if they were sharp and I began to understand that the designers of this piece were

either very, very stupid, or they had something else in mind.

We have talked about the functional aspect of the blade and the sheath tip. There is also a fine row of non-functional serrations running for about 2/3 of the length of the back of the blade in some AK bayonet models. These, like the false edge ground on the reverse side of the clip point, are purely for psychological enhancement. They simply make the bayonet look like some sort of high-tech gut-ripper. What do we really have here?

We have a blade on a bayonet that will not cut flesh, a blade that cannot be sharpened in the field, a blade made out of costly, tough, high-grade steel by an expensive grinding and milling procedure, and a blade that gives a soldier a psychological boost by appearing to be a deadly weapon when it's not. If that were all there was to it, the AK bayonet might be dismissed as an expensive piece of equipment that doesn't work too well but remains popular with the troops. But we can't dismiss this concept out of hand. The Soviets *want* Ivan to enjoy carrying the AK bayonet and close scrutiny of the rest of the sheath, the guard, the handle, the pommel, the release mechanism, and even the two screws that hold the handle and release mechanism in place show why.

Once you stop thinking in terms of a bayonet or fighting knife and start thinking in terms of a wire-cutter, all sorts of insights develop, and certain engineering features of the AK bayonet take on new and significant meaning. A bayonet doesn't need an expensively milled and ground tool-steel blade, or an injection-molded phenolic handle that insulates against electricity, or a pommel with a protective shroud cast around the release mechanism to prevent jamming or accidental release. Neither does a bayonet require that the two simple screws that hold the handle and release mechanism in place be staked with a punch so that they can't possibly come loose *unless* there is something intended beyond the obvious function of a bayonet — such as anti-shock electrical insulation which might be lost if the fit of the handle were disturbed. If that sounds like wild speculation or second-guessing the Soviet military mind, take a look at the rest of the package: sheath, guard and the AK series weapons themselves.

We have already described the simple but highly-effective wire-cutter that is formed by the tip of the sheath. The rest of the sheath is a very durable and robust metal envelope that covers the blade. Just the sort of thing that you would grab and use to pry on something. And the top half of the sheath — the part you grab with your hand — is

insulated against electrical shock. Not just a little insulation, mind you, but a good, solid, black rubber shroud that is at least 1/8 — and in some places a full 1/4-inch — thick. Further, the sheath attaches to the belt with a simple little leather harness that allows it to be quickly and easily removed from the bearer's belt without removing or loosening any other load-carrying equipment. The insulation remains undisturbed during the removal. It should. It is one half of the wire-cutter.

The guard of the AK bayonet, like the rest of the piece, was designed to function as more than a guard on your basic bayonet. It is a very strong casting, and is attached to the blade by two very robust rivets. Most guards on fighting knives and bayonets simply slide over the tang and are held in place by the handle. Additional expense and effort were expended here because the men who designed this little jewel wanted more than a common bayonet or a simple, hand-held wire-cutter. If they had not, a simple slide-on guard would have been sufficient. By riveting the guard, they allow it to work as a fulcrum when the cutting function is employed and the bayonet is in place on the rifle. Simply rest the sheath half of the cutter on the ground and steady it with your foot on the insulation covering the sheath, grab the AK-47 by the stock and heat shield, pick up the wire in the jaws of the combination, and push. There is very little wire I know of that can't be cut with a fulcrum and a 30-inch lever. American troops who used the flash suppressor on their early M16s to snap the wire on C-ration boxes would have appreciated this type of feature.

If the wire happens to be electrified, no sweat. The AK stock and heat shield provide electrical insulation on one end, and the rubber coating on the sheath provides it on the other. It all makes for one hell of a good combat wire-cutter, and one that the troop won't throw away. As mentioned previously, even if he hasn't encountered wire, he'll hold onto something that looks like a knife.

Several simple conclusions for the American fighting man come out of all this. If Ivan or anyone else comes at you with an AK bayonet in his hand and a knife-fight on his mind, he's due to be dead meat in short order — presuming you have a better weapon in your hand and know how to use it. Don't be overly-concerned about the AK bayonet as a trench knife. It is nearly impossible to cut someone with one of the things, and almost as hard to effectively stab unless there is a rifle attached behind the blade. A confrontation between a man armed with a proper fighting knife and someone waving an AK bayonet around almost

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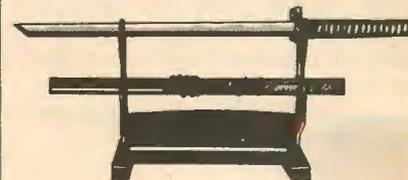
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qualifies as an unfair fight — but then that's the idea as I see it and why I make fighting knives. Even our issue KA-BAR is far superior as a hand-held fighting knife.

Soviet planners obviously feel that a good wire-cutter is much more vital to their interests than a good fighting knife or a good bayonet. They have elected to expend a great deal of thought and no little manufacturing effort and expense to design such an implement. They also want to ensure Soviet troops have this tool in their possession in combat, so it was given the appearance of a weapon to hide its basically non-lethal function and prevent its being discarded at the first available opportunity. This, along with the great care and effort expended to make this wire-cutter shockproof and 100 percent reliable — remember the shroud around the release mechanism and the staked assembly screws — shows the very great emphasis the Soviets place on being able to breach a wire perimeter. They want to be absolutely certain that anyone who makes it to the wire won't have an equipment failure in his wire-cutter when he gets there. They want to be positive that the first man to reach the wire in an assault is able to cut it before the defenders can blow him away. With the AK bayonet they have given him a tool that will get the job done. Both clever and devious, it is well engineered and skillfully made. It is a very good wire-cutter that will get you killed in a knife fight. It is obvious from this piece of equipment that those in charge of Soviet infantry tactics see no real potential for the average infantryman to face a knife-fight situation on the modern battlefield.

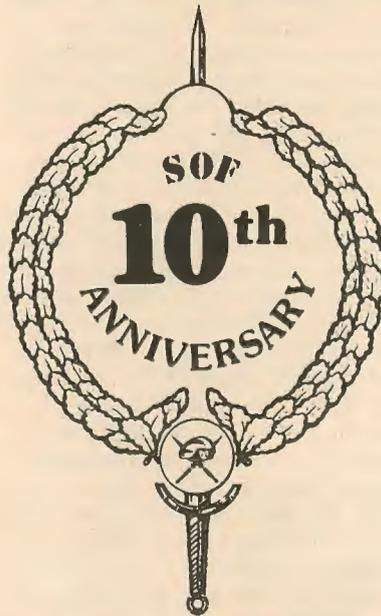
They expect wire, and they plan to cut it. ✂

DE-BRIEF

Continued from page 4

The first tentative steps have been taken in the formation of the Joint Special Operations Agency which oversees all military special operations and advises the JCS on anti-terrorist activities. We support that and applaud the emphasis on quick-strike reactions by Army Special Forces and Rangers, Navy SEALs, Air Force Special Operations units and Marine Recon outfits. Even more loudly, we applaud the attitude of President Reagan who backed his military bets with a National Security Decision Directive which allows military or paramilitary strikes to prevent terrorist attacks against America and her allies — and to punish the attackers.

It's about time we learned that turning the other cheek to terrorists simply invites another slap. ✂



BULLETIN BOARD

Continued from page 10

SPOTLIGHT BRIGHTENS...

In the wake of the deaths of CMA members Jim Powell and Dana Parker (See "CMA in Central America," page 75,) questions from the world press showed that SOF is widely considered to be the only authoritative source for information on the "private sector military" — or, if you prefer, soldiers of fortune. This attention and 85 reporters at the '84 SOF Convention spawned the most balanced stories about the magazine we have ever seen.

Both ABC and NBC featured SOF in their evening news broadcasts, including Fred Francis' impartial four-minute segment on NBC. Since then, SOF has had PBS and West German TV network crews trooping through our offices.

SOF has been cited for effectiveness both in reporting on and participating in private sector efforts to fight communism. In an NBC broadcast, Atlatl Bn. CO Maj. Armando Azmitia stated, "Before [SOF] started to help us, we could anticipate that 50 percent of our machine guns were going to fail in the field. And right now, we have almost zero malfunctions."

Azmitia credited that record to Pete Kokalis' small-arms maintenance training missions.

ARDE SPLIT...

Injured by a bomb blast, and expelled from *Alianza Revolucionaria Democrática Nicaraguense* (ARDE) by a 19-1 council vote, Eden Pastora is trying to keep what little he has left by continuing to call his remaining supporters "ARDE." Commander Zero is the only person who can benefit from this misrepresentation, since most *norteamericanos* won't know the difference.

Americans solicited for aid by ARDE should make sure contributions are going to the reformed ARDE under Alfonso Robelo, since they are now planning combined ops with the FDN.

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COMBAT WEAPONCRAFT

Continued from page 14

military weapons do not allow soldiers to direct accurate fire in low-light situations.

A weapon for combat *must* be designed with night fighting in mind. Much of modern combat since Korea has been in irregular or counterinsurgency warfare. That means in order to survive and succeed soldiers must fight effectively at night.

When was the last time you zeroed your military rifle at night?

OK, an easier question first. Name the world's battle rifles made without issue night sights: FN-FAL, G3, FAMAS, AK-47, CETME, Mini-14, Steyr AUG, M16A1 and M16A2 . . . Hardly any type-classified battle rifle of any army allows sighted fire at night.

Which issue rifles have night sights? Galil, some AKMs . . . the list is much shorter.

Deduction: As a grunt in any war going on today, you need — but probably won't have — functional night sights on your issue shoulder weapon.

Do night sights work? Yes, even in daylight. Carrying a Galil in El Salvador, I leave the night sights flipped up all the time. They look just like the high-visibility sights on my combat pistol, and help me in snap shooting.

So Galil has taken care of the Israelis. What about the rest of us?

Field expedients will be crude, but can be helpful. One of the easiest is a white string, tied from the rear aperture to the front post. You can't see it in the lowest light, and you have to lift your head above the normal sighting plane to see the string, but once you get the hang of it, you can point pretty well at close range. Unfortunately, it only helps with direction and the real problem with night shooting is usually elevation, shooting too high.

Another expedient is a chalk line or strip of white tape run down the top of the barrel and handguard. It's harder to knock off than the string, but to aim using this system you must lift the head even higher over the weapon. That complicates the concern for firing high as the muzzle tends to rise with the level of the eyes.

The best bet is to make yourself a luminous sight.

It's not that hard. I've had to use many different firearms in security work in Africa and Central America, and I've had to install my own night sights on all of them except the Galil and the AKM.

Any standard flip-type military aperture sight can be converted without

affecting the weapon's combat accuracy. File the top of the long-range (300-500 meters) aperture sight down level. Then file a deep, square notch down to the bottom of the aperture. Paint a vertical line on the front post and dot the standing arms of the rear sight with colored luminous paint. To aim at night, simply center the luminous vertical line between the two dots, swing onto the target, hold and squeeze.

An even better modification can be made by cannibalizing any cheap, five-dollar compass. Break the compass apart and using a fine knife-blade pry off the luminous dots on the compass base. Super-glue them to the arms of your home-made rear sight. Next pry off the luminous bar on the compass needle and super-glue it to the front post. Works great.

Manufactured night sights work even better. The U.S. military has tested an M16 sight with luminous tritium inserts that replaces the existing sight without modification. That's a great idea for the front, but we still need something for the rear sight.

The Aimpoint sight is battery powered, adjustable for intensity and excellent for day or night. The recon platoon commander of the Airborne Battalion of the Salvadoran Army is

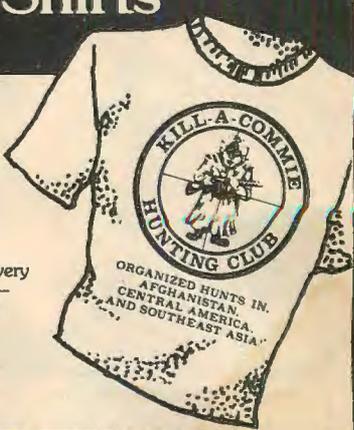
presently using an Aimpoint sight, a gift from Bill Rogers of Rogers Holster Company. He says he likes it for general use, but it is particularly effective at night. (The latest model is still smaller than the original compact Aimpoint.) The only problem: changing batteries in the field . . . if you have them.

The Armson O.E.G. — my personal favorite — is a single-point type scope, made for use with both eyes open. The O.E.G. is rugged, accurate, and effective for both day and night shooting without modification. It is lit by a replaceable radioactive element, guaranteed for 10 years. Six were given to the Salvadoran Army. The Atlacatl Battalion got most of them, and one Atlacatl platoon commander claims a one-shot kill at a paced-off 400 meters. Remember to use your strong eye on the O.E.G. and look at your target with the weak eye. It's a hard sight to use for a man with his strong eye opposite from his normal firing shoulder.

Every assault rifle in current issue is a good combat weapon. You can fire it by day or night, and clean it by day or night. You can even perform elementary repairs by day or night.

You ought to be able to sight it by day or night. ☒

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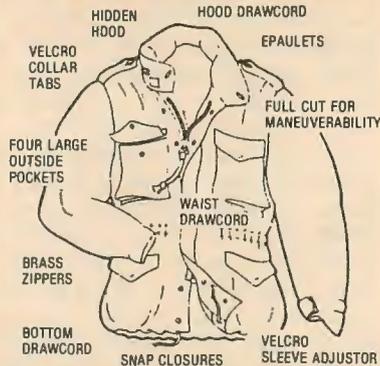


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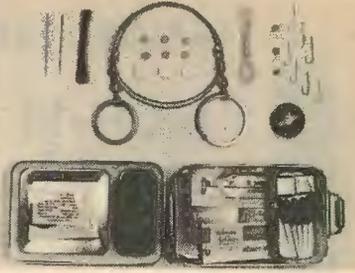
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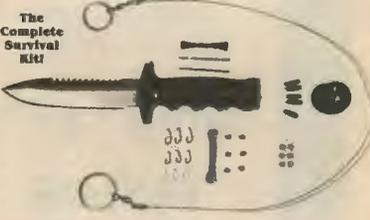


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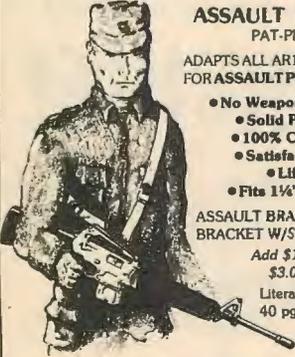
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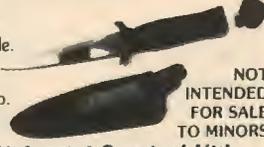
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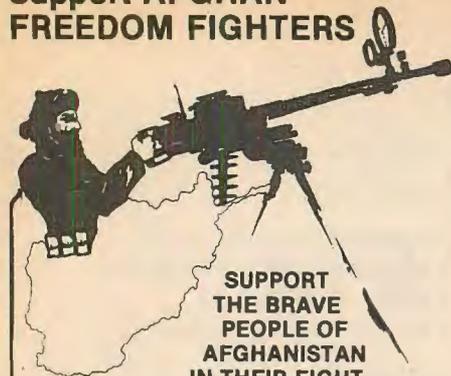
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ADVERTISERS INDEX

Advertiser	Page
Alghan Freedom Fighters Fund	142
American Historical	17
Assault Systems	18-19
Auburn Wolfe Pub.	112
Ballard Cutlery	Cover 3
Bancroft Cap Corp.	124
Brigade Quartermasters	109
CCS Communication Cont.	125
Citizens for Reagan	122
Collectors Armoury	118
Command T-Shirts	123
Deibel German Military	122
Delta Specialty Prod.	136
Doubleday Military Bk.	11
Dragon Master	135
Dutchman (The)	111
El Salvador/Nicaragua Fund	121
Enforcers Outfitting, Inc.	127
Excalibur Enterprises	108
Exotic Sports	117
Gemini Industries	124
Greene Military Dist.	129
Guaranteed Dist.	21
Gun South, Inc.	25
Heckler & Koch	Cover 4
Heritage Arms	110
HKS Products	114
House of Weapons	126
INCO	122
Kaufman's West	23
Larc International	131
Law Enforcement Assoc.	126
Lenny Magill Prod.	131
Light Enterprises	126
L.L. Baston	108
Loompanics	129
Merc Shirts	137
National League of Families	119
North Am. School of Firearms	15
Paladin Press	3
Parrellex Corp.	6-7
Personal Security & Armament	121
Peter Bauchop Cust. Knives	123
Phoenix Systems	114
Pioneer & Co.	112
Quartermaster Sales	116
Refugee Relief Int'l.	129
R.J.S. T-Shirts	120
Safariland Hunting	123
Silent Partner	14
SOF Exchange	Cover 2, 105, 126, 133, 142
SOF Subscription	106-107
Spare Time Sports	115
Special Weapons Prod.	132
Survival Books	126
Survival Store (The)	110
Swat Viper	120
Tower Hill Press	126
U.S. Calvary Store	113
World Prof. Tae Kwon Do	117
World War 2 Ltd. Prod.	132

SUPPLY LOCKER SECTION

Alpine Military	138
Anker Designs	141
Bryg's, Inc.	138
Cloudland Enterprises	139
Cobra Defense Access.	139
Combat Glasses	138
Creative Horizons	138
Delta Press	139
Devil's Brigade	138
Edan Press	141
Feather Enterprises	140
Ferde Grofe Films	139
Gemini Wilderness	139
Global School	139
J.R. Stupero	142
King and Sutley Co.	140
Kurt Ehrlich Co.	138
Lancer Militaria	141
Lifeknife	139
LRRP Enterprises	140
M & R Associates	140
Mainline Sales, Inc.	139
Mathews Police Supply	140
Micro Structures	138
Milltex	142
Modern Schools of America	142
O'hara Publications	141
Picky, Picky, Picky	141
Prime Targets	140
RP Knives	141
Sin Lai Productions	141
Taylor Cutlery	140
Universal Electronics	138
Westbury Sales	142
Yankee Mfg.	138

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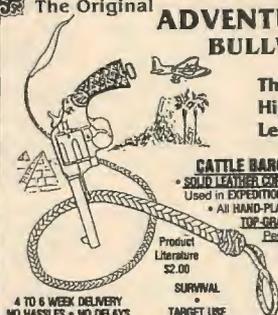
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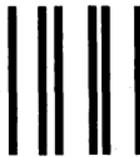
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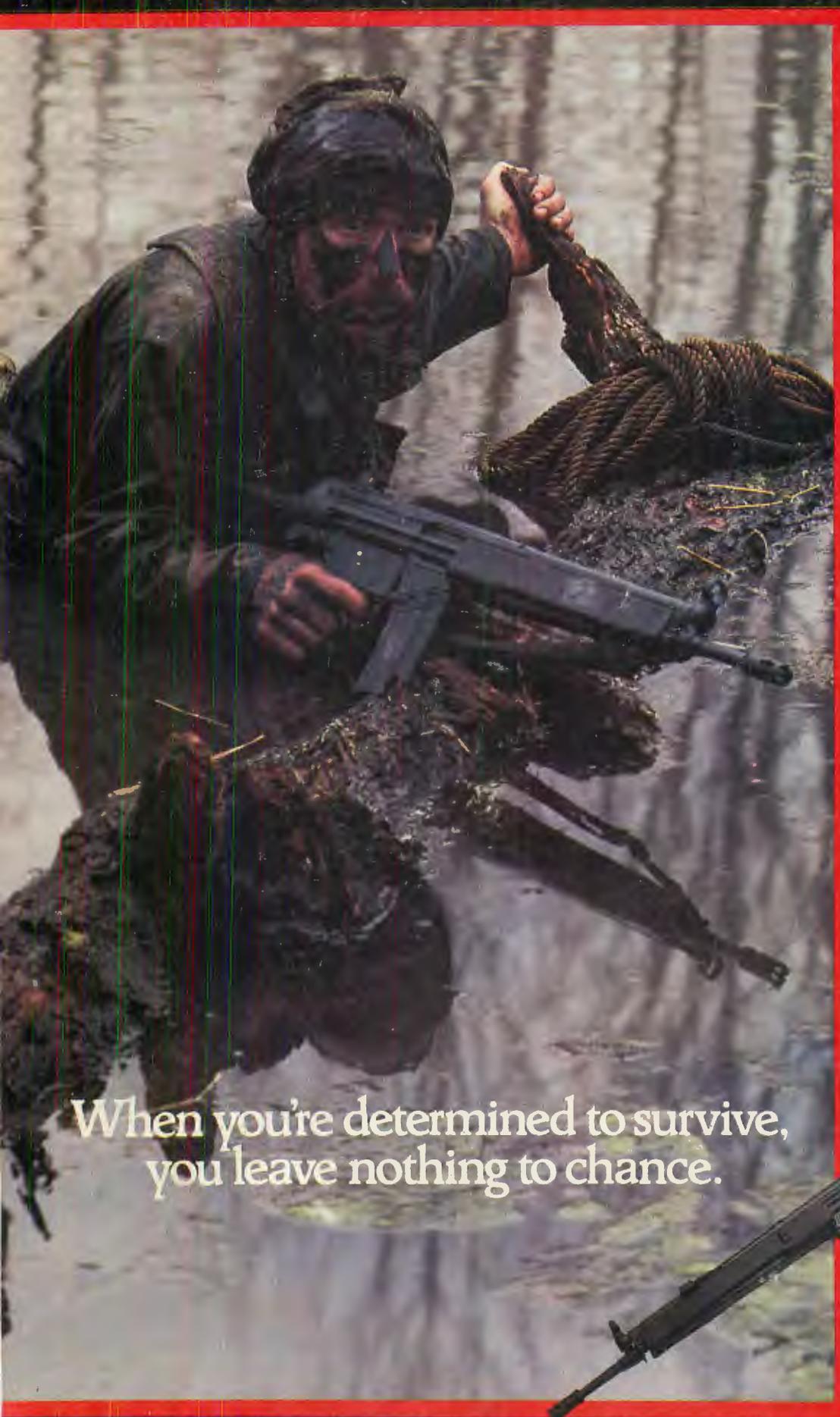
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