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# SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

The Journal of Professional Adventurers

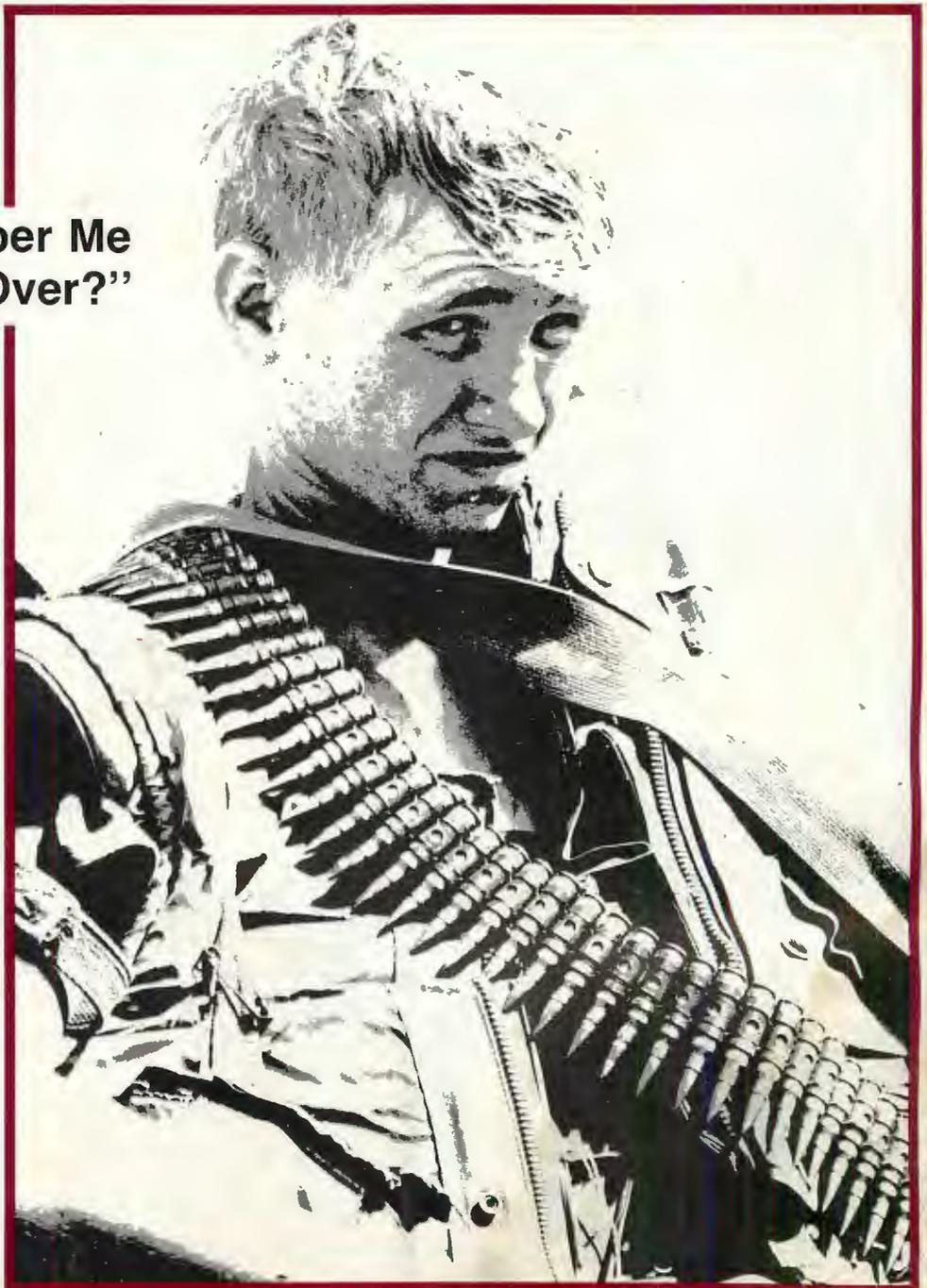
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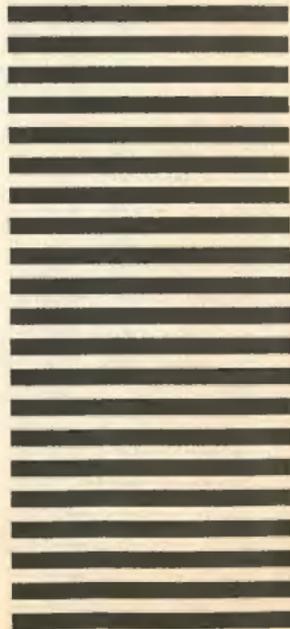
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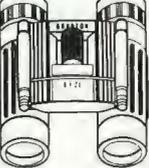
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Kaufman's is certain you'll be both pleased and amazed at the quality and effectiveness of this binocular. If you're not completely satisfied return it to us for a full refund plus a \$5.00 credit which may be applied towards any of our merchandise at any time.

Choose: Camouflage rubber armoured or Black rubber armoured.  
List price ..... \$120.00/each.  
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## 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.

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Sizes: XS,S,M,L ..... \$46.75/each; XL ..... \$51.50/each

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**Ranger Combat Cap - Woodland Camouflage**—latest Army issue. This winterweight cap features lined flaps which can fold out to keep your ears warm and tucked 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.

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**Regulation GI Dog Tags**— (GENUINE GI) 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.  
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**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. Sizes: 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 waterproof) 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.**

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Choose from:  Olive Drab (OD) Green  Camouflage, Woodland Pattern (latest GI issue to Army)  Desert Tan - (NATO issue).  Camouflage, Tiger Stripes - (Commercially made in a US mill to military specs).

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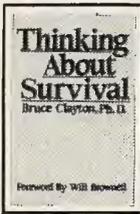


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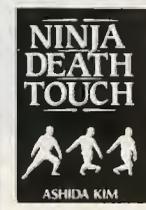
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# DE-BRIEF

by Dale A. Dye, Executive Editor

**D**ESPITE a frustrating lack of hard evidence, most Americans — particularly American veterans — continue to believe some of their countrymen remain in communist hands in Southeast Asia. Activity at the dedication of a second memorial to the sacrifices of Vietnam Veterans in November of last year clearly indicates the good people of this nation are not about to allow the issue of American POWs and MIAs to be buried in some bureaucratic bodybag.

Political observers and commentators — those pundits who park on the shores of the Potomac and attempt to read our minds — are saying it's all part of a "new conservatism" that's sweeping through society. They point to the re-election of President Reagan to prove their contention.

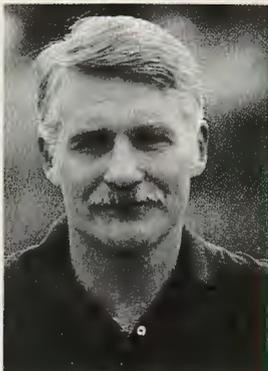
Liberals who didn't find themselves medevacked out of office in the elections say it's all hype, and we should put the issue to rest. They point accusing fingers at Hollywood and say movies such as "Uncommon Valor" and "Missing in Action" only serve to foster false hope.

None of this rationalization washes well in the face of new revelations about POWs from the man who spent longer as a prisoner — and left the Vietnamese military prison system later — than any other American who returned to U.S. soil. Former Marine Robert Garwood says he believes as many as 70 U.S. citizens remain in communist hands in Southeast Asia. We believe him.

Garwood is hardly an unimpeachable source. He was convicted of collaboration with the enemy after fellow POWs testified at his trial concerning his activities while in communist hands. He has been indelibly branded an enemy sympathizer and tainted by remain-

ing in Vietnam long after the other known prisoners were repatriated. But Garwood's background actually lends credence to his reports of other Americans being held by his former captors.

The record reveals he was a trustee, a sort of model prisoner who was allowed access and freedom denied to other POWs. It was while employed in this capacity that he came across the other Americans who he claims are still imprisoned in Vietnam. He cites some names and places which jibe with information developed by U.S. officials investigating the situation. And his own story has already produced as much profit as it's likely to in the form of a biography. Garwood only stands to lose more face if he's lying.



The real question here is not the credibility of the witness. We should be asking ourselves — and our elected representatives — what this country intends to do about this new evidence. What sort of economic, diplomatic and world political pressure can we put on

Vietnam to cough up our remaining POWs and MIAs — in good shape and in a hurry?

It's going to take some pressure from the bottom up in the form of letters, telegrams and phone calls demanding action or information on this new evidence. It's going to take a renewed administration commitment to the clout of the Joint Casualty Resolution Center, which a year or two ago didn't have enough money to pay phone bills or hire vehicles at its headquarters in Bangkok, Thailand.

We've managed to erect a satisfactory national memorial to the men who died and those who came home from the war. Isn't it about time we did something tangible for the ones who may still be fighting?



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**COVER:** Marine PFC Russell R. Widdifield wasn't thinking about monuments while he rested on a sweep 25 miles north of An Hoa in Vietnam, but he may have been wondering what sort of reception he'd receive at home when his combat tour was complete. In 1968, dissidents and divisiveness in America had created a difficult situation for American fighting men and veterans of the war in Southeast Asia. It was a long, difficult time before America's Vietnam Veterans finally got the tribute to their service and sacrifice they felt was appropriate. See SOF's on-scene coverage of the dedication of that memorial on p. 31. Photo: Department of Defense (Marine Corps)

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2



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6

**6 GI M-65 Field Jacket**

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1



KIDS SPECIALS

3

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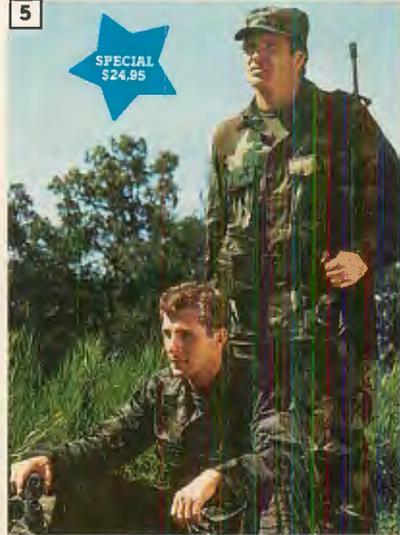
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**5 U.S. Military Fatigues**

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5

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12

13

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9

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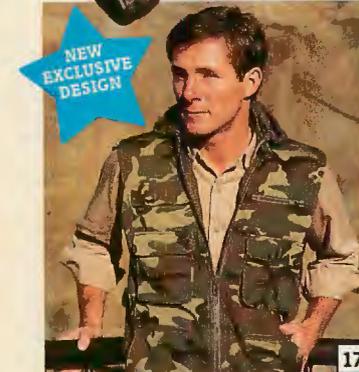
**14 The Bionic Ear**

Extremely sensitive pointable, electronic listening device the size of a flashlight. Amplifies sounds and passes them on to the user through stereo headphones which are included. It is used extensively by hunters, bird watchers, security and law enforcement personnel. The Bionic Ear can hear a whisper at 100 yards, feet scuffling in a warehouse at 200 feet or more. It can hear a car door shutting at 5 blocks and a coon dog on the trail up to 2 miles away. Uses a 9 volt battery. **Warning:** this device is not intended as an eavesdropping device.

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14



17

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**19 British Commando Knife**

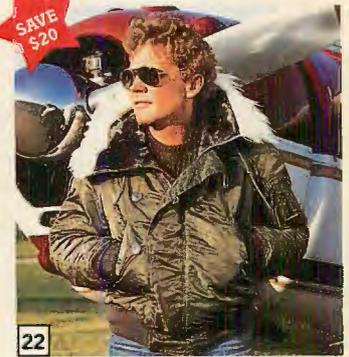
This is the famed Sykes-Fairbairn knife made in Sheffield, England. Originally designed for the British Commandos in WW II. 6" double edge razor sharp blade delivers instant death. Complete with black leather sheath. #470300 **\$24.95**



19

**22 USAF N-2B Flyer's Short Parka**

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## MARKISTS IN MEXICO...

Sirs:

SOF is an excellent source for information ... in assessing the advance of communism in the world. I read with interest the recent article "Red Tide at Cancun; Mexico's Misguided Military" (SOF — December '84). The information is accurate except for one thing.

"Mexico is effectively a one-party state," as SOF reported. However, it is not "by every test a democratic country." Mexico is indeed the target for communist takeover. But as a citizen I cannot agree that it is coming from Central America. The danger is from within. That one party that controls Mexico has been communist since its birth in 1917, but only now has its real objective been clarified. Generations are being indoctrinated in our schools to choose communism as the best form of government. The economic and moral support Mexico is giving Cuba and Nicaragua is incredible. I find quite alarming ... a deep belief that Mexico is a democratic country. Nothing could be further from the truth. The communists are in your yard already and you don't even know it. The Mexican government is a totalitarian socialist regime. There are patriots in Mexico willing to expell communism and I am one of them.

Name Withheld  
Chihuahua,  
Mexico

*SOF is happy to learn that there are informed, concerned citizens in Mexico who realize what's going on in that country. Look for more of our continuing coverage of the situation in Mexico. And thank you for your observations.*



## FLAK

### KOKALIS UNDER FIRE...

Sirs:

Kindly tell Mr. Peter Kokalis to bug off. I respect any man's opinion who has respect for other people's judgments, even if those opinions differ. Peter lacks this facet. I am one of those "big-bore looney tunes" that Kokalis loves to thumb his nose at with no chance of redress. Until the time that Kokalis drops the "my word on military small arms is all-seeing, all-knowing and infallible" posture, the man gets nothing but contempt from me as far as his weapons expertise is concerned. Otherwise, you folks have a great magazine. Keep it coming.

M.R. Andrew  
Amarillo, Texas

*SOF appreciates your comments and is glad to give you a shot at redress in its Flak column. Mr. Kokalis stands by his guns, however, despite your opinions. The debate over the best caliber of weapon will never be settled, as everyone has their own preferences and reasons for those preferences. SOF stands by Mr. Kokalis as one of the best gun writers in print today. We are proud to have him.*

### KAREN PROTEST...

Sirs:

Your foreign correspondent, Jim Coyne, is full of it when he spreads lies in your magazine that the Karen Freedom Fighters are finished. I'm a Karen and buy your magazine every month. I know Jim Coyne because one of our friends brought him to us. Coyne did not want to go into the front lines with us. He just asked a lot of questions that never appeared in the magazine. Why? We hope you are going to print this letter because we believe that SOF's people are not all like Jim Coyne. I sign for all the KNLA people who have already died and for those who are still fighting and dying for the freedom of all Karens and other groups against the Burma socialist government.

A Karen Fighter  
Bangkok, Thailand

*It's good to know that the Karen read what SOF has to say. We regret the confusion caused by our story. At the time it was written, the Karen had their backs against the wall. The ethnic armies have survived the latest government offensive, but the Karen are not winning the war. But as Mao said, if the government isn't winning, it's losing. Our hopes are with the Karen and their allies in the fight against Burmese tyranny.*

## MORE ANGER OVER AK AD...

Sirs:

I have been a reader of your magazine since the first issue and have always come down squarely on your side. I must, however, take exception to your reply to Mr. J. Carter's letter in the December 1984 issue ... (that) espouse a hatred for communism and then "consider it a service" to indirectly support their cause by accepting advertising for their products. You are helping sell the rope they will hang us with.

R.S. Reynolds  
Louisiana

I read your answer to the "Flagrant Fonda" letter (SOF — November '84) with great interest and agreement. I then turned to the ad on the inside front cover. Where in hell do you suppose the revenues from the sale of those ChiCom AK-47s are going? SOF can't be that hard up for advertising bucks. Get those pinko ads the hell out of OUR magazine!

T.M. Hade  
Santa Clara, Calif.

I have been reading your magazine for the last six years that I have been in the U.S. Navy and I am upset to see an ad from this source. How many of your staff or readers carry a little bit of "China North Industries" around in their bodies?

Jonathan W. Hull  
Address Withheld

The adds for the ChiCom AKS and SKS do not belong in SOF. Let's practice what we preach guys.  
James F. Chrobot  
Albuquerque, N.M.

*SOF is the last place you'd expect to see aid and comfort to the enemy, nor did we intend or construe running the Clayco AKS ad as such. Our staff — including the Vietnam vets — saw nothing wrong with allowing Clayco to sell a superior weapon at a highly competitive price. But the sale of Chinese AKS through SOF ads has brought enough flak (about 20 letters) that we are withdrawing the ad to avoid unnecessarily offending sensitive readers.*

# WELCOME THE NEW YEAR WITH A BANG!

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- DAY DESERT PANTS or JACKET ONLY **\$28.95 ea**  
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- SWAT TEAM MANUAL FM-169B, **\$12.00**  
134 PGS. Operational procedures, tactics and theories for SWAT operations, illustrated.

- VIET CONG BOOBYTRAPS, MINES AND MINE WARFARE TECHNIQUES. Illustrated Pub. by Department of the Army. TC5-31 69 Pgs. **\$8.00**

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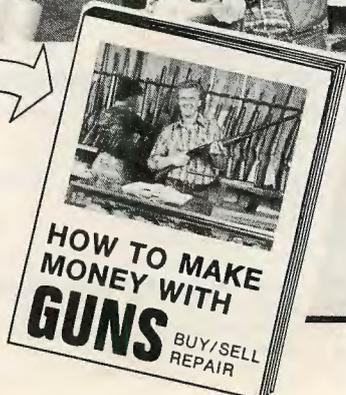
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## CLOTHING SOURCE...

Sirs:

Attention, military readers. Base laundry facilities often maintain a rack of abandoned clothing that can usually be purchased for the cost of the laundry service. This is an excellent source for good used fatigues for Nicaraguan freedom fighters. I've already acquired two cotton fatigue shirts for only 80 cents each. Please pass on the enclosed \$10 to the Nicaraguan Defense Fund.

S. King  
Dayton, Ohio

*Thanks for the tip. SOF hopes all our military readers will take advantage of this source for badly needed clothing to help our brothers fighting communist oppression in Central America.*



## AND FROM THE FAR NORTH...

Sirs:

I'm totally baffled as to how so many Americans and especially your Congress can't see that the communists are starting to kick in your back door. Canada now has a more conservative government that I feel will try to fill its role in NATO. The liberals and [former Canadian Prime Minister Pierre] Trudeau praised socialism and cheered the communists. I really like SOF. Its good write-ups on firearms and its columns are always darn good.

Robert E. Smith  
British Columbia, Canada

*It's always a pleasure to learn that our loyal readers North of the border are willing to take the time to let us know what they think of SOF. It means a lot to us. SOF is also pleased with the results of the latest elections in Canada and feels confident that the country is headed toward a more conservative, sensitive bent, not only in domestic decisions, but in the area of foreign policy.*

## BREN BITCH...

Sirs:

I have never felt as dissatisfied with a gun manufacturer as I am now. I am writing as a service to potential Bren 10 purchasers. On 10 October 1982, I placed an order along with a check for \$495 for a Bren 10. After 17 months and numerous delays the pistol was delivered without magazines in a paper bag without the .45 conversion kit. Now, 24 months after payment and seven months after delivery of the pistol, the magazines are still undelivered. [The factory rep] refuses to answer calls. His secretary has become rather rude and is always vague when explaining difficulties. Greed and incompetence appear to be the bottom line here, people. I am surprised that Jeff Cooper lent his name to this product. But then I bet he has magazines for his Bren.

Anthony M.  
Raper  
Fayetteville, N.C.

*Thanks for bringing the situation regarding Bren 10 magazines to everyone's attention. It was a topic of some heated discussion recently when SOF staffers were in Phoenix, Ariz., firing machine guns with our automatic weapons editor, Peter Kokalis. Obviously a lot of gun owners are upset over the Bren 10 magazine situation. SOF is keeping track of the problem and may well have to do some in-depth reporting on the problem in the near future if it is not corrected. In the meantime, we are pressing urgently for a solution.*

## CENTRAL AMERICA...

Sirs:

I offer my deepest thanks for your editorial De-Brief in the December 1984 edition of SOF regarding Dana Parker. Dana was a friend. He was a professional law enforcement officer and a soldier. He had seen the battles on our streets. He had seen the battle at Khe Sanh and he had the vision to see what is happening in Central America. Dana acted on his beliefs — no matter the cost.

John C. Park  
Elkton, Tenn.

Recently, a couple of Americans were killed in Nicaragua. The government indicated it was going to investigate private sector military groups working in Central America. It is a shame to put those two patriots in the same sentence with a traitor, but why was Jane Fonda never investigated? Our government probably will try to prosecute these people, especially since they are not celebrities. Maybe we should tear down all the statues of Von Steuben, Kosciusko and Lafayette.

Master Sgt. Darwin Stamper  
Fort Bliss, Texas

*Dana Parker and Jim Powell were killed in a 1 Sept. 1984 helicopter crash while working in Central America for the Civilian Military Assistance group. The complete story of that tragedy was presented in the January edition of SOF ("CMA in Central America: The Private Sector Suffers Two KIA").*

## MORE PLAUDITS...

Sirs:

I find your magazine among the best. Your articles on Central America are truly excellent. Your approach in obtaining and presenting information is an example for all. Keep up the good work.

Master Corporal John R.  
Webber  
Canadian Armed Forces

It was interesting to see that the Piranhas have finally graced the pages of SOF. (SOF — December 1984, "Patrolling Hot Water") This unit along with her counterpart in Honduras has forced the majority of the gun and supply runners out of the Gulf of Fonseca and into the

*Continued on page 99*



# ADVENTURE QUARTERMASTER

## BALLISTIC EYE PROTECTION

Chain mail veils and medieval-style faceplates protected some soldiers' eyes from debris from HE artillery shells and fragments splattered from barriers hit by small arms fire. If they'd had Jones Carbonite lenses for glasses and goggles, doughboys would've been better protected, and they would've been able to see.

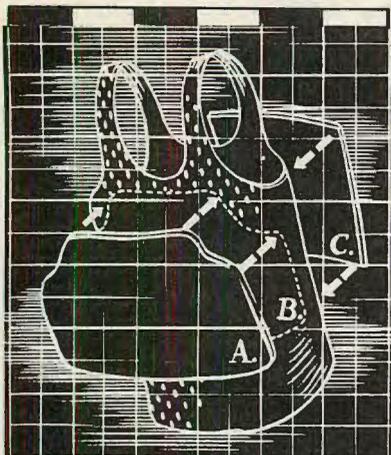
SOF staffers have extensively tested Jones shooting glasses and goggles for the last year. From arctic and alpine conditions to the desert and the reloading room, they've proved tough, scratch-resistant, fog-resistant and comfortable. Jones' claims are considerable, but we found both prescription and protective eyewear performed exactly as advertised.

Most incredible, and most interesting to SOFers, is Carbonite's capacity to deflect ballistic objects. And that doesn't mean just wind-blown sand. Travellers Insurance tested the lens for insurability and found that the 3mm Carbonite lens would not break under the impact of a .38 Special bullet at 15 yards. Nobody in the office was mad enough to stand there and be shot at, but a test lens was mounted on a target, the distance paced off and the bullet fired.



It was incredible. Scuffing and deformation were visible at the point of impact, but the lens had not broken. The bullet had not lodged and did not penetrate.

Jones makes a large range of eyewear and other products, including windshields for race cars and what must be the world's safest shooting glasses. All lenses are guaranteed against breakage. Shooting glasses start at \$29, including ballistic nylon frames and Carbonite 360 lenses. Information and prices are available from the Jones Optical Company, Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 3096, Boulder, CO 80307. Phone: (303) 447-8727 or (800) 321-8300. Telex: 450860.



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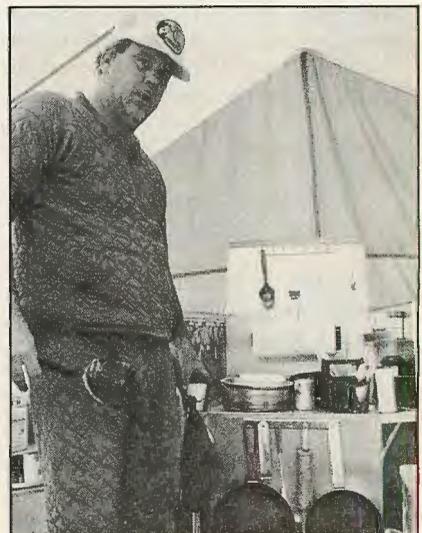
## CAMPERS' KITCHEN

Hunters ate unusually well at the '84 SOF deer and elk camp. Marvin Porter had come to cook and brought his portable camp kitchen.

The Campers' Kitchen is a 21x13x13-inch brush-finished, piano-hinged aluminum box that unfolds to instantly provide a work surface, spice racks, paper towel rack, and tool- and towel-hanging hooks. Folded, it holds food and condiments, and a large inventory of included pots, pans, plates and flatware. It's designed for six, but with the addition of a few plates and cups the kitchen got a hard week's use from 15 hunters.

The Camper's Kitchen doesn't include a stove, and it doesn't cook, but it obviously helped Porter's preparation of popular apple pies and peach cobbles.

Prices for Campers' Cupboards and Campers' Kitchens range from \$46.29 to \$111.59, and information is available



from Pat Lynn's Campers' Supply, Inc., Dept. SOF, 7630 Reindeer Trail, Box 9, San Antonio TX 78238. Phone: (512) 680-5571. ☒



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The following models of the MP5 SMG are available: MP5 A2 with fixed stock; MP5 A3 with retractable stock; MP5 SD1 with receiver cap, no stock, silenced; MP5 SD2 with fixed butt stock, silenced; MP5 SD3 with retractable stock, silenced; MP5 K, ultra short, with receiver cap and assault grip.

**When lives are at stake,  
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*For the name of your nearest H&K law enforcement representative, call toll-free: (800) 368-3658, in Virginia (800) 572-2247. Or write on your department letter-head to: Heckler & Koch Inc., Law Enforcement Division, 14601 Lee Road, Chantilly, Virginia 22021.*

**In a world of compromise, some men don't.**

## ABCs OF RESEARCH...

If you have a journalism or library science degree, you might want to contact ABC's World News Tonight about jobs in the research department. They haven't fired anybody yet, but if they had any sense they would.

On 21 November 1984, ABC broadcast Scott Barnes' claim that the CIA had hired him to kill Honolulu businessman Ronald Rewald. They apparently gave Barnes' account some credence because there was no apparent reason for anyone to lie about such a thing — unless he had a history of misrepresenting the truth.

Well, Scott Barnes *does* have such a history. On page 32 of SOF's POW/MIA issue we carried a debunking story of Barnes' claims that he was hired to kill American agents in Laos, to have swum a nonexistent river on the dry-land Thai/Cambodia border, and too many other obvious fabrications to catalog here.

Like other federal agencies, the CIA cannot sue for libel. But agency pressure apparently prompted ABC to air a well-disguised retraction. That wasn't good enough for the Company and they took the unprecedented step of filing a formal complaint with the Federal Communications Commission requesting that broadcast licenses be lifted from ABC's local affiliates.

Ted Koppel of ABC News Nightline reportedly wouldn't air Barnes' story, probably because he remembered meeting him in '82, when Barnes' stories were no less fantastic than his 1984 fractured fairy tales. But the evening news directors took the bait. Maybe it was a slow news day.

# BULLETIN BOARD



## RUGER COUP...

Weapons usually scale down pretty well. It's harder to scale them up directly. But, of course, if anybody could do it, it's Bill Ruger's team.

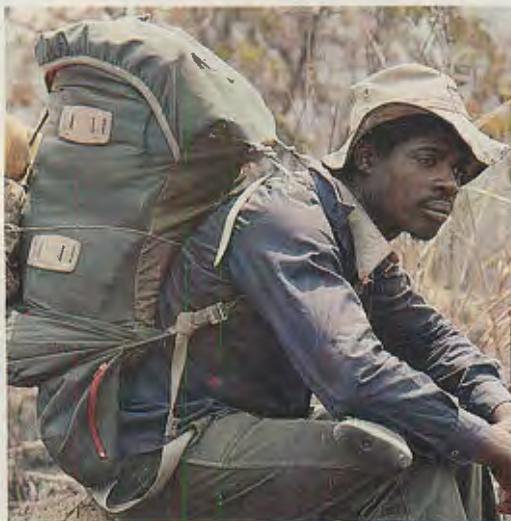
The 5.56mm NATO Mini-14 has been reborn as the XGI in 7.62mm NATO (.308). The 40-inch, 7.9-pound self-loader should be available in the near future, and work proceeds on a .243 Winchester variant. Sturm, Ruger and Co., Inc., Dept. SOF Southport, CT 06490.

Projected retail price for the XGI is \$425.

## CFC DONATIONS...

Military people and Federal employees can support Refugee Relief International, Inc., (1105 Balmora Drive, Lafayette, CO 80026, Federal Identification Number 74-2255573) by writing in RRII as a recipient under the Combined Federal Campaign Donations program. Just jot down the number and designation on the standard form when the CFC campaign starts at your base or station.

RRII donors for December 1984 included: John Fredricks, Jeffrey L. Smith, Gary Novak, and an extremely generous anonymous donation made in memory of Mr. Harvey G. Meyer.



Angolan guerrilla carries SOF foreign correspondent David Mills' Bergen on part of Mill's 1000-mile, 53-day trek across Northern Angola. Watch for coverage of a nation at war from another place nobody but SOF goes, in April's *Soldier of Fortune*. Photo: David Mills

## COMMUNIST CONNING IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Everyone thinks insurgency in Southeast Asia is communist inspired.

It is. But that doesn't mean you can count on the communists to line up in neat rows of opposition against "U.S. Imperialism." It's often a problem picking out who's on which side.

Ever since puny Vietnam staved off the U.S. giant, the press has seen communist intervention in Asia as monolithic. It's not.

Even in the early 1960s the two major communist powers bickered over how Ho Chi Minh should run his little war. Now that's all over and things are as unstable as ever. China badly wants to dominate affairs in Southeast Asia and is putting pressure on Vietnam to pull out of Cambodia. But actions speak louder than words and until now, Peking has done little more than talk.

In the past, China threw its weighty support behind the blood-stained Khmer Rouge. Understandably, the Cambodian people are a little leery about placing the ruler's crown upon the head of the same monster that slaughtered millions between 1975 and 1979. But for ideological reasons, Peking has chosen to virtually ignore the non-communist forces fighting Hanoi's puppet government. The main non-communist, anti-Vietnamese group, the Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF), has received little more than lip service from any of the major powers. But now, as the KPNLF awaits another Vietnamese attack on their stronghold near the Thai border, they have something to look forward to.

During an October 1984 visit to Peking, Son Sann, the KPNLF's leader, extracted a promise of weapons for his beleaguered troops — the first sign of the new pragmatism that marks China's Asian policy.

Peking has turned around completely. They no longer support left-wing guerrilla movements anywhere in Southeast Asia. Instead, they have arms supply agreements with most of the non-communist governments in Southeast Asia.

The most startling Chinese turnabout took place in Burma. Peking has decided to get out of the insurgency business there too. Their client in that revolt-wracked nation, the Burmese Communist Party (BCP), no longer enjoys Peking's favor. Instead, China is cozying up to Burma's socialist government; another sign that China has changed its strategic stride.

Sound strange? Maybe. But don't get the idea that Peking is leaning away from communism. It's just that for the moment, a respectable position in world diplomacy is more important than ideological purity.

— Dale Andrade

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## PINEDALE VICTORY...

In November of 1984, the citizens of Pinedale, Wyo., overruled a town council proposal to ban the carrying of deadly weapons in establishments selling alcoholic beverages. SOF wishes to congratulate the people of Pinedale, and to thank the National Rifle Association (Dept. SOF, 1600 Rhode Island Ave NW, Washington, D.C.) for helping alert Pinedale to this threat to their rights. We are especially grateful to Pinedale councilman and U.S. Navy vet Larry Beck for informing the NRA of the problem, and to field rep Maj. George Nyfeler (U.S. Army, Ret.) for representing the interests of NRA members in the town meeting which finally voted to kill the proposed ordinance.

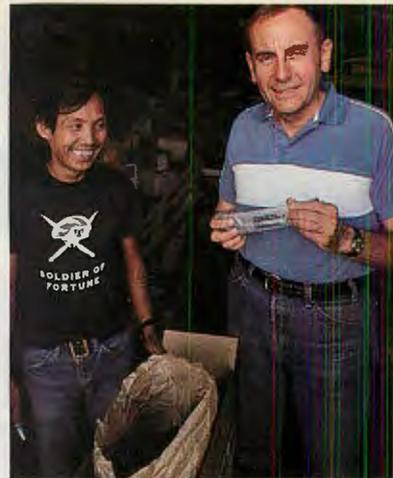
Don't forget, the \$15 NRA membership fee includes a subscription to your choice of NRA periodicals and contributes to the lobbying effort to protect your Second Amendment rights.

## WAR STORY...

Former SOF contributing editor Jim Morris' Vietnam saga, *War Story* has made the big time. Watch for it on newsstands next month in a Dell paperback edition for \$3.95. Also watch for a review of this fine novel in a future issue of SOF. Congratulations, Jim.

## PAKS HIT BACK?...

The latest diplomatic complaint out of the Russian puppets in the Kabul regime sounds like the Zodiac Killer's whine in *Dirty Harry*: "He tried to kill me!" They have accused the Pakistanis of shooting up a couple of Afghan choppers (probably Mi-8 Hips) near the border post of Barikot. Considering that several Pakistani villages along that border have been bombed and rocketed in the last couple of years, it's not surprising that the Pakistanis are sensitive about aircraft on their border. But it is interesting that they are hitting back at all, since they already live under the implicit threat of Soviet retaliation or invasion for what the communists see as inadequate efforts to cut Freedom Fighters' supply lines by controlling border crossings.



Staffers Giang La Bang (left) and Alex McColl pause for the cameraman during preparation of another shipment of support material for SOF's Freedom Fighter's funds. Contributions for Afghanistan, El Salvador or Nicaragua may be sent c/o SOF, 5721 Arapahoe Ave., Boulder, CO 80303.

## AFGHAN COLLECTION...

The following contributed to SOF's Afghan Freedom Fighters

*Continued on page 79*



MiG-21 medicine? If the Sandinistas *do* get strategic-range aircraft and try El Salvador, maybe this will be the appropriate MiGroup response. Meanwhile, Golden Knights XO CPT Rex Forney has become what he calls "the ultimate air-launched, man-guided, manually-detonated anti-personnel weapon system." Photo: SSG Gary Winkler, Army Parachute Team, Fort Bragg, N.C.

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# I WAS THERE

by Uzal W. Ent

## Silhouette Shoot

*Uzal W. Ent retired as a brigadier general from the National Guard in 1980. Between 1945 and 1953 his active-duty U.S. Army service took him to Japan and Germany — and to Korea where, on 3 September 1950, his platoon from the 27th Infantry Regiment fought the Battle of Silhouettes and Mortars:*

**E**NEMY machine gun fire killed one of my squad leaders and wounded two other men, so we dug in on the reverse slope of the hill we had just taken.

Since my platoon had no medic, the wounded men's buddies took them to the company command post. Unknown to me, they hadn't returned, leaving a gap in my line on the knob above my own CP.

About 2200 I decided to check on the men I believed were holding the knob. I had gone but a few yards through some trees when I noticed the silhouette of a crouching man within our perimeter. It was definitely not a GI. He faced in my direction and moved his arm in a forward signal. The situation began to shape up in my mind. We had North Koreans inside

the lines. I could have shot him, but there were more of the enemy in a position to attack both my platoon and the second on our flank. I reasoned that I had no living men on the knob and that the best way to deal with this threat was to call in 60mm mortar fire. I prayed our tube crews were up to the task of precision fire at such close ranges.

Returning to my foxhole, I called the weapons platoon leader on the telephone and started his 60s firing at the foot of the enemy's side of the hill. I gradually worked the fire toward the top, to chase the enemy toward me. Fire was lifted about two-thirds of the way up the slope and shifted to as close to my foxhole as possible. As spent mortar fragments fell onto my back and into my foxhole, I fought back an almost overpowering desire to check the mortars.

The weapons platoon leader's voice crackled over the phone: "I can't shorten range anymore! We're at minimum! We're adjusting by quarter-turns on the elevating and traversing knobs!" I told him to keep firing and to mix white phosphorous (WP) with the high explosive. The Willy Pete really caused a commotion and infuriated the enemy, who fired more frantically, directing all of it toward the mortars, which they had just located. One Red burp-gunner stood within five yards of one of my foxholes, firing toward the mortars. A WP round turned him into a fiery statue in the instant before he fell.

I worked the mortar fire around the knob, back to the base of the enemy's side, back up the slope, then shifted it again near my own position. Over and over we repeated the pattern. The loud explosions of HE, muted bursts of WP, incessant chatter of burp-guns and crack of rifles was punctuated by the cough of firing 60s. At last, enemy fire slackened, then stopped.

The following morning I inspected the knob, without — to my surprise — drawing enemy fire. Sixteen dead North Koreans sprawled on the slopes and crest of the hill. A mortar dud lay within six inches of the edge of one of our foxholes. My own foxhole contained hundreds of tiny mortar fragments. Two mortarmen had been slightly wounded and two men from the Second Platoon had been killed by the infiltrators. Many more would have died on that hill in Korea if I had not spotted an enemy silhouetted on the skyline and our mortarmen had not been expert enough to fire their patterns danger-close to friendlies. My men learned two valuable lessons which they never forgot during the rest of the war. Stay alert at night and trust those guys manning the tubes to your rear. ✕



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# COMBAT WEAPONCRAFT

by Harry Claflin

## Shotgun Shortcomings

**S**HOTGUN: the ultimate combat weapon.

If I hear that again I may put a load of buckshot from "the ultimate combat weapon" into the guy who is foolish enough to think he's dispensing wisdom. Shotguns are not much good in most infantry combat situations although they do have some applications. Unfortunately, people who have never had to face music on a genuine battlefield are enamored of scatterguns for everything from sniping to opening beer bottles and they exploit the weapon's sinister image.

I'll tell you up front I don't like shotguns for the average infantryman. They're nearly perfect for a limited number of specialized missions, but they are *limited* in effectiveness to those special cases. Drawing on a couple of decades of experience with shotguns in combat in Southeast Asia and Central America, let me tell you what scatterguns are and aren't good for in military ops.

Shotguns are about as good a thing as you can have on a day-long, daylight, small-unit ambush patrol. Either way — if you're giving it or getting it — one shotgun in a squad will help a point man save his own life, or drive an enemy to ground in the kill zone. At close ranges, shotguns flat put a fan of lead into the air.

But you can forget what anybody ever told you about using shotguns with conventional ammunition in the dark. Some people think that because the shot spreads out on paper at 50 meters, a scattergun will provide a similar fan of shot at five meters. It ain't true. You can cover the beaten zone of a single shotgun round fired at 15 feet with your hand. That means you've still got to aim.

And you've got to see to aim. You won't be seeing much after one round of 12-gauge fired from an 18-inch cylinder in dead dark. All you're going to see for the next five minutes is the ghost of your own muzzle-flash. On the other hand, your opponents are going

to have a great idea of where you are. In fact, unless there's heavy cover, the enemy mortar FO is going to see you crank that shot from his OP. Some exotic, flashless shotgun shells have been developed for the U.S. Navy but without them your scattergun will not help you make it through the night.

That covers my "daylight" qualification concerning the effectiveness of shotguns in combat. What about "day-long?" Here's a handy experiment to show you why I don't recommend carrying a shotgun and ammo for it much longer than 24 hours over rugged terrain. Go down to your local gunshop, pick up two 10-round boxes of 12-gauge, a 20-round box of 7.62 and a 20-round box of 5.56 NATO. Weigh them in your hands. Which is heaviest? Then stack that 40-rounds of rifle ammo against one of the 10-round boxes of shotgun ammo. Get the idea? You'd need native bearers for a long patrol.

Then there's current civilian wisdom on ammunition. Everybody's jumping up and down about increased numbers of projectiles and better patterns with Number 4 buckshot. I imagine that's fine for police work. They may want to use that load to incapacitate 7-11 bandits without taking out any innocent kids or nuns or dogs watching the action from half a block away. But for military purposes we're concerned with close range engagements. That's because we can expect an enemy we come upon to be under — or rapidly getting under — cover. In that situation you need penetration, not a load of shot bouncing off sturdy surfaces to ricochet around the area. You get penetration from the mass of the individual projectile. Compare 00 buckshot with Number 4 for mass and you've got the picture.

If you really want penetration with dispersion, the modern military answer is the flechette round. I've never used them in combat, but the experimental flechette rounds I acquired for T&E a few years ago were terrific. They gave good accuracy, good prints, good

target saturation and they ran away from any shot load I've ever used in poking holes in tough targets. At close ranges I imagine these little arrows would penetrate most soft body armor. Unfortunately, I know of no civilian source for such shells, so most of our readers will never get the chance to practice with them until they are needed.

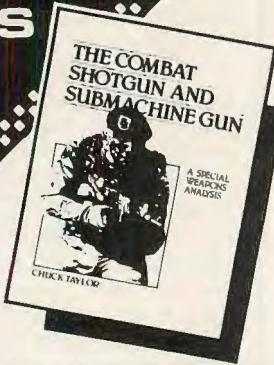
Another of my favorite delusions frequently expressed by cocktail-lounge commandos is the worship of pump shotguns. Yes, they're simple, reliable and work with a wider range of loads than a semiauto. But how are you going to play that trombone when you're flat on your belly ducking incoming rounds? Again, this is a police prejudice that may meet legal or department requirements for police fire control, but that decreased rate of fire from a simpler weapon has no military advantage. Increased reliability is also a myth. Few pump guns have passed the long-term reliability tests given the Browning autoloader before it was issued in World War I. New semis are better than that. My own favorite is the H&K-imported Benelli for reliability and an unbelievable rate of fire.

Like the Benelli, new guns are generally better than old ones, but there's one wrinkle in recent shotgun design that still mystifies me. Why on earth would people want a folding stock on a scattergun for military purposes? You can safely assume a man with a folding-stock shotgun hasn't shot it very much. Either that, or he just doesn't shoot very well. They simply aren't solid, they're usually complicated to unfold or close and they beat your face till it bleeds. The Remington 870 stock is probably the worst offender. It has two vertical steel-plate rails. If you're holding the gun the right way, it'll give you a permanent scar under the cheekbone with your first shot.

Some will tell you that there's a special hold for a folding shotgun stock. It's called "no spot-weld." Sorry, I was a Marine for too long to buy that. I don't know how you're supposed to hit what you're aiming at or get the target back in your sights without your cheek on the stock.

When the Close Assault Weapon System project finally develops a select-fire, box-fed shotgun (preferably in 16- or 20-gauge — recoil's too high in 12s), then that one man in a squad in heavy cover is going to have a *fine* weapon. But it's only going to be a better *shotgun*.

Until ammo and guns improve so a .223-sized case will throw an ounce of lead 500 yards accurately without blinding you or beating you to death on full auto, stick to a good assault rifle as your basic combat weapon. Hunt ducks with your shotgun and have a ball. The ducks don't shoot back. ✕



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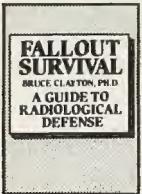
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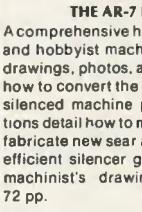
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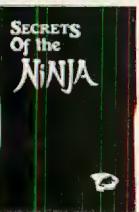


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by John D. McCann

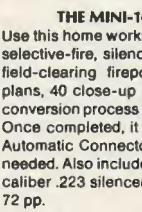
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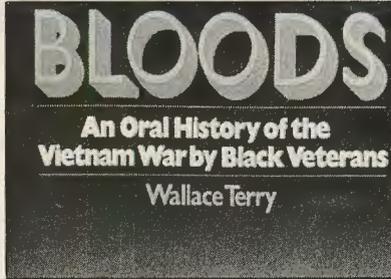
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**BLOODS.** An oral History of the Vietnam War by Black Veterans. By Wallace Terry. Random House, Inc., Dept. SOF, 201 E. 50th St., New York, NY 10022. 1984. 300 pp. 8 pp of photographs. \$17.95. Review by N.E. MacDougald.

ANY review of a book on the Vietnam War should specify what portion of that war it concerns. There was no single Vietnam War, there were several. Because the war spanned 14 years, because most troops rotated annually, and because strategy shifted with each President, the concept of one war confuses more than it clarifies. **BLOODS**, however, bypasses this pitfall. Each vet's experience receives a chapter in this oral history. The author wisely avoids explanations or analysis of the war, or of being a black combatant in it. He lets the 20 vets interviewed speak for themselves. They have plenty to say.

**BLOODS**, if it has any striking quality, has a gut-wrenching, tear-jerking ring of truth, at least for one vet that was there. It probably would have the same effect on a non-vet because **BLOODS** recalls Vietnam so vividly that one can almost smell it. The choppy narrations reveal its oral origin. They sound slightly jumbled, gramma-



tically imperfect, but true to the form in which the story-teller speaks. Obviously a heartfelt outpouring, the book has a raw intensity that would have been lost had Terry tried to polish and perfect the story line.

Terry purposefully provides a representative sample of black troops: enlisted men, noncoms and officers from all four services. And a balance was sought between those with urban and rural backgrounds. The emotional and physical scars these vets reveal affect the sensitive reader, regardless of political persuasion. The war's terrible reality and the prejudice some blacks encountered make for compelling reading.



Because **BLOODS** constitutes one long quotation, picking one for review would seem simple. Truth is, each vet has something important to convey; only restraint prevents quoting more. First there is Marine Corps 2nd Lt. Biggers, platoon leader, 9th Marines, assigned to Vandegrift Combat Base, March 1968 through April 1969, who speaks for many of us:

"The people in Washington setting policy didn't know what transpired over there. That's why we had all those stupid restrictions. Don't fight across this side of the DMZ, don't fire at women unless they fire at you, don't fire across this area unless you smile first or unless somebody shoots at you. If only we could have fought it in a way that we had been taught to fight.

"To me, we made a dent, even though the South did fall. Maybe we did not stop the communist takeover, but at least I know that I did something to say, 'Hey, you bastards, you shouldn't do that.' People like Jane Fonda won't buy that because they went over there and actually spent time with the people that were killing Americans.

"As long as a black troop knows he's going to take a few knocks like everybody else, he can go as far as anybody in the Corps. Our biggest problem as a race is a tendency to say that the only reason something didn't go the way it was programmed to go is because we are black. We as blacks have gotten to the place now where we want to depend on somebody else doing something for us. And when we don't measure up to what the expectations are, the first thing we want to holler is racial discrimination. My philosophy is, if you can't do the job — move."

Terry provides a glossary that explains "Namisms" and service acronyms; you needn't be a vet to understand fully. More importantly, the author includes a chronology of major events from 1945 to 1976. This is critical to understanding the war's different stages and parallel changes in morale, etc., by combatants. And the photos help readers visualize the vet doing the "talking."

Terry, a black journalist, covered the Vietnam War for *Time* from 1967 to 1969. He has been a consultant on race relations to the Department of Defense and the Marine Corps. He now writes for *USA Today*. My only criticism is that the book wasn't longer. ✕

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Pose this question for openers. Why are the wooden ammo boxes with spiffy leather carrying straps for the .30-caliber Browning machine guns so hard to come by? I've given it some thought and decided most of them were burned on campfires surrounded by freezing GIs during the WWII winter offensives on the Western Front. Not solid enough? OK, try this.

How about the only known instance of fitting one muzzle device over another muzzle device? When it was still Rhodesia, the Rhodesian Army beat, bent and welded together a crude contraption which fit over the 22mm-diameter flash hider and grenade launcher combination on their FN FAL rifles. Designed to divert all the propellant gases sideways and upward, it quite effectively tamed the SLR (Self-Loading Rifle) during recruit training. Several thousand were fabricated and it proved popular.

Ever heard of a 20-round magazine for the AK-47? I know what you're thinking. "This fool has a 15-round magazine for the People's Republic of China Type 68 rifle and doesn't know what it is." I do know the difference and I have both in my collection. First of all, the Type 68 magazine holds 20 rounds, not 15 (Sorry, *Jane's Infantry Weapons*, all editions are in error). The follower on the Type 68 magazine has a hold-open so cartridges from two 10-round SKS stripper clips can be inserted into the receiver's feed guide and forced downward into the magazine through the rifle's action while the bolt is held to the rear. The strange AK-47 20-round magazine has no hold-open on the follower and is approximately 0.75 inches longer than the Chinese Type 68 magazine. Why was it designed and for what was it issued?

Hell, I don't know.

I have never been a fan of drum magazines (See SOF, "Full Auto," January '83). They are complex and expensive to produce and, thus, not very cost effective. But cost isn't as important as how it works. No matter how great they look on George Raft's Thompson, drums are complicated and tedious to load, and most are easily damaged.

There's one exception. Loaded with 100-percent green tracer, the 75-round RPK drum is mighty fine to have on the short leg of an L-shaped ambush. Designed for the RPK light machine gun, this 75-round drum functions equally well on any Kalashnikov assault rifle and offers a handful



of devastating firepower. RPK drums don't high-center bottom-fed, bipod-mounted LMGs like extended box mags. And are they easy to load.

Depress the loading lever on the front of the drum: That compresses the magazine spring before each round is inserted under the feed lips. Release the lever after the round has been seated and repeat the process. Easier to load than any extended capacity box magazine because of the mechanical assistance offered by the loading lever, the RPK drum is stout and reliable, too. After it has been rotated into the magazine well, the RPK drum slopes forward compactly at a 45-degree angle.

Before your fever for an RPK drum runs too high, you should understand that they are uncommon and difficult to locate. On the rare occasion an RPK 75-round drum is offered for sale in the U.S., it can cost \$350 or more, depending on condition.

Speaking of tracer ammunition, Hirtenberger Patronen, Zundhutschen and Metalwarenfabrik of Austria manufactures 9mm Parabellum tracer that burns longer than it takes to say their name — or about 400 meters. This airborne sparkler burns brighter than most 7.62mm NATO tracer.

Intended for use in submachine guns, it'll rattle anyone's cage when it comes from the muzzle of your Browning HiPower. For more 'yuks,' fire it into the engine or fuel tank of a vehicle. Unfortunately, it's only available to police agencies through the law enforcement distributors of its importer, Gun South, Inc. (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 6607, 7605 Eastwood Mall, Birmingham, AL 35210).

If there is an expert at your beer bust, try this piece of Tommygun trivia on him. The 1921/28 Thompson SMG supposedly operates on delayed blowback using the Blish principle. John Bell Blish maintained that adhesion was a molecular force which binds together the surface of molecules of two bodies at the common surface of contact. Of course, that's not true, but Blish held that if two metallic surfaces were forced together under pressure their molecules would adhere. As the pressure was reduced the adhesion would cease and the surfaces would be free to move.

Applied to the Thompson, this involved a titanium/aluminum bronze lock in the shape of an H with lugs projecting from its sides. The surfaces

# FULL AUTO

by Peter G. Kokalis

## Technical Trivia

of this Blish lock are inclined at an angle to create downward pressure on the lock under recoil spring pressure. The center bar of the H holds the two sides intact and also serves as an engagement for the actuator (which actuates the Blish lock under impulse of the recoil spring and also provides a projection for the manual retraction of the bolt). The Blish lock's two side members engage locking slots in the bolt, and its projecting lugs engage locking grooves in the receiver, thus tying the receiver body, bolt and actuator together. The lock's motion is obliquely up and down relative to these three components.

The problem is that none of this complicated mess does anything whatever to retard the bolt's rearward movement.

The 1967 issue of *Gun Digest* contains a lengthy article on the Thompson submachine gun by Ray Barse. Barse quaintly assures us, "During tests in 1928 the British discovered that no one could tell, when firing, whether the Blish lock was in or out of the gun. The same observation was made later by Thompson-armed British soldiers at Tobruk. When they had trouble keeping the locks free of desert sand, they found the weapon would keep on firing, even a little faster possibly, if they "took out the bloody lock and pitched it at the Jerries."

The author apparently had never so much as disassembled a Thompson, let alone used it in combat. Yes, the Blish lock is useless in retarding the bolt's rearward travel. But without it, the actuator cannot be used to retract the bolt. The two parts would no longer be connected! Perhaps the author's phantom troops drove cleaning rods down the bore to manually retract the bolt. If only the popular gun press would confine their observations to hunting rifles and wheel guns.

And finally, have you ever wondered why Japanese soldiers kept beating themselves on their helmets with grenades in old WWII newsreels?

It had nothing to do with the code of Bushido. After the safety pin was withdrawn, the fuse could be activated only by striking its head on a hard object. The fuses were unreliable, and the grenade had to be thrown *immediately*. No wonder they lost the war. ☒



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**T**HE RP Hollow Handle Survival and Combat Knife, made by Robert Parrish (Dept. SOF, 1922 Spartanburg Hwy., Hendersonville, N.C. 28739), is one of the better examples of the current genre of so-called survival knives.

The knife follows the contemporary stock-removal approach to blade construction and is made of 440C stainless steel. The blade is of the spear point configuration with an unusual triple-tiered sawtooth arrangement on the back of the blade which the manufacturer assures us in his ad will work. Not quite so, according to my experiments with the blade. Three minutes of vigorous effort directed toward sawing a five inch diameter mesquite log in two resulted in a cut slightly less than a quarter of an inch deep. I can't call that productive labor but the sawteeth may be of some value in other ripping or tearing field endeavors.

Parrish's eight-inch blade is an impressive piece of work. Unlike most 440C blades I've encountered on the market, this one does hold an edge very well. It also exhibits good cutting qualities. Good enough, in fact, for its cutting performance to come as a surprise. That's the good news.

The bad news is that this knife is extremely hard to sharpen. The steel is both hard and abrasion resistant, which means that in this case you had better be prepared to spend some time and effort when you need to sharpen this piece. It will definitely take a liberal application of both.

As a knife steel, 440C has never enjoyed a good reputation for strength. It is widely used by many stock removal knifemakers, but should not be used in an application where blade strength is a major consideration. The reason for this became immediately and painfully apparent when the blade was subjected to a moderate bending and resilience test in my shop. Using only bare hands for leverage, and with the blade clamped in the padded jaws of a bench vise, a 2 $\frac{3}{4}$  inch portion of the tip snapped off the end of the blade when moderate pressure was applied.

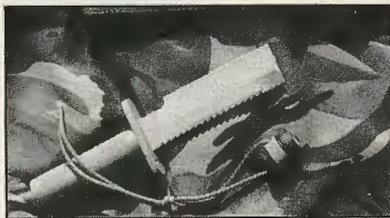
I do not feel that this is an unreasonable test, since we are talking about combat and survival here. In fact, forged blades are given an even more severe test than this when they are clamped in the same vise and a 24-inch pipe wrench is used to apply the bending pressure. A forged blade not only won't break under these conditions, it also will not take a permanent set and springs back to perfect alignment when the bending pressure is removed. That's not an unreasonable expectation for a blade. It may be the last bet before you are threatened with having to cash in your chips and you



sure as hell don't need a broken blade in your hand at that point.

The hollow handle on this knife is made of one-inch (outer diameter) stainless steel tubing with a wall thickness of  $\frac{3}{32}$  of an inch. The handle and butt cap are knurled to enhance grip, and the knurling and method of attaching the handle are very neatly done, giving a non-slip handle with a storage compartment  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches deep. Again, that's the good news.

The bad news is that a one inch diameter round handle feels strange in the hand. And, friends, that steel is *cold* when you grab it in the winter. A metal handle can in fact stick to your hand when the temperature is below freezing and atmospheric conditions are right. I know you can wrap it with a boot lace, but there has to be a better solution.



The worst thing about this handle is not its shape or the fact that your hand can freeze to it, but rather the fact that it is so heavy. This knife weighs exactly one and one-quarter pounds on the scales at my local post office. Most of that weight is in the handle, and as a result, this knife is a full quarter-pound overweight without the sheath, and the resulting balance is terrible.

Speaking of sheaths, the Parrish knife can be purchased with two varieties. The stock model appears to be made out of seven to eight ounce leather, very solidly and neatly stitched and riveted. There is a pouch on the sheath to carry the enclosed sharpening stone, and both the pouch and the retaining strap that goes over the guard of the knife are held closed by a snap. There are tie-down thongs galore, and no less than four separate nylon and elastic web straps are included with the package.

The other sheath is a solidly constructed fabric arrangement executed in a fashionable forest camo pattern, and also contains a pouch to carry a sharpening stone. The stone pouch and retaining strap are held in place by

# BATTLE BLADES

by Bill Bagwell

## Those Hollow-Handled Hackers

velcro on the fabric version of the sheath.

So far, so good, but there are some important considerations here. While the sheaths are well made of good materials, the design of each is not optimum. Both sheaths have extremely long belt loops. This causes the sheath and consequently the knife to hang quite low when worn on the belt, either a civilian model or a military pistol belt. Carried in standard configuration at the hip or just to the rear of it, the knife tends to bang into your side or butt when you walk at a normal pace. If you use the tie-down thong on the tip of the sheath to tie sheath and knife to your leg, the act of walking causes the sheath to pull on your belt as your leg goes forward, and as your leg comes back, your belt is twisted and pushed in the opposite direction. The result of all this pushing and pulling is that you will have to stop and pull your pants up before you have walked much more than 50 yards with the tie down thong on your leg.

Yet another bad feature of the fabric sheath is the fact that the velcro closures make it impossible to remove the knife silently. You can hear this particular velcro release for at least 50 feet. There is no way that I could find to get this release to function silently.

Negative as I may seem about Bob Parrish's creation, it's *not* a bad survival knife as far as these hollow handled things go. It does cut and hold an edge. It is hard to sharpen, and yes, we did break the blade. The sheaths look racy, but either pull your pants off or slap you on the butt as you walk. The balance is such that chopping and thrusting are seriously impaired, and with knife and sheath weighing in at one pound, 12 $\frac{1}{2}$  ounces, the whole thing is seriously overweight. On the whole, a lot more negatives than positives.

However, I think that most of the other hollow handled survival knives on today's market suffer from many if not most of the criticisms leveled at this particular knife. The basic idea sounds good, but it is very hard to put in to practice. ✖

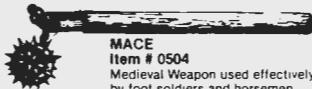
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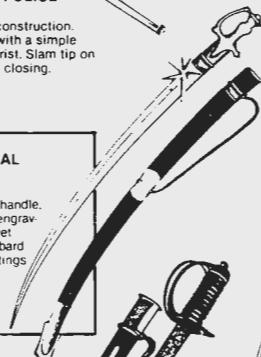


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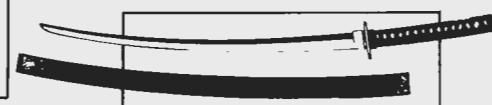
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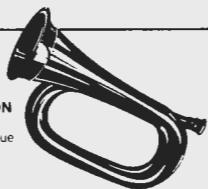
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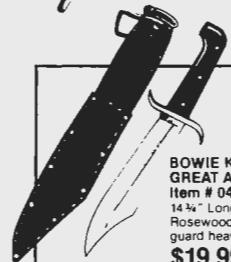
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## Vote for SOF **BROWN** Publisher Robert K.



A barrage of anti-gun legislation was pounded into law throughout this country during the 1960s and early 1970s by legislators who were anti-constitution, anti-liberty, or simply misguided into believing such laws would reduce crime. They sang a convincing rendition of that old song about the direct correlation between the availability of guns and the increase in crime. It was then — and continues to be — faulty logic. We all know now that crime actually *increased* during the period gun owners' rights were attacked.

Certainly the National Rifle Association was not fooled. Reacting to this pressure, a majority of NRA voting members — calling themselves 'The Federation' — overthrew NRA's old guard of officers and *directors* in 1977. The Federation's intent was to force NRA to give priority to the fight for Second Amendment rights. Since that time, NRA has been able to block or modify anti-gun legislation *while* nearly tripling membership to more than three million. It's been a period of hard-earned successes but more must be done.

Some of NRA's old guard are still calling too many of the shots. For example, in a recent bill designed to remove the onerous anti-gun provisions of the '68 Gun Control Act, NRA officially endorsed the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms amendments which would have gutted 10 of 12 pro-gun provisions and added a nationwide, mandatory

14-day waiting period to buy handguns. NRA later copped out on the travesty and blamed "sloppy bookkeeping." NRA officials also failed to oppose a bureaucrat's controversial change to Federal regulations which allowed hunting on government lands unless previously forbidden by Congress. Because of that failure, hunting is *now forbidden* on government lands unless *expressly authorized* on a specific plot. This represents a reversal of centuries of tradition and clearly demonstrates that our NRA leadership is not on top of vital issues which concern members.

NRA now admits an error and the organization is suing in Federal court to overturn the regulation. That's fine, but why was it allowed to happen in the first place? The Federation — of which I am a member — wants to keep our NRA officials' feet to the fire and see that we stop playing catch-up ball.

For the first time in decades, gun owners and people who believe strongly in the provisions of our constitution can count on Congressional support. That's become obvious in our recent national elections. But some of NRA's bureaucrats still labor under the impression that we are fighting a *losing battle* for gun rights and *must compromise* on gun legislation. That's simply not so anymore and each compromise is yet another mortal blow to our rights.

I firmly believe that we are *now in*

*the driver's seat* in Congress and can create new legislation rolling back those laws created by fuzzy thinkers and social engineers during the last few decades. We can now force the anti-gun crowd to make some compromises as we chip away at *their* gains over our rights.

Voting members of the NRA will receive ballots this month for election of NRA directors. NRA has done a good job foiling anti-gunners since the 1977 Federation revolt but we are only holding the line.

It's time to take the offensive. *We are on a roll!* If you believe we should fight for our gun rights and overturn anti-gun legislation, I personally urge you to vote the following slate for NRA Board Directors:

Robert K. Brown — Colorado  
Ronald Britton — Minnesota  
Jim Carmichel — Tennessee  
Weldon H. Clark — Maryland  
Joe DeSaye — Montana  
Richard D. Donaldson — Nevada  
Stephen W. Donnell — Oregon  
William F. Greif — New York  
Robert Holderness — Virginia  
Leonard S. Horner — Colorado  
Dr. David I. Kaplan — New York  
Mrs. Jay Janen Knox — Maryland  
Max N. Krunk — Texas  
James McGurk — Pennsylvania  
Carrol D. Newby — Arizona  
John W. O'Donnell — Wisconsin  
Dr. Jack Reece — Michigan  
Michael J. Slavonic — Pennsylvania  
Dr. Raymond H. Smith — Texas  
Kenneth Spring — Washington  
Bill Stegkempter — Florida  
Curtis Todd — Arizona  
Glen I. Voorhees — Texas  
Lawrence J. Witt — Washington.



## SOF VIETNAM

# FROM WAILING WALL TO HALLOWED GROUND

## Viet Vets Celebrate Monumental Victory

by Jim Graves

**A** MERICA'S Vietnam Veterans have finally won a war. Nearly 10 years after their country welshed on a bet that U.S. citizens would support a seemingly endless war without clear goals or a national will to win, the living veterans of service in

Southeast Asia mounted a counterattack and forced a formal, tangible form of public apology for the way they had been treated over the years.

Victory was all the more sweet for the veterans because it came slowly and pain-

fully. The opening salvos were fired over the memories of fallen buddies.  
Two years ago on a blustery Veterans Day, swarms of Vietnam Veterans mustered in Washington, D.C. for the dedication of a somber, black granite wall etched



with the names of the 58,022 Americans killed in the Vietnam War. Many were not happy with the sinister form of the first public acknowledgment of sacrifice. They felt some people who also served and sacrificed in Vietnam were being ignored. The first memorial mourned the dead and said nothing about the survivors.

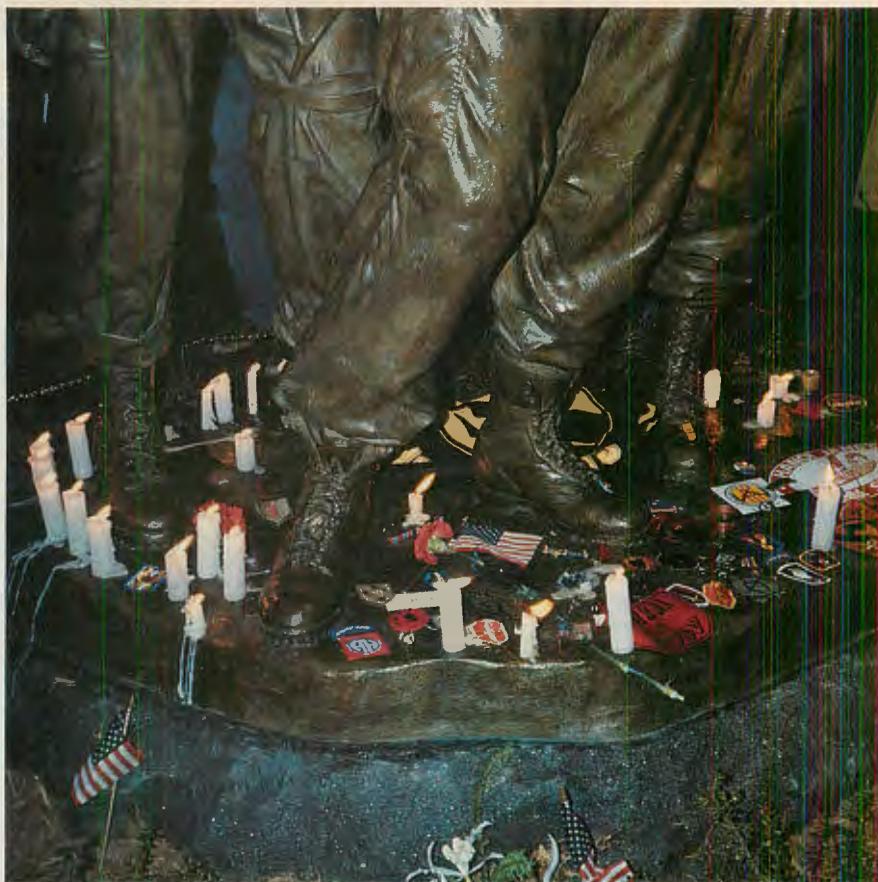
The living vets came mostly to comfort and console each other over personal losses and to read the names of buddies immortalized in stone. It was a sad scene and many left the nation's capital depressed. Their country still had not got it right. For them the war — and their service in it — was not a subject of depression or sadness. Veteran's Day 1982 was for the fallen and the forgotten. The living veterans left Washington wanting something more.

Veterans' organization leaders and activists began to gather fire support to do battle with the bureaucracy over creation of a second memorial. Skirmishes continued over two succeeding years, primarily between the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF), the private group which built the original memorial, and other vets who expressed criticism and displeasure with the symbolism of the only existing public tribute to their sacrifices. In the closing stages of the infighting and maneuvering, a second memorial was commissioned and approved.

The Victory Medal was unveiled and presented before some 200,000 Vietnam Veterans and supporters on Veteran's Day 1984. It brought tears and smiles to the countenances of those who braved wind and cold on the Mall near 21st Street and Constitution Avenue to get a first look at the second memorial. Dedicated on Friday, 9 November 1984, Frederick Hart's bronze sculpture of three typical grunts was in the mold of the triumphant monuments of World Wars I and II. It was also a much more satisfactory salute, according to vets who celebrated life and their continuing belief in America in Washington's teeming streets and hotels.

Veterans returned from across America for a three-day series of events which organizers appropriately coded "Salute II." It had all the trappings of a well-oiled military maneuver and culminated on Sunday, 10 November when the complete memorial — somber black headstone and soaring tribute to the triumph of human spirit — was formally and finally accepted by President Ronald Reagan on behalf of the people of the United States.

During his speech Reagan, in his first public appearance following a landslide election victory and his first visit to the memorial, had sincere words for the noisy throng of jubilant veterans. "No number of wreaths, no amount of music and memorializing will ever do them [Vietnam Veterans] justice," he stated. "Those who fought in Vietnam are part of us; part of our history. They reflected the best in us. The men of Vietnam answered the call of their country."



On the night of the memorial's dedication, veterans placed candles and unit patches at its base to signify their approval. Photo: Jim Graves

Veterans honor the dead in their own ways. Sometimes it's a wreath, sometimes flowers. But there is always an American flag adorning the base of the Vietnam War Memorial. Photo: Jim Graves



There were similarities between the two Veterans Day weekends, which focused on veterans of America's most-recent war, but the mood of Salute II was noticeably different. The veterans had already paid emotional homage to the fallen and many were preserving a tentative peace with countrymen who misunderstood — or detested — the individual soldier's role in Vietnam. In 1984, they came seeking buddies with whom they could laugh, drink and remember the good times that generally outweighed the suffering in dimming memories of the war.

Many had kind words for Salute II's combination figurehead and first sergeant, George Sullivan. A totally disabled Vietnam Veteran who headed an ad hoc group to plan the festivities, Sullivan made it clear he wanted "a celebration and not a funeral." He indicated the dedication of the first memorial in 1982 depressed him. He'd had enough depression in his life since being wounded in Vietnam and Sullivan swore to prevent "everybody being bummed out" by Salute II.

"I remember how I felt that Sunday," Sullivan recalled of his emotional state after the wall was dedicated on Saturday, 13 November 1982. "That Sunday was the most depressing day of my life and I didn't want to see that happen again."

He called the first dedication a sort of funeral and then modified his terms. "Funeral might be too strong a word," he indicated. "But in the two years since Salute I, we've had time to accept things better and come back and say: 'I'm not ashamed I went to Vietnam. I'm not a loser. I'm glad

## RALLY ROUND THE FLAG, BOYS

The war they fought and the campaign they waged to build the Vietnam Veterans Memorial mirrored each other in one key aspect. Both were sharply divisive.

Controversy over the validity and necessity of the war in Southeast Asia erupted into street violence in the U.S. Veterans came home to have their experience ignored at best. At worst they were treated like potentially dangerous sociopaths. Given the prevailing post-Vietnam social consciousness of the 1970s, most Vietnam Veterans realized that getting national support for a monument to their monumental sacrifices would be an uphill battle.

But Jan Scruggs and others decided that if veterans wanted a memorial to mark their service and sacrifice in Vietnam, they'd just have to fight up that hill and overrun the opposition. In the effort bitter feelings prompted by the war surfaced to split even the veterans' ranks. Fortunately, the struggle for official recognition has given the Vietnam Veteran a renewed sense of pride and status that most thought would never come. The national psyche and the image of the Vietnam Vet is emerging whole, healthier and happier.

The struggle among veterans working for support of a national memorial — and ultimately the nation's post-Vietnam healing process — began when Scruggs, a former Army corporal, founded the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. Under his guidance, the VVMF began a nationwide campaign to involve veterans in raising their own funds through private donations to select a design and build their own memorial. Heated disagreement among veterans began in 1981 when a monument design was selected from among contest entries.

The winner was a 21-year-old Yale University architecture major, Maya Ying Lin of Athens, Ohio. Some questions were raised because the designer was barely old enough to really remember U.S. military involvement in Vietnam. Mild protests were made about her Chinese ancestry because China supported the communist enemy in Vietnam. But the real battle lines formed over the design of the proposed monument.

Despite vehement objections from many veterans, Lin's concept became reality on Washington Mall at 21st Street and Constitution Avenue, NW. Two walls of somber black granite were erected, each almost 247 feet long, meeting at a 125-degree angle pointing northeast. The granite panels comprising the walls are narrow and small on each open end of the monument's V-shape, but they gradually expand in height as they reach the midpoint, so that while the panel tops remain at ground

level, a viewer descends along the excavated sculpture until reaching the vertex. He or she then can look up at two panels just over 10 feet high meeting in an obtuse angle. The open end of one wall points at the Washington Monument, the other at the nearby Lincoln Memorial. Inscribed on the discreetly numbered panels are the names of the 58,022 Americans killed or missing in action in the Vietnam War.

Ironically, in trying to avoid one potential problem in the monument's design organizers ran into it headlong. One of the first design criteria established for the VVMF-sponsored competition was that the memorial not express a political message. But as many heavily-criticized sculptors have learned, artistic renderings communicate different things to different people.

Vietnam vet Tom Carhart fired the first public volley in the battle between veterans when newspapers reported that he had tagged Lin's work "the black gash of shame and sorrow."<sup>22</sup> Some veterans viewed the design as definitely set in a political cast, and saw its connotations as anti-veteran and anti-American.

SOF Publisher Bob Brown was one of the earliest and most vocal critics of the first memorial. He provided money and muscle to help other opponents get organized.

"When the first small group of us came together to propose a more appropriate memorial — the statue and flag — the most tangible support came from SOF," commented Vietnam Veteran Milt Kopolous who was one of the opposition organizers.

"If it weren't for the support Bob Brown and SOF provided, the group of supporters would never have come together and there simply would not be a memorial and flag standing there today."

The second memorial movement gained weight and credence in the form of protests to practically every governmental authority.

Such protests — as sharp as they were — ultimately resulted in a constructive and apparently satisfactory compromise that won critical acclaim from both sides of the controversy: Fredrick Hart's recently dedicated statue of three U.S. servicemen. It depicts the three — a black, a white and a Hispanic — in combat gear in a pose typical for combat patrols in a hostile area. All are looking toward the thousands of names on the wall.

The compromise also included provisions to make the meaning of the monuments clear to all observers. An added inscription reads: "Our nation honors the courage, sacrifice and devotion to duty and country of its Vietnam Veterans. This memorial was built with private contributions from the American people."

Another compromise was a pole from



Veterans from all branches of the service gathered to show their faith in America and to receive a belated homecoming. Photo: Jim Graves

which to fly the American flag, erected between the statue and the wall. The fight to add the flagpole made many veterans bitter about the monument dispute, according to some of those involved.

Even detractors now agree that Lin's sculpture has artistic power. Its worst veteran critics acknowledge an overwhelming emotion when they see it and they claim to clearly perceive the intended message. The nation has acknowledged the ultimate sacrifice made by thousands of real people that they knew and fought beside, loved, suffered and laughed with in Vietnam.

Perhaps that powerful emotion — and the painful memories it prompts — is the reason many veterans are reluctant to visit the wall. Some have said the reaction is not in the design but in the staggering size of the roster of names. From an individual perspective, it's hard for many veterans to realize that so many people died in Vietnam.

Dennis Steinburg, a Vietnam Veteran from Bergland, Michigan, was typically moved by his descent into the bowels of the memorial. "I think the wall is stunning," he commented, "and I'm not a war memorial lover. They seem to represent death. That wall *stopped me* in my tracks. I remember I stood at the apex and looked down one side and another and it just overwhelmed me.

"The only great advantage those names have over us is that they died during their youth. Their youth will forever be intact. Ours won't. It's just a fleeting memory."

The controversy over a public tribute to Vietnam Veterans has finally abated and the memorial is complete. The maligned and much-disputed wall — in a beautiful city noted worldwide for its memorials, monuments and tourist attractions — has become the second most-visited site.

— Jim Graves

my buddies are here with me and let's have a drink to our buddies we lost and the MIAs. And let's move on with our lives.' "

To cultivate a more up-beat atmosphere, Sullivan's Salute II group concentrated on getting veterans to organize unit reunions during the elaborate and traditional activities of a Veteran's Day weekend, which lately have included candlelight services for the POW/MIAs, an Army Band concert, a flyover at the Mall by helicopters and jets and a service at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery. Sullivan's Salute II organization also arranged for a concert on the Washington Mall on Saturday, 10 November, with Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons and Chris Noell.

Noell, a relatively obscure Hollywood personality these days, struck a particularly poignant chord in nearly all the Vietnam Veterans. She was one of a block of DJs who were heard over the American Forces Vietnam Network (AFVN) during most of the war years and a favorite with the troops, who drooled into their transistor radios at her traditional greeting: "Hi, love. It's Chris Noell from Hollywood." Noell, who currently lives in West Palm Beach, Fla., hosted a Top-40 program called "A Date With Chris," which aired in Vietnam from 1966 to 1970. She brightened many miserable days for Vietnam servicemen and repeated the performance at Salute II.

Valli and the Four Seasons, the group which busted charts continuously in the '60s and a favorite of many Vietnam-era vets, performed in a rock concert atmosphere on the Mall. They were clearly caught up in the spirit of the event. Valli, a patriotic and opinionated performer, even sacrificed profit for principle.

He refused payment for the lucrative appearance beyond a small advance for expenses already spent when he learned Salute II organizers stood to go into the hole for some \$80,000.

"He feels a great debt to us [Vietnam Veterans]," said Sullivan. "We're the people who made him rich and famous. And he's a very patriotic, pro-American guy. When he found out we weren't getting support from the veterans' organizations he got very upset." Sullivan indicated the singer said the organizers didn't owe him any more money.

Valli also promised Sullivan that the Four Seasons would return to any future events — provided there are any. That brings up a sore subject with Sullivan and his team of helpers. They put Salute II together with only \$20,000 in donations, and Sullivan said he spent another \$80,000 of his own money in making the huge party happen. Similar celebrations were originally envisioned for every four years, but he has no firm plans for a Salute III in 1988 unless he gets more solid support. Veterans and friends can offer that as well as help Sullivan offset his losses on the 1984 event by writing: Salute II, Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 19373, Washington, D.C. 20036.



Jane Fonda is not taken too kindly by Vietnam Veterans. They still take every opportunity to show their displeasure over her participation in the Vietnam War. Photo: Jim Graves



One of the more illuminating events of Salute II was the burning of Jane Fonda in effigy. Photo: Jim Graves

## BURN THE BITCH

Many times the best part of a ceremony is not necessarily listed on the official program. Vietnam Veterans attending the recent dedication of the second and final part of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial gleefully flocked to an event that the official planners couldn't list in the line-up of Veteran's Day activities. It began shortly after the formalities ended.

Weather on the Washington Mall was appropriate: cold and damp, reminiscent of the Vietnam monsoon. It provided a somber setting for the final dedication of the memorial. A misty wind whipped off the nearby Reflecting Pool as Jan Scruggs, head of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF), the group which brought the project to life, officially turned over to President Ronald Reagan the statue depicting three grunts on a combat patrol.

But the weather hardly dampened the spirits of the veterans and their families who turned out for the dedication ceremony. They suffered politely through the political folderol that Washington exudes on such occasions and were fairly reserved during the actual dedication ceremony. And then the image of an old enemy appeared in their midst.

It was as though someone had yelled "Incoming," or offered early rotation on the Freedom Bird for the ones who could vent the most anger. Some 200,000 veterans and observers did an abrupt about face and roared as someone raised an effigy of Jane Fonda at the rear of the crowd.

It was a hell of an idea if crowd reac-

tion is any measure. A stuffed dummy looking like Jane Fonda and topped with a VC flag became the target of the frustrations many veterans have felt over her unpunished activities in support of their enemies. "It wasn't difficult," said one of the effigy's creators. It was effective.

"Burn The Bitch!" The chant grew to a roar as hundreds of cammie-clad vets clamored to see the effigy go up in smoke."

Without hesitation, someone dashed on a little gas to carry out the will of the crowd. A Zippo sparked in the drizzle and the blazing effigy sent smoke and flame skyward to the delight of observers. All that was missing were hotdogs and marshmallows. The fire brightened the sky — and the somber mood. It seared something into the hearts of hundreds of men who'd borne a grudge against Fonda for years.

"It looked like everyone was enjoying themselves," said Scruggs. The former Army corporal left the speakers' platform just in time to witness and enjoy the impromptu conclusion of the ceremony. "I thought it was rather humorous," he added. Scruggs had weathered a lot of criticism over the memorial since he began fighting for its creation, but he emerged that day a hero: Jane Fonda was the honorary villain of choice.

How many times over the years have so many veterans thought of having Jane Fonda in their sights so they could say, "Go ahead. Make my day."

She finally did something for America's Vietnam Veterans. Thanks, "Hanoi Jane." Sin Loi.

— Jim Graves

There were some serious moments during the Veterans Day observances. After the dedication ceremony and the concerts, people flocked to the candlelight service for the POW/MIAs sponsored by the National League of Families on Saturday night. Throngs of veterans, families and friends went out to the Mall to hear George Brooks (of the National League), Everett Alvarez (Veterans Administration Deputy Administrator and a returned POW) and others speak in a moving program honoring the 2,483 Americans still unaccounted for in Southeast Asia. The United States Air Force Ceremonial Band and the United States Navy Sea Chanters — singing “Let My People Go,” “America,” and “Battle Hymn of the Republic” — provided a moving musical background for the ceremony.

At the end of the program the mob filed past the looming V-shape of the original memorial to place lighted candles at its base or along its top. That triggered a minor confrontation when a lone Park Service attendant moved in and demanded that the candles be taken down off the top of the wall. He seemed distraught and worried that wax might disfigure the giant granite slabs.

Most of the vets thought he needed a prompt attitude adjustment session and paid little heed. A barracks-room lawyer in the group pointed out that the memorial would not officially belong to the Park Service until Sunday and suggested there were more appropriate locations the attendant might find for the candles — on his person. Cooler heads prevailed and a suggestion was made to simply move the candles back a few inches so they would not drip wax down the wall. The Park Service guide measured the mood of the crowd and decided compromise was a part of his federal job description.

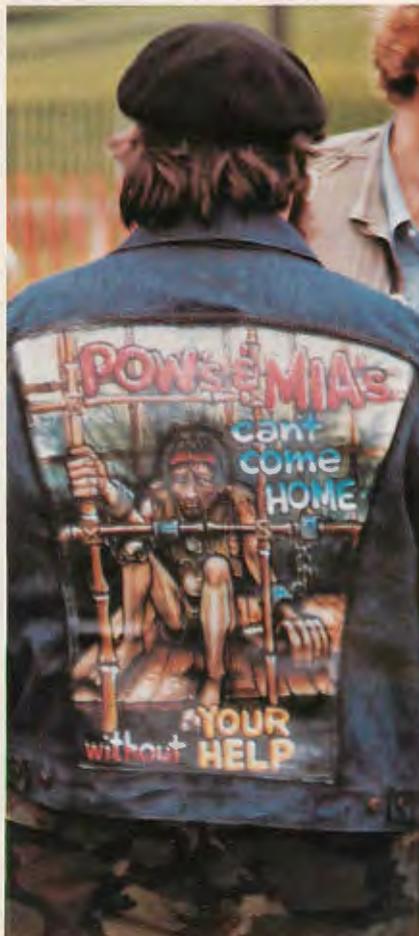
Vietnam's most senior military veteran also made muster at the dedication of the second memorial. Retired U.S. Army General William C. Westmoreland, commander of Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) until 1968, took the weekend off from helping argue his libel suit against CBS-TV to come to Washington. He blinked back tears at the thunderous applause that followed his introduction to “his boys.” Enthusiastic veterans clamored for a speech Westmoreland was not prepared to give. The grey-haired General Westmoreland ad libbed a near perfect sentiment. “You did the job your country asked you to. You did magnificently and nobody could have done it better.” It was the sort of thing this crowd had come to hear but speeches occupied little time.

While hectic, often tiring organized events swirled around the veterans, most sought the solace of what they considered the real core of the gathering. In both small and large groups, veterans met to share experiences and private thoughts with the only people who could genuinely understand and empathize: other veterans. At informal meetings in quiet Georgetown bars and restaurants or at formal unit reunions, Vietnam Veterans rediscovered each other and re-



**Most Vietnam Veterans have families now but they will never forget their days in the war. The young son of this 101st Airborne Division vet can't understand what all the fuss is about. Photo: Mark Johnson**

**The living haven't forgotten. This Vietnam Veteran carries a reminder for everyone that many American POW-MIAs never returned from Southeast Asia. Photo: Mark Johnson**



lived those high times when success was measured by survival rather than bank balance.

Planning for participation in Salute II since March, Army Division Associations were far more organized and cooperative than their other service counterparts. For Salute II, the 1st, 4th, 9th, 23rd (Americal) and 25th Infantry Divisions; the 82nd, 101st Airborne Divisions; the 173rd Airborne Brigade; the 199th Infantry Brigade; the 1st Cavalry Division; 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment; Special Forces Association; 93rd Evac and Airborne-Ranger/LRRP Associations all hosted Washington reunions. The attendance made the Army veterans clearly in the majority during Salute II.

Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard and Marines were directed to “headquarters hotels,” but there were only a few reunion organizations from those services. In a couple of cases, the former commanders of some Marine companies did start their own and put together mini-reunions, gathering familiar faces from among the crowds.

Most often former Marines, USCG, USN and AF personnel arranged ad hoc gatherings simply by keeping a sharp eye out for unit patches on often ill-fitting fatigues and uniforms worn to public events on the Washington Mall. Some expediently sought out old comrades by carrying homemade signs or yelling at mass gathering: “Anybody here from Bravo 1/9, '66-'67?”

Headquarters hotels posted locator boards and two Veterans organizations ran computerized veteran data banks to help veterans track down long lost buddies. (See “Find-A-Vet” on Page 36.) In a sort of Vietnam Veteran “computer dating service,” veteran Tom Sutterfield has married modern technology to one of a number of quirky aspects about service in Vietnam.

The relatively short combat tour — 13 months for Marines and 12 months for soldiers — makes it especially difficult for Nam vets to locate buddies who did not rotate with them out of the combat zone. That and the changing nature of the war over 10 turbulent years makes it hard for veterans to locate men who can relate to a specific set of wartime circumstances. Most men went to Vietnam as individual replacements in units that operated in *vastly different* situations over a long period of time.

A veteran who served with the USMC's 1st Battalion, 9th Marines in Da Nang in 1965 would have a totally different frame of reference from a 1st Air Cavalry Army vet who served in the Central Highlands in 1968. The 1/9 vet would even have a substantially different experience than another 1/9 vet who served in 1967 in the DMZ. Fortunately, such confusion is not reflected in the statue which the Vietnam Veterans came to Washington to see.

Sculptor Fredrick Hart found it difficult to avoid conflict with perceived images of individual veterans when he was designing the memorial which depicts three “typical” Vietnam-era fighting men.

“At first it was very confusing,” said

Hart, who is not a 'Nam Veteran. "You know the way you dressed, the way you did things, the little eccentricities you had at a certain time in a certain place. If you went 200 meters down the line, two months later everybody would be doing something different.

"Guys would come in while I was working on it and say, 'Ahh, we never wore gas masks.' Or, 'We didn't do that, we did it this way.'

"I was always getting this contradictory stuff and it made me kinda dizzy for awhile. I would do something and then somebody would come in and tell me that was the wrong way.

"Finally, I realized that there was no one person, no one viewpoint that was correct and that there was this collection of details that someone would always find fault with because they just never did that." In the end Hart went for generalities rather than details in both service affiliation and peculiarities of combat uniforms.

The product of realist rendering is a genuine compromise that seemed to make virtually all veteran observers confident that they were represented in one form or another. Three fighting men gaze into the distance with tired eyes, as though they were returning to basecamp following a long, hot walk in the sun. The central figure is a white man; obviously a Marine because of the distinctive USMC-style flak jacket he is wearing. A black soldier flanks him on the right, wearing an Army flak jacket with a towel around his neck and carrying an M16 with the sling removed. The man on the left is obviously Hispanic. He wears a floppy cover commonly known as a "boonie hat" and carries an M60 machine gun on his shoulder. They are very typical. They are the images that TV has burned into American minds concerning her Vietnam Veterans.

"What I tried to do was give the appearance of a unit — as if the three had just stepped off a helicopter together, somewhere on some landing zone in Vietnam," Hart explained.

His handling of historical detail is impressive for a man who was never in Vietnam. Hart has done a particularly moving job on the countenances of his subjects. They have the "thousand-yard stare" so familiar to war-weary veterans of all conflicts. They seem to have seen it all. And like many Veterans of Vietnam, they seem old before their time. A second element which adds to the emotional impact of Hart's work was out of his hands.

The second Vietnam Veterans Memorial was placed by government officials in a group of trees on a rise opposite the right arm of the first memorial. Standing seven-foot tall and weighing about 3,000 pounds, the bronze warriors gaze toward the older memorial as if they were scanning the ebony surface for the names of buddies they had lost in combat. These elements of the new memorial have added fuel to a fire that continues to smolder between those who like



## FIND-A-VET

Ever wonder what happened to that guy who served with you in Nam? You know, good old what's-his-name from Texas, the Big Apple or Puckyhuddle, Nebraska. Wouldn't it be great to look that crazy dude up and see if he's still dinky-dow?

You're in luck. If you want to find some of your buddies and you've got a few details on their backgrounds, Tom Sutterfield of the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. (VVW) may be able to help.

Sutterfield, national commander of the VVW, brought his "Find-A-Vet" computerized data bank service to Washington for Salute II and made a big impression on the many vets who were unaware of his organization or his locator service.

If you are like most Nam Vets, you came home alone between 1965 and 1975, left the service shortly after your return or within a year or two, and got on with your life. At home, you probably sought other vets as friends but more often than not they served in a different time, place and unit. As memories dimmed over the years, it became increasingly hard to get back in touch. Even the guys who made up your world for 365 days became only memories.

Sutterfield, an employee of Burroughs Computers, was aware of this problem both from his own experiences in trying to locate friends from Nam and from conversations with other VVW members. He decided to do something about it and started his "Find-A-Vet" service using his own computer equipment and VVW members as the original pool of data.

Veterans can write to Sutterfield (Find-A-Vet, Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 567, Stone Mountain, GA 30086) for a data form. Fill out the pertinent information (name, rank, service, dates of service and current address) and return it to Sutterfield. At the same time, you can request a search through the data bank for friends — even if you can't remember their last names.

The beauty of applying computers to the relocation problem is that Sutterfield can search for key items and get print-

outs. If someone wants to know the names of all veterans from India Company, Third Battalion, 3rd Marines or all India 3/3 vets who served during a specific time period, the computer can spit it out in no time flat.

Sutterfield got plenty of help from Burroughs Computers during Salute II. Because everyone expected heavy demand, they supplied additional terminals, printers and supplies. While his computer service was not well-advertised, Sutterfield was able to add about 4,000 names to the data bank. It now has 10,000 veterans listed.

At present, the data bank is limited to veterans trying to locate other veterans and Sutterfield has no plans to change that policy. It is also free.

"Vet organizations should strive to serve vets, not make money," said Sutterfield.

He also sponsors another organization. Called Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc., Dept. SOF, 2090 Bald Mountain Road, Wilkes-Barre, PA 18702, it costs only a \$6 membership per year and might be worth looking into if you are a vet. VVW is open to veterans of all wars — but is dominated by Nam Vets — as well as wives or husbands of veterans and civilians who served in Vietnam. It provides the traditional services to veterans, assisting in filing claims for disability and compensation, representation before appeals boards, etc. VVW also publishes a newsletter; \$8 for six issues yearly.

The organization is openly patriotic and their rules back that up: "Membership in this organization is denied, in accordance with our Constitution, to any otherwise qualified persons, who are, or who we strongly suspect of being, opposed to the Constitution of the United States and/or dedicated to the overthrow of the Government of the United States."

It's not hard to see why Sutterfield's "Find-A-Vet" program generates an American flag logo when the computer is turned on.

— Jim Graves

An American flag waves proudly over the new memorial. It's been a long time coming. Photo: Jim Graves

the original wall and those who believe the tribute needs both structures to be complete.

The focus of the controversy seems to be the expressions on the faces of the fighting men depicted. Proponents of the more surrealistic black wall feel that these fighting men — boonie-rats to Army vets or bush-beasts to former Marines — appear to be searching the wall as if they were looking for their own names among the KIAs. Opponents of the wall say the expressions are just a reflection of the bewilderment, disassociation and aura of detachment so often used to stereotype Vietnam Veterans.

"Actually a lot of what I put [in the men's expressions] I got from veterans looking at the wall," Hart revealed. He made hundreds of trips to the site while working on the bronze. "So you get the glazed look that the machine gunner has, the pained, but defiant and tense look that the white guy in the center has and some sheer anguish that the black guy has." Hart feels he captured what was wanted but he's aware that he has detractors.

"It [the symbolism of the statue] was an enormously tricky problem and there were an enormous number of people, waiting like vultures for us to fail so they could say, 'I told you so.'"

The criticism of his project preyed on Hart as he struggled with the statue. He indicates the biggest depressions came from "opening the *Washington Post* every morning." Hart doesn't mind letting people know what he thinks of the establishment press.

"Those sonofabitches came after me every day, relentlessly. Whether it was letters-to-the-editor, editorials or columnists." It was a fairly venomous campaign.

After two years of scorn pouring from the pens of left-wing columnists like Mary McGory in the *Post* and syndicated columnist Ellen Goodman (who writes for the *Boston Globe* but runs in the *Post*), Hart was ecstatic when on 10 November 1984, *Washington Post* art critic Benjamin Forgey wrote: "It [the combination of Hart's bronze and the wall] is perhaps a most improbable reconciliation, but it is altogether a fitting one." Hart supports that view and he's very proud of the finished product. Others are too, and they appreciate the symbolism involved in adding a flagpole as a final tribute to the men who served that national symbol. (See "Rally Round the Flag, Boys," page 33)

William P. Pendley expressed his opinion in *The Washington Times*. "Standing there beneath the flag, hearing it snap in the wind, you look up into the earnest faces of young men sent to war — pausing timelessly in combat — and then, lowering your gaze see across the vast expanse of grass to the headstone raised to those who did not return. They should have been together: the service, the sacrifice and the symbol." ❧



# FLYING THE UNFRIENDLY SKIES



## A Combat Pilot Reviews El Salvador's Air Force

by Dana Drenkowski

**T**HE story is screamed over Radio Venceremos with maddening regularity. It's always the same song and dance staged by the propaganda pushers to impress gullible guerrilla fighters.

"The despicable, cruel and inhumane Winged Death Squadron is at it again," intones the communist announcer and the daily soap opera continues. The villains are always El Salvador's Air Force pilots flying small A-37 Dragonfly jet fighter-bombers to "intentionally attack villages and to gun down innocent women and children from the air."

American veterans who have had the opportunity to tune in on such broadcasts are reminded of similar propaganda produced by Hanoi Hannah and other North Vietnamese broadcasters. Similar charges were made against U.S. pilots. There was no truth to that and there is none to the charges being leveled by Central American communists at Salvadoran pilots flying combat missions over the turbulent terrain of their country.

Naturally, the diatribe over Radio Venceremos becomes most strident when one of the A-37 jocks manages to spot and squash a guerrilla encampment. Then it's *Katy Bar the Door* and the *Fuerza Area del El Salvador* (FAS) pilots are called everything but human. The attention given to these government airmen is clearly all out of proportion to their size — which simply proves that they are a powerful, painful frustration for the communist guerrillas.

Less than 75 pilots make up the FAS and only a small number of these actually fly the six available A-37s. The rest of this

close-knit fraternity flies a motley but colorful collection of more than a dozen aircraft types and many of the pilots are checked out on two or three different planes. But numbers of pilots or aircraft are not measures of their impact on El Salvador's continuing, bloody guerrilla war. With typical Air Force aplomb, these young men carry the war to an elusive guerrilla army each day. None hesitates to take off despite the fact that Radio Venceremos regularly broadcasts a guerrilla promise to execute any pilot unlucky enough to be shot down and fall into their hands. That's not a major concern in El Salvador's ready rooms or jungle flightlines. Salvo pilots don't make easy targets.

Until the war really boiled over two

years ago, FAS pilots were often qualified to fly several different aircraft types ranging from transports to helicopters and fighter planes. That made most of them highly-qualified aviators but there is a continuing move to specialize pilots in particular types to increase their effectiveness. Currently Salvo pilots are divided by communities of transport, helicopter and fighter squadrons. The generally stay with a single type of ship and rarely cross over into another specialty.

Salvadoran pilots are free from most of the flying restrictions usually placed on their U.S. counterparts. They take full advantage of such a loose rein by pushing to develop flying skills that are right out on the edge of the performance envelope for whatever they fly in support of the



Above the clouds: A-37 Dragonflies head through the skies toward a guerrilla camp. Photo: Dana Drenkowski

COIN war. FAS pilots are also unfettered by the usual non-flying administrative garbage which takes up more than half of a U.S. Air Force pilot's time. Morale-building air shows and stunts after missions keep them razor-honed for the real business of combat flying. Combat aviation requires total concentration and the Salvo pilots are allowed to concentrate on flying.

## DRAGONFLIES AT WAR

The runway rushed rapidly beneath the nose of the little jet. With a familiar little bump, we left the earth behind and climbed quickly to cruising altitude. Kicking at the rudder pedals, we aimed the bulbous nose of our ship between the two volcanos we would use as landmarks. Navigation in El Salvador is no problem. Just remember your bearing from a familiar volcano.

As we levelled off, I looked at the two 750 pound bombs nestled snugly beneath each wing. A three foot fuse extender — designed to detonate the bomb above ground for maximum shrapnel effect — gave them an even more sinister appearance, sort of like hitchhiking bees with their stingers extended. We were packing the gear to get the G's in this area. Now all we had to do was find them.

I was back in the cockpit of a jet fighter-bomber headed for combat, this time in the right seat of an El Salvadoran FAS A-37 Dragonfly. The A-37 is a modified version of Cessna's twin engine T-37 trainer. Every USAF pilot remembers them from his days in pilot training. Bomb racks, a rotating barrel Gatling-type 7.62mm machine gun and two powerful J85 turbojets turned the screeching trainer into a brush-skimming guerrilla buster. And we were going to see just what it could do.

Our target was five abandoned farm buildings being used by the guerrillas as a remote training camp. The *campesinos* who had lived there were driven out by the war — now only the Gs stayed there. Intelligence had confirmed the Gs were there the night before. Now, at the crack of dawn, we were going up to try to catch them.

My pilot had checked my logbook so he trusted me to take the stick and drive the Dragonfly to the target area. Compared to the slow moving piston engine O-2As and C-47s I had been flying with FAS, the Dragonfly seemed light and nimble as it cut the clouds. I relaxed and enjoyed the airplane, watching the rugged mountains covered with vegetation in an endless variety of green. The landscape streaked by so rapidly that I was surprised when the pilot broke into

The nerve center of El Salvador's combat aviation body nestles in a brushy plain a few miles east of San Salvador at Ilopango Air Base, a flat circle of earth barely 7,000 feet in diameter. A single ribbon of runway stretches north-south across the entire base. Both ends of the runway are guarded by deep ravines and the western edge is overlooked by high ridges. Mazes of smaller ridges and

ravines creep to the outskirts of the eastern side of the base and drop off into Lake Ilopango, a volcanic crater filled with water and stretching to a diameter of eight miles. One fourth of the available base area is occupied by civilian aircraft and a civil aviation operation. This area is separated from the main base by a single barbed wire fence but the taxiway from the civil side of the field is open. The



With its payload of bombs, the Dragonfly can do a lot of damage to concentrations of enemy troops. Photo: Dana Drenkowski

my thoughts by announcing that he had the targets in sight.

Taking over the controls, he flipped the armament switches on and adjusted the mil setting on the divebomb sight. Pushing gently on the stick, he took us on that familiar elevator ride from altitude to swoop down on the first target. The right wing lifted gently as our deadly cargo clicked off the bomb-rack and nosed toward the cluster of hootches. We clawed up and out of the dive, an action that subjected us to a gut-wrenching four or five Gs. The pilot had no problem jinking left and right to thwart any tracking missiles or radar-guided gunfire that might follow us up. We repeated the routine: four passes, four bombs.

A quick flash followed by the tell-tale white concussion wave that rippled from each explosion marked our hits. The familiar blossom of high explosive expanded below us and tall columns of black smoke drifted upward from the target area. One quick orbit over the target and it was back to work. The pilot flipped the blinking armament panel switches from "bombs" to "guns." Six times the Dragonfly screamed down on the scrambling guerrillas, pouring more than 1100 of the 1500 available rounds through the barrels of our 7.62mm mini-gun. The red tracers arced lazily into the buildings and training fields. None were off target. Our pilot had mastered the tricky business of keeping one eye on the gunsight and the other on his flight instruments.

The controls came to me again as we made low-level, intimidation passes at another nearby guerrilla encampment. My personal rules for this mission held me to observation rather than active combat, so I kept my hands off the gun controls. I skimmed the earth, making tight circles around potential targets but it was impossible to make a positive I.D. of guerrilla activity at that speed. An attack wasn't worth the risk. Climbing back to altitude, we cruised back to the volcano near Ilopango without draining the rest of our ammo.

Later that day, Radio Venceremos came on the air with one of their usual blistering reports. It seems that our plane didn't *really* hit a guerrilla encampment. Once again, the FAS had managed to massacre a village filled with women, children, and pregnant nuns. There were no guerrilla casualties, the radio said.

The story is always the same. It probably doesn't fool anyone anymore but the rebels keep trying. There was no village, only five buildings occupied only by guerrillas and we nailed them. No communist propaganda can alter that fact.

— Dana Drenkowski

Salvadoran government is well aware of security risks but there is no workable alternative to the cheek-by-jowl arrangement. Ilopango is the only major air base in the country and available funds to build a separate civil aviation complex are sucked off by the war effort.

This situation causes major worries for the officers commanding the army's Airborne Battalion which is tasked with defending the base. Their concern is not without some basis in sad experience. In 1981, Ilopango was attacked by guerrilla saboteurs. Nearly a dozen planes disappeared in balls of flame, a loss the Salvadorans could ill afford.

The leader of that guerrilla strike force defected recently and described how his tiny band was trained for the attack at a Cuban military camp near Havana. Following a subsequent trip to Nicaragua for final training, they recrossed the border to carry out the mission. Although it has been four years since that attack, Ilopango remains vulnerable. That's one of the major reasons Salvadoran pilots are such a cautious lot.

They have learned to take full precautions against guerrilla reprisals in the air or on the ground. The airmen pack weapons wherever they go — on base or off. It's mostly dealer's choice and Salvo pilots sport a profusion of pistols ranging from standard USAF .38 caliber revolvers to the infantry's .45 Colt Government Models. The clear favorite at San Salvador's Ilopango Air Base is the 9mm Browning High Power. The Colt Python .357 Magnum runs a close second.

Off base, pilots usually opt for long guns but there does not appear to be a standard. You can spot practically any type of shoulder weapon available in the free world: H&K retracting-stock 7.62mm rifles, FN FALs, M2 Carbines, H&K 9mm sub-machine guns and even a few sawed-off shotguns. Eating with pilots in a cantina off base is like working in a western movie. Everyone packs a big iron on his hip and dozens of rifles, SMGs and shotguns are stacked under the table.

It's not scarf-in-the-wind bravado. The Salvadoran Air Force is simply being practical. Their pilots are on call to fight as infantry if Ilopango is attacked and they intend that the flying officers have the right tools at hand for the job. Salvadoran military officials point to high morale and a growing rapport between Air Force and Army units as proof that the multi-mission concept has added benefits for both arms. The pilots and air crews are clearly prepared to hump a mile in the infantry's boots and it's appreciated.

All that's understandable given the common background of nearly all of El Salvador's military officers. Fliers begin their climb up the military ladder with acceptance for training at the country's military academy along with all other military cadets. Aviation candidates face three or four years of school and flight training before they become operational as Air Force



**FAS helicopter pilots get most of their training in the U.S. but their experience comes from fighting the elusive enemy that threatens El Salvador. Photo: Harry Claffin**

flying officers, but many of them begin earning their combat crew status before they complete the required courses. If the FAS needs pilots to fulfill operational requirements, it does not hesitate to order an early graduation for aviation cadets and put the novices into the grinding flight schedule.

That's not such a rare occurrence these days. Despite the small size of the country, El Salvador's FAS has a relatively large fleet of combat aircraft to man. Air Force inventories include at least 14 different aircraft types. Six tiny but powerful twin-jet A-37 Dragonfly fighter-bombers provide the backbone of FAS close air support capabilities. Capable of delivering six 500-pound or four 750-pound bombs on target, they can also strafe the enemy with 7.62mm multi-barreled mini-guns. About half a dozen O-2As (Cessna twin prop 337s converted for military use with additional radios and rocket launch tubes) provide extra muscle for air strikes on guerrilla formations.

Multi-mission capabilities including troop transport, recon, command and control and gun support are provided by a tired fleet of 32 Huey helos of Vietnam vintage. A handful of Israeli-French Ouragan fighters, several long-toothed C-47 Gooney Birds and an assortment of French and

American light helicopters complete the air combat arsenal. A few small training planes, Israeli transports, a pair of DC-6s and other odds and ends from a variety of sources are used to take up the admin slack.

That looks good on paper but the cold reality of the situation is another matter. Most of the admin and service support planes don't fly much — many don't get airborne at all — because the skimpy Salvadoran aviation budget is totally targeted at keeping the combat planes flying.

The O-2s, A-37s, C-47s, Hueys, and a couple of creaky transports are getting the majority of El Salvador's air time. The workhorse C-47's are the valves that control the flow in the army's logistical pipeline so they get tender, loving care from flightline crews. Helicopters are equally vital to air-mobile war waged by the country's BIATs (anti-terrorist battalions) so they also attract a lot of maintenance attention. That doesn't make the rotary wing situation rosy. There is too much work for too few helos. Both American and Salvadoran officials have been working on a solution through clogged and convoluted bureaucratic channels. Additional Hueys are on their way to El Salvador but until they arrive the fleet remains woefully inadequate for the wartime task. Four of the available Slicks are committed by prearrangement with the U.S. for use as medevac birds only. That's hardly the worst aspect of the aviation support problem faced by the FAS.



## RECON TEAM EXTRACTION

The sound was chillingly familiar. Five Hueys hovered like giant insects over the runway, their rotor blade kicking swirling clouds of dust into the damp morning air.

*Whop-whop-whop...* that sound had become the trademark of the Vietnam War and I thought back to those dog days. But there was little time to reflect. The slicks were jockeying into formation and takeoff position on Ilopango's runway.

This one could involve hot LZs. As the pilot pulled collective, I checked the brand new folding-stock FN FAL 7.62mm rifle, jacking a live round into the chamber. The doorgunner flashed a confident smile as he flipped up the feed covers on his twin M-60s and threaded two 1,500-round linked belts. Thumbs up. We were ready for the mission. The chopper bumped slightly up and down, swaying from side to side in pre-flight hover.

It wasn't my usual position on a mission. I was used to flying the machine rather than playing gunner-observer. But this wasn't my army so I sat back and watched.

As we waited for final takeoff clearance, the easy bravado wore off. Our smiling door gunner turned solemn. Staring at nothing, he mouthed words I couldn't hear over the noise of the blades. I saw him make the sign of the cross. Then he did it again. This kid was scared. No mission in El Salvador's violent guerrilla war is safe and he knew it. He was on his sixth prayer when when I let my thoughts drift back to the afternoon a few days ago when I was kicking back with FAS pilots in the ready room.

We were bored and hoped for something exciting to come our way. The chatter in the room suddenly quieted to a respectful murmur as a squat, powerfully built young man with a razor thin moustache and that ever-present Salvadoran smile, came in with a thinly-disguised air of urgency. The helicopter squadron commander glanced around before catching my eye. He looked at me

Helicopters form the core of any mobile guerrilla war. El Salvador uses UH-1s to carry the war to the communists. Photo: Harry Clafin

and casually — too casually — asked, "Captain, would you like to ride as an extra gun on an extraction?"

A former USAF captain during the Vietnam War, I had jockeyed most of the FAS inventory of aircraft already. Unfortunately, that experience did me little good since the mission needed chopper jocks. I mumbled a confession about my limited helicopter flight time to the chopper squadron commander. No matter he said, this mission was hot and he needed an extra gunner to back up the two experienced pilots who would ram-rod the Huey. It was time to get involved — seriously involved — in El Salvador's fight against communist insurgency.

The commander gave me the low-down as we pre-flighted the Huey. A two-man recon team had been infiltrated earlier into a salt-water swamp near an estuary of the Rio Lempa. They were investigating reports that guerrilla supplies from Nicaragua were being smuggled from ocean-going shrimp boats and run by small boat up the Rio or by pack animal into the interior. They'd been spotted by guerrilla scouts and the defecation had hit the oscillation.

A hasty call for help got a four-man support team dropped in to assist. Shortly after that, all six were in serious trouble and another 24 man team was lifted out to the site. The Gs also reinforced and it was now up to us to haul all 30 of their butts out of the sling with five Hueys. This time the Gs would be gunning for us.

I was in the squadron commander's chopper as we got airborne. The other four were strung out in perfect echelon behind us. We were designated the gunship because our slick had twin M60s in each door as opposed to the single M60 in the door of the otherships. We flew south out of Ilopango, around the rock-studded base of one of El Salvador's many steep-sloped volcanos. Skimming the deck at just under

100 feet, I watched the white-sided, red tile roofed houses that clung to the slopes slide through the sights of our twin M60s. Choppers laden with weapons and grim men heading into battle were a stark contrast to the clotheslines full of drying garments that slipped beneath our rotors. It all blurred as we rounded the hill and clawed our way up through the wispy clouds that clung to the steep volcano.

We descended to El Salvador's coastal flatlands that melded into the shimmering ocean. Within seconds, we were dripping with sweat in the hot, humid air that blanketed the coast. The earth soared up at us as the coastline appeared in the open door of our slick. The pilot popped us over several tree lines that ran perpendicular to our course before cranking a hard left to race along the gentle surf. This was gutsy flying.

As if reading my thoughts, the pilot nosed even closer to the sand and surf that blurred beneath the skids. A mere five feet of rushing air separated us from the earth. These pilots all earned their wings at Ft. Rucker, Alabama and their nap-of-the-earth skills surely were a gleam in the eye of a few Yankee flight instructors. I swear I saw the breakers on my right flash foam higher than the skids.

A checkerboard of beautiful beach villas and poor, thatch-roof huts opened beneath the racing choppers. Children smiled and waved, dogs ran barking after us and chickens and cows fled as we roared by. A few miles outside of town we hit the zone.

The lead chopper reared as the pilot snapped the nose high to kill airspeed. We dropped from 90 knots to a hover in seconds. The skids touched down and determined men vaulted out of the slicks to set up a hasty perimeter. No incoming as yet, but the doorgunners anxiously swept the surrounding jungle with their sights.

We weren't alone for long. From the trees, deadwood and brush on our left side filtered small groups of heavily-armed men. The *long hair*, *sweat bands* and beards didn't hide the professional attitude of these hombres. Their clean, well-cared for weapons were a dead giveaway. We had found the recon team.

In a well-ordered rush, the troopers scrambled on board the Hueys while the doorgunners and I cautiously swiveled our weapons over their heads at the trees, watching for trouble. The treeline stayed quiet and we didn't have to fire a shot. Our cargo of eight Salvo soldiers piled aboard our chopper, relief written all over their faces. It was time to go and we roared back into the sky. Mission accomplished.

— Dana Drenkowski

Effective maintenance requires flightline crews to rob Peter and pay Paul. They frequently mothball a number of aircraft and cannibalize them for spare parts to keep others airborne. The C-47s, Hueys, several T-41s, O-2s and A-37s compose the primary muscle of the combat fleet so they are kept constantly ready for flight. Everything else enjoys a lower maintenance priority.

El Salvador's tiny contingent of fixed-wing fighter-attack aircraft — the French Ouragans — are also kept airworthy, but the FAS has found little operational use for their high-performance capabilities in a guerrilla war. Their four forward-firing 20mm cannons are the heaviest airborne ordnance available in the country which would make them an asset against an enemy air threat — in the unlikely event that such a thing should ever appear.

The real air-to-ground asset is the helicopter. Since none of the U.S. supplied helos are delivered in gunship configuration, the FAS has conducted some interesting experiments. They mounted fixed, forward-firing Gatling-style 7.62mm machine guns on two Hughes 500D helicopters in an effort to provide blanket firepower for ground support. The jury is still out on the experiment since one helicopter was lost in an accident and the other has not seen enough use to fully evaluate the project. Meanwhile, there are other problems plaguing El Salvador's helo fleet.

The cost of modern helicopter gunships, their vulnerability to ground fire, and the excessive maintenance problems that a lack of stand-by spare parts engenders causes observers to question their efficiency in a low-intensity, Third World conflict. Unless a country is wealthy enough to shell out more than \$10 million each for new generations of gunships, it's more efficient and economical to seek gunship support from among fixed-wing assets.

That's brought new life and a familiar mission to the hard-working C-47 transport aircraft of the FAS. The addition of AC-47 Spooky gunships to the anti-guerrilla aviation line-up marks a cost-effective tactical decision as well as a change in strategy. The FAS is *about to launch* their first Spooky gunships into the fray but they were not able to pull it off without some significant sacrifice. To afford the AC-47 variant, the FAS had to delay purchase of additional, badly-needed A-37's. That caused some hand-wringing in the Ministry of Defense, but air advisors correctly pointed out that while the A-37 does an effective job in striking large targets from high altitudes, high speed makes it less than optimum for lingering over battlefields searching for targets of opportunity or hitting small, precise areas.

U.S. military strategists urged purchase of the Spooky gunships basing their advice on experience in Vietnam. They argued that bombs are indiscriminate area weapons which often kill civilians and combatants in the same fiery blast. Spooky is much better at zeroing in on small groups of illusive Gs.

The AC-47 gunship is a mixture of so-

phisticated high-tech and primitive raw power. Just take a C-47, add telescopic, infra-red, low light and laser light television systems, banks of machine guns or 20mm rotating barrels and you've got a lead-spitting airborne ass-kicker that can precisely cover a specific area with a hail of bullets. All of Spooky's guns bristle from one side of its sleek fuselage. It circles the target in a slow bank, weapons constantly hammering the area.

Initially, 7.62mm multi-barrel machine gun rigs were considered as the main armament because of their 6,000 round-per-minute rate of fire. That proposal was scrubbed when aviators discovered the weapons' range limitations would force the planes to fly below ridgelines on strike missions into valley floors leaving the aircraft too vulnerable to enemy snipers hidden in the heights.

Larger calibers had to be considered. The 20mm Vulcan gun was out because of limitations placed by Congress on exploding rounds. They finally decided on three

.50 cal Brownings as a compromise. But there's a catch. The three .50 Browning machine guns can only put out a maximum rate of fire of 3,000 rpm. It is unlikely that the .50 Browning-armed Spooky will perform to the standards set by the 7.62mm and 20mm Gatling gun versions.

This spectacular weapon may significantly change the face of war in El Salvador. When Spooky becomes operational, the FAS will be able to add a night air strike capability to close air support and the guerrillas will no longer have their 12 hours of darkness to frolic without fear of death from the sky.

With AC-47s circling in the clouds, the A-37s will be free to concentrate on higher priority targets suitable for their specialized attention. Massed assaults like the one on Cerron Grande Dam in May of 1984 (See SOF, November, 1984) will be much more difficult for the guerrillas to stage under threat of lurking A-37s. Of course, all this speculation is based on the FAS ability to



ABOVE: Three-foot fuse extenders on 500-pound bombs ensure detonation above ground level for maximum shrapnel effect. BELOW: Twin M60s in each door of a Huey make it a "gunship." Photos: Dana Drenkowski





## O-2A RECON MISSION IN EL SALVADOR

My twin prop Cessna O-2A preceded the convoy, snaking lazily through the sky as we looked for the ambushes along the road. It was a frustrating job. Once again, they had hit us and we were unable to unleash our fury on the slippery enemy that danced around the main supply route.

The guerrillas had command-detonated a claymore mine on the highway. Not an unusual event considering that a seven-truck army convoy was traveling from San Miguel to San Salvador. But there was a twist to this story. The G's intended target was a civilian truck, hit at random among the dozens of trucks and buses that crawled along that stretch of road. The army convoy was still five miles down the road.

Had the convoy been hit, our 2.75-in. rockets would have hammered the attackers and then marked the scene for more heavily armed A-37 Dragonfly jet fighter-bombers which would scramble to the scene within 20 minutes.

We were overhead within 30 seconds after the explosion. Black smoke mixed with brown dust shrouded the scene making it hard for us to check things out. We swooped low, looking for the terrorist team, while the critically wounded driver was pulled out of the smoking ruins of his truck by passers-by. An angry mob searched futilely for his anonymous assailants. They gestured in various directions as we flew 25 feet overhead, hoping to get some indication of the guerrilla's direction.

This bloody attack marked a change in communist strategy. The guerrillas had recently announced that they would attack El Salvador's economy and this attempted murder was just another blow. For the past few weeks, guerrillas had been killing and maiming innocent civilians who form the backbone of the country's agriculture and industry. We weren't going to sit still and let that happen.

The O-2 clipped the upper branches of the trees bordering the road hoping to flush the killers but they had vanished. Below us, the army convoy had roared

Cessna O-2A observation aircraft used in El Salvador are virtually the same as the USAF O-2B (shown) but with olive drab paint jobs and a seven round rocket pod attached under each wing.

up to aid to the driver. He was loaded onto another civilian truck and rushed to the nearest clinic. We didn't know if he would live or die and we never found out which.

Since the enemy had melted away, the army convoy decided to continue their mission. Our Cessna took up its position above and ahead of the convoy, acting as the eyes and muscles of the escort troopers. Nestled under each wing of the O-2A was a deadly pod of seven 2.75-inch rockets, but they would do us no good that day.

I jockeyed the O-2 for several hours, searching out likely ambush sites in advance of the convoy. If the same procedure had been used earlier with the civilian trucks, we might have been able to discourage the attackers or flush them out before they detonated the weapon. At the very least, we would have had a better chance of nailing them as they broke from cover after the damage was done. The 30 seconds it took us to get to the target had made all the difference in the world.

I was gratified when the *Fuerza Aero Salvador* (FAS) pilot with me pointed out that a number of the potential ambush sites I picked out had been used in the past. We flew low enough to see powder burn marks across the road where claymores and grenades had detonated.

The hours wore on. My flight suit was soaked with sweat from the relentless sun pounding through the plexiglass canopy as we droned on and on. "Boring holes in the sky," we used to call it in the U.S. Air Force. Still, it beat walking.

Three long hours later, the convoy was safely in San Salvador and we could bring our bird home. Ilopango Air Base never looked so good. A few last minute details and it was off to the snack bar for some ice water and fresh orange juice. Funny how the simple things can mean so much.

— Dana Drenkowski

fly, fight and survive some peculiar non-combat difficulties.

Aircraft maintenance procedures and flight safety regs aren't quite the same down south as American military aviators understand them. U.S. flying safety and maintenance officers would probably throw up their hands in frustration at the motley collection of aircraft that fly daily missions into often hostile country. But the Salvadoran maintenance crews have moved heaven and earth to keep this rag-tag air force flying. It's not hard to understand a lack of standardization and strict safety measures. There's a real, live war going on and the FAS has to use whatever they've got to get the job done. If that involves shaving a few corners, pushing hourly maintenance schedules or ignoring problems that would ground U.S. aircraft, so be it. Fortunately, El Salvador's equipment is less sophisticated than state-of-the-art U.S. technology and it requires less expertise to be used effectively against a guerrilla enemy with little anti-aircraft capability.

Money is always tight and priorities have to be set. The infantry war clearly enjoys first funding favor. That frequently impacts on purchase of niceties that would make flying in El Salvador safer. A proposed \$5 million radar system was reluctantly given up in favor of diverting the money for creation of another light infantry battalion last year.

A lack of technology creates other tactical problems. At present, pilots have to rely solely on radio direction signals or Visual Flight Rules to guide their aircraft to distant targets. They have little hope of finding or pursuing an elusive enemy in the dark or during bad weather without a more sophisticated remote guidance system. Except for the Spooky night-attack capability, the FAS mostly remains grounded at night or during periods of reduced visibility. The Hueys can manage to safely ferry troops on night insertions, but the fixed-wing close air support remains chocked and chained.

Despite remarkable skill and determination, FAS aircrews are fighting an uphill battle in building an effective, reliable air support arm for the beleaguered infantry below them. Machine fatigue and battle damage frequently limit the effectiveness of the FAS's hodge-podge of aircraft types. On any given day, only about half the A-37s may be available for combat while the remainder undergo scheduled maintenance or other repair.

Nowhere is the situation more critical than in the helo fleet. Of 32 nominally available slicks, it is not unusual to have as few as two or three of the aircraft ready for immediate action. Some of the FAS helicopters remain grounded beyond hope of getting airborne quickly because their bullet-damaged engines have been sent to the U.S. for repair. It is difficult to imagine a more blatant case of bureaucratic callousness. Everyone seems to realize El Salvador is fighting a bloody war, but no one in Washington seems willing to treat their re-



**Preparing for a mission: FAS A-37 pilots scramble for the skies whenever guerrilla concentrations are reported. Author (left) went along to observe. Photo: Dana Drenkowski**

quests for priority repair of vital helo engines as anything more than "routine."

If there are 235 helo engines waiting for repair at the central depot, engines arriving from El Salvador — where they are vitally needed — simply become numbers 236 and 237. No big deal. We'll get around to supporting these peoples' fight for their lives when we can find the time. It doesn't matter if the other engines are used only on Sundays by the Podunk Army National Guard, if they came into the depot first, they get repaired first. This strange system frequently kept Salvadoran helos grounded without engines for as long as 18 months. During such a time, a full 10 percent of total FAS helicopter assets are grounded and out of the fight.

*Soldier of Fortune* magazine discovered the situation and brought it to the attention of Reagan administration officials. That nudge created some reaction and engines from El Salvador were given additional priority, moving the scheduled time of repair up to only four months. It's better but it's hardly an acceptable adjustment. A U.S. Army unit at war would consider a four month repair wait on helo engines a full-blown war crime. They would scream for — and easily get — a replacement engine. No such luck in El Salvador but the Reagan Administration hopes to remedy the problem by prompting Congress to provide replacement engines for FAS helos.

Understandably, the Salvadorans are more concerned about their helicopters than any of the other aircraft. They are the battle-tested stars of the hide-and-seek guerrilla game. Their mobility denies the communists the advantage of sanctuary and gives government troops a quick-strike capability. During the battle for the dam at Cerron Grande, Hueys were used to ferry some 800-900 airborne/airmobile troops directly onto guerrilla formations. The battle turned into a rout despite the delaying factor of having to use only a few helos to jump back and forth between the battlefield and Ilopang

go Air Base. At the time, FAS had only 25 Hueys, half of which were grounded by mechanical problems. Despite that, the guerrillas were demoralized by the rapid airborne response to their attack.

Maintaining that capability requires big bucks. Hueys are among the most expensive types of aircraft to purchase and maintain. El Salvador's Hueys, built and operated by the U.S. Army in the '60s and '70s, each cost as much as one A-37 and are far more expensive to operate. Hourly fuel costs and maintenance time add to the bill. Helicopters also have a shorter service life, partly because they are easier to shoot out of the sky. With a cruising speed of about 120 knots, Hueys don't move fast enough to tax the guerrillas' limited antiaircraft capabilities. Hovering adds another dimension of vulnerability. Holding over an LZ gives the enemy a shooting gallery of opportunities to nail a slick. Even a rock thrown into the rotor blade by a guerrilla could ruin a pilot's whole day.

The bottom line is clearly drawn in terms of tactics. Will it be fighter-bombers, like the Dragonfly, or gunships? Six A-37s are not enough to dent enemy capabilities but it is unlikely that Washington will provide any more. A-37s need intricate intelligence sources or ground recon teams to establish that there are no civilians in the area before they strike — AC-47s don't. The real advantage of A-37s is their ability to pummel enemy troop concentrations or supply lines. Washington apparently feels the FAS has enough aircraft to do that.

And there is the familiar issue of hearts and minds. You don't win them with indiscriminate bombing from great altitude with the potential for unintentional civilian casualties. The government of President

Napoleon Duarte understands the problem and has severely restricted the use of bombs in situations where it might lead to civilian injuries.

Adequate scout plane techniques can also limit casualties from bombing raids. The FAS uses O-2As to sound things out before a raid, but they don't do an adequate job. They need a more specialized plane. I'd recommend a variant of the Vietnam-era O-1 "Birdog" liaison aircraft. They were ideal for patrolling guerrilla-infested areas. This single engine tail dragger needed only a 500-foot stretch of grass or blocked-off highway for takeoff and required minimal maintenance. Phenomenally low gasoline consumption enabled it to prow around for hours at 60-90 knots. Unfortunately, the U.S. doesn't use the plane anymore. And that means that El Salvador won't be getting any of them. It doesn't mean a similar aircraft could not be located and provided.

Obviously, the O-2s are not the ideal aircraft for scouting missions, but they are all the FAS has for the job. The pilots have the guts, but they need to have a consistent policy for scout flying in order to deliver more effective aerial reconnaissance. Most scout pilots fly at 2-4,000 feet searching the bush for guerrillas. Occasionally they scare some up but usually it's a fruitless exercise from that altitude. Some O-2 pilots are down low enough to blow people down with propwash, but most are not. A true recon plane should be down in the trees and brush spotting camouflaged targets, but only a few of the FAS scout pilots nose their aircraft down under the treelines.

There is also a significant psychological aspect to aerial reconnaissance. If the presence of scout aircraft becomes an expected part of a villager's day, he is likely to feel less threatened by communist intimidation and more confident that Big Brother is up there somewhere waiting to pounce on anyone who gives him trouble. Often, the villagers will set up signals to warn pilots of guerrilla movement. But that will only happen if the pilot has put in many hours of low, slow flying in a specific area.

USAF advisors with FAS can't help as much as many would like. Their situation is similar to that confronting their U.S. Army counterparts. They are not allowed to go into the field to actually see the results of U.S. training. Without watching FAS performance in combat, it is difficult for them to properly evaluate the needs of El Salvadoran military. It's a catch-22 situation unless somebody steps in and unscrews things.

But there is an alternative. El Salvador might consider hiring civilians with extensive military backgrounds to work as advisors without political restrictions. The civilians, like their AID or DOD counterparts, would certainly not be mercenaries, but they would be less politically sensitive than U.S. military personnel.

Salvadoran military officials aren't going to be picky. They just want to win the war and anyone who can help them is welcome.



# SALVOSPEAK



## Don't Forget Your Fag Bag When Going to Gloria's

by Greg Walker

LIKE literary garbage collectors on their way to the dump, soldiers in each of the world's wars scavenge their own peculiar slang terms out of military bureaucratess. Familiar at first only to its originators, a "slanguage" emerges from the battlefield, takes off its coat, spits on its hands and goes to work as human communication. Typically, this jargon is less than reverent or respectful.

Such communication is frequently so effective that it becomes an accepted part of the English language. American service in Vietnam provides a host of examples. Most civilians old enough to vote easily recognize what's meant by "grunt," "Huey," "the Nam," "beaucoup," and so forth, into a virtual lexicon of terms developed by soldiers in Southeast Asia. Now we have soldiers in Central America and they are rapidly writing their own dictionary.

The expressions coming out of El Salvador and into the constantly-widening list of military jargon are a bit different than those that gained widespread acceptance during the Vietnam era, but they serve to communicate thoughts and images among the men who have served there.

U.S. Military teams are employed as MTTs (Mobile Training Teams) and these units develop and dispense jargon during and after their relatively short, temporary duty stints in Central America. Given the track record, it's very likely some of their terms will find a place in our language. To give you a jump on the situation, here's an incomplete list of the terms you might hear among U.S. soldiers in El Salvador.

**ACCIDENTAL DISCHARGE** — Also referred to as "A-D," describes ostensibly unintentional firing of a weapon. Usually leads to court-martial in U.S. military where it is relatively uncommon. In El Salvador, A-D's among poorly-trained troops are not at all uncommon, which makes training duty a little hard on the nerves. Torpedos (See **TORPEDO**) who become bored during their late-night shifts outside

San Salvador's posh private residential compounds frequently have A-Ds, which are also probable if someone tailgates their boss's Blindado (See **BLINDADO**) too closely. Also what happens when your .45 falls out of it's Fag Bag and goes off on impact (See **FAG BAG**). A-D's that can be pinned to U.S. trainers usually result in a fast ride home on the FTS (See **FTS**).

**ADVISER** — Vietnam-era term for Trainers (See **TRAINERS**).

**ASSHOLES, FUCKHEADS, ETC.** — Terms used to denote members of the news media. Interchangeable in this context with *puta* (See **PUTA**). Also used on occasion to describe members of the MILGRP MAFIA (See **MILGRP MAFIA**).

**BLINDADO** — A heavily armored civilian vehicle, such as the one used to transport U.S. personnel around the capital. With each Blindado you get one Torpedo (See **TORPEDO**).

**BOZO** — Any magazine staffer from publications like *Soldier of Fortune* who shows up in El Sal and does what trainers are not allowed to do — such as go on combat patrols with indig troops.

**CANNON** — Any weapon, but primarily refers to a pistol.

**CASIO WATCH** — This time piece is now replacing the Rolex and Seiko as SF's "watch of choice" in El Salvador. No particular reason, hopefully a fad.

**CEROTE** — Spanish for "piece of shit." Used a lot when speaking about the U.S.-issue .45 caliber semi-automatic pistol, Model 1911A1 — especially if it falls out of your Fag Bag and has an A-D.

**CHELE** — Spanish for "light complected person." Refers to gringos.

**CONTESTED ZONE** — An area where a trainer is working that has insurgent activity to the degree that the trainer could come under hostile fire. Not to be confused with a "combat zone," which is an area where an adviser is working that has insurgent activity to the degree that the adviser could come under hostile fire.

**DEER HUNTER** — Anyone that wears fancy field uniforms and carries several pistols, knives, "sheen" guns and "nades" and declares himself ready for anything. Normally U.S. army officers are Deer Hunters.

**DOUBLE-NICKLE** — The frustrating, congressionally-imposed 55-man limit on U.S. trainers in-country. The slang version of this term used by Cuban trainers in Nicaragua translates as "six grand."

**EL SAL RING** — Gold rings with the Special Forces crest and motto on them. Produced only in El Salvador and normally only for those SFers serving in-country. Presumably replaces the star sapphire ring that became so popular in Vietnam.

**EOM** — End Of Mission. At this point the MTT (See **MTT**) is over and the team returns to home base where they turn in their cannons, get their gear off the FTS (See **FTS**), and fill out travel vouchers to see how much TDY (See **TDY**) they're going to have to pay back for the privilege of serving in El Salvador.

**ESTAR BOLO** — To be drunk. To be drunk in public will get a trainer a one-way ticket on the FTS.

**FAG BAG** — Leather bag about the size of a shaving kit in which U.S. personnel carry their handguns. They're told it's because they don't want to wear a holster in civilian clothes, which would imply El Salvador really is at war and a dangerous place to serve. Naturally, no one checked out the efficiency of this system with the trainers, who are always forgetting where they left their Fag Bags. It's considered very bad manners to go into nice Salvadoran restaurants and leave your Fag Bag on the table. The accepted form is to remove the weapon before the first course is served and place it — locked and cocked — under a napkin to the right of the place setting, while stowing the Fag Bag under your chair.

Continued on page 94

# CHOOSING COMBAT CUTLERY

A Shopping  
List for the  
Perfect  
Fighting  
Knife

by Bill Bagwell



ARA kukri (left) weighs twice as much as the other knives here (left to right); Randall Number 1 is a well-regarded replacement for a custom fighter; Guardian II is a modern interpretation of traditional dagger; long, light, strong Bagwell fighting Bowie; and hollow-handled Applegate-Fairbairn allows handle-heavy balance shift by moveable weights.



**W**E have the tools and weapons that are at our disposal largely for two reasons — they are either issued to us by the particular branch of the military in which we are serving, or we have each considered our own specific needs and have chosen our gear accordingly. One of the most basic and effective of these tools and weapons is a knife. It is also the most difficult to shop for and acquire.

Choosing a knife for a combat/survival application appears to be a relatively simple proposition. The marketplace is literally crammed with options for the person who feels moved to obtain a survival or fighting knife. That would appear to make it easy to buy a good knife — but it's not.

In fact, it's much easier to buy a firearm, tent, sleeping bag, body armor, or nearly any other item of quality field or combat equipment than it is to buy a knife that will give you a significant advantage in a life or death situation. The primary problem is a lack of acceptable criteria for what features a good combat or survival knife should have. Opinions on this issue are like certain unmentionable parts of anatomy. Everybody has one.

For most items we purchase, we come up with established performance criteria. We don't tolerate rifles that give 10-inch groups at 100 yards off a bench. We won't buy tents that leak or sleeping bags that won't keep us warm in cold weather. We shouldn't tolerate knives — weapons or tools which we may have to stake our lives on — if they don't perform up to certain strict standards either. But we do.

Here are some considerations in choosing a knife that will not let you down when you need it most.

No matter how similar they may look, no two types of fighting knives are created equal. You will clearly want to carefully choose a knife which produces very real and demonstrated advantages over other weapons of the same type. Differences in knives of the advertised combat or survival class are hard to spot. Take your time and examine the candidates for your money carefully.

The first and most important requirement for a combat knife is strength and durability. **IT MUST NOT BREAK.** If your knife breaks in combat, you will probably die. Think about that. Then look at the blade and general construction of your present knife with a very critical eye. How strong is it — really? You should realize that some steels are much stronger than others. Your blade should stand up to the two basic types of stress that combat use may impart. The steel quality and construction will be a major factor in that.

A combat blade may either be bent violently to one side, or it may be called upon to receive or deliver a blow as hard as it is possible for a man to administer. That means it must be capable of withstanding as much lateral stress and shock as a man can dish out in an adrenalin rush. That's a lot, as anyone who has been in combat or a major barroom brawl will attest.

There are two generally available steel types that can handle this type of stress. One is the medium and high carbon spring steels, such as AISI 1040, 1060 and 1095. Also useful in this category is W2, which possesses good cutting qualities.

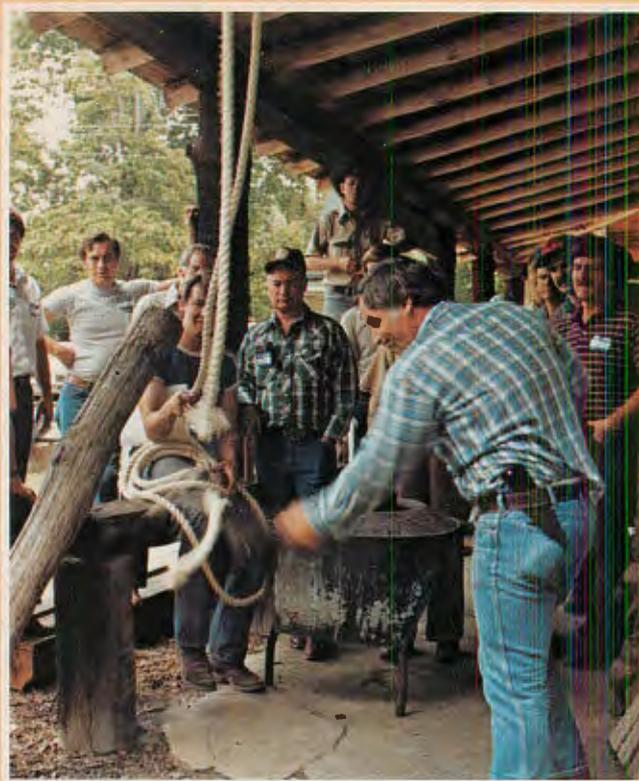
The other type is a series of steels which are formulated for such uses as bits on jackhammers and drills designed to cut stone. Most of these are relatively inexpensive, readily available and designed to withstand one million flexing





Author-made battle blade: hand forged, strong, lively balance.

Daggers don't cut it in Bagwell's book: short, light, handle-heavy and high-angle edges.



SOF contributing editor Bill Bagwell cuts free-hanging one-inch manila rope with a single stroke of one of his 12-ounce, nine-inch Bowies. Photo courtesy Bill Bagwell

cycles at anywhere from 80 percent to 100 percent of their rated loads. You begin to see that there is no excuse for having a blade that will fail due to lateral stress. Why aren't all combat or survival knives made of such materials? Good question. I've wondered about that myself.

None of the currently fashionable stainless steels such as 440C, 154CM, D2, etc., have the kind of strength we are talking about here. 154CM in particular is bad about chipping out on the edge when the knife is subjected to chopping and hacking. Apparently appearances and false economy are the real reasons some popular fighting knives are weak. You should know what kind of steel is in the blade you are considering. If you can't tell, put the blade in a bench vise. If you can break it under pressure of your bare hands, the blade is not strong enough for combat.

You should be able to take your combat knife, sharpen it to a razor's edge and then hack and chop and/or whittle completely through a 2x4 building stud. Twice. Then shave hair from your arm, WITHOUT RESHARPENING YOUR KNIFE. Your combat/survival knife should cut and slash like a razor, have the power and chopping capability of a cleaver, stab and penetrate like a dagger and have superior cutting qualities on the back stroke. Those are tough standards to meet and I have always maintained there is only one style of fighting knife that includes them all. My recommendation for your combat or survival blade is a well made Bowie knife.

A Bowie knife that is properly made will feel like a magic wand in your hand and will make cuts that you will have to see to believe. Developed and perfected in the late 1820's and early 1830's, this knife was carried and used by men who were extremely pragmatic and who demanded that each piece of equipment be functional and efficient. In those days when rifles and pistols were either flintlock or percussion, and the revolving pistol was barely a gleam in Sam Colt's eye, knife fights were common. A blade that was superior to the other guy's was often the difference between life and death among those pioneers. Despite the lessons of history,

it is a cold, hard fact that the knives sold today are for the most part vastly inferior to the knives sold in this country in the year 1840, both in terms of design and performance.

Modern steels and designs don't necessarily make the difference. There will be manufacturers and custom knifemakers who will strongly disagree. Many who use 154CM in their blades will tell you with a straight face that you are not supposed to cut anything except flesh with their knives, and that to hack your way through a 2x4 building stud with one of their razor sharp blades borders on vandalism. You might remind them that the pages of American history are full of battles, duels and common fights in which skulls were split to the teeth, limbs were severed with a single stroke and disembowelments were commonplace.

Today's knives are for the most part too small, too light, and improperly ground and balanced for yeoman work such as this. An occasional disembowelment is well within the capabilities of most modern knives, but those chores requiring real speed and cutting power in the stroke are simply beyond the reach of most of today's combat cutlery.

Given all that and the very real possibility of it happening again in combat, here's a shopping list of specifications.

- Look for a Bowie style knife that is made out of a straight carbon steel, not stainless. If you are about 5'10" tall, the knife should have a blade between 9 and 9¼ inches long.
- The knife should balance about an inch forward of the hilt. Under no circumstances should it be handle heavy. The blade should feel as if it wants to move through its intended target while remaining perfectly controllable in your hand. Swing it around until you're sure you've got the feel.
- The knife should carry its point on the centerline of the axis of thrust. When you thrust with the knife, the point should go exactly where you are pointing, not an inch up or down or to the side.
- The blade must be flat ground for maximum slicing and slashing capability. For strength, the blade must be at least



Traditional kukri exemplifies leverage, with weight placed forward and heavily angled blade. A formidable chopper, but difficult to recover.

A knife with a heavier swing weight allows either chopping attack on sentry's skull, or traditional dagger attack.



$\frac{3}{16}$  of an inch thick at the guard, and  $\frac{3}{8}$  of an inch is better. The blade should taper from this thickness to the point.

- It should not be parallel-sided. The clip point should be between 3 and 3 $\frac{3}{8}$  inches long, concave, and sharp.
- There should be no false edge, or swage, on the back behind the sharpened clip.
- The handle should be stag, one of the tropical hardwoods, or one of the domestic hardwoods that has been suitably treated. It should fit YOUR PARTICULAR HAND. This is not a pair of socks where one size fits all. A serious knife is made to fit the man who uses it. The handle should be a natural material, not metal or a synthetic, as it must provide a positive grip when cold or wet or both.
- The guard should be large enough to keep your fingers off the blade, but not so large that it catches in your clothing when you draw the knife.
- The knife should weigh between 13 and 17 ounces, depending upon the type of balance.
- The sheath should give you *instant and silent* access to the knife, and you should be able to draw it with one hand. You should also be able to carry this knife and sheath totally concealed. In other words, the sheath should not hang a foot down the back of your leg or otherwise impair your mobility. It should also be compatible with the sort of field equipment you expect to wear.
- Finally, strap the knife on your belt or your field equipment as you expect to wear it. You should be so comfortable wearing a knife with a nine or 10-inch blade that you can forget that you have it on. This is doubly important in a survival knife. In a survival situation you are probably going to have to make do with what you have, and if you're completely comfortable carrying your knife, chances are you *will have it*.

Granted, that seems like a long and complicated shopping list for a simple tool like a knife. You may even spend days searching popular advertising for a knife that fits this bill. Chances are you won't find one. So, should you settle for less? What's the big deal? Today's stainless steel knives cut.



Pushtun (Afghan) *cherkei* is quick in the hand, provides solid grip and excellent penetration, but little chopping power.

Randall Number 1 has changed little from WWII till today, reflecting several points of Bagwell's argument.



Why shouldn't I settle for one of them?

You could. But I wouldn't want to think you'd be willing to stake your life on it.

What you most likely need if you're serious about a combat or survival knife is the phone number or address of a good, professional knifemaker. But be carefully in choosing your man. Many of today's practicing knifemakers are not full time professionals. A great number who advertise their wares commercially are hobbyists who are truly unaware that stainless steel puts their products at a severe disadvantage.

As far as I can determine, there are only a few men in America (you wouldn't run out of fingers counting them) making the kind of combat or survival knives a professional needs. They can and will deliver them in a reasonable amount of time at an understandable price. I'll be glad to give you names if you want to write me through this magazine.

If you're concerned about your blade and your ability to survive in combat or in difficult field conditions, you should contact one of these men. Ask them if their knives will do the things they should. Ask them if they *can make* you a knife that will hack and chop a 2x4 in two and still shave, or if it will cut a free-hanging, one-inch Manila rope in two with one stroke, or if it will cleave a 24 inch section of 2x10 completely in two with one blow. Ask them if they produce a blade with an edge that can be restored to a shaving sharpness with six or eight strokes on an Arkansas stone. Ask them if they stress test every knife that leaves their shop. Ask them if they can make a knife for you that fits YOU.

They'll answer your questions and they'll welcome the challenge of making a blade that truly fits your needs; a blade you can count on when it's a matter of life or death.





# PICKING A POLICE PIECE

## What Every Well-Dressed Cop Should Carry

by Gary Paul Johnston

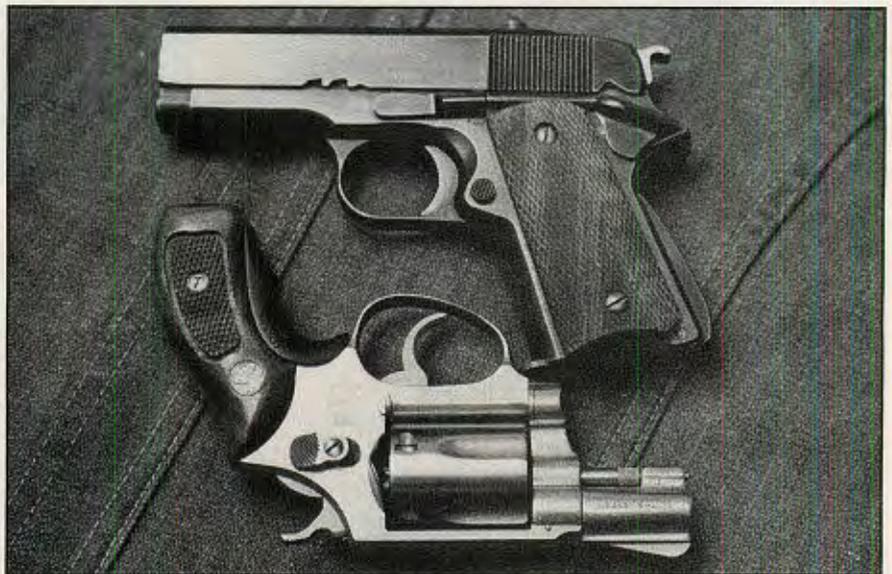
**T**HERE are as many opinions about the ideal police sidearm as there are police officers. If you carry a gun, you've got a favorite. If you don't, you've got an opinion. So how does the cop on the street — the man or woman who may have to stake his or her life on a sidearm — choose the right weapon?

They either accept the gun that's been selected as department or force standard, or they pick an appropriate weapon from what's commercially available. If there's a choice, police officers need to do some careful consideration.

The first thought will almost invariably be a revolver of some sort. Since the invention of the revolver during the 19th century, the weapon has gained almost universal acceptance as a police sidearm. Wheelguns have never been the complete answer in police weaponry, but they have remained popular with police departments primarily due to their simplicity and reliability. More about that later.

The appearance of the self-loading or "automatic" pistol around the turn of the century marked the beginning of a new ball game in handguns and various models were soon adopted by military forces around the world. Several progressive police departments around the world also switched to semiautos but the cops in America clung to revolvers. While our military standardized use of the Colt Model 1911 in cal. 45 ACP, law enforcement agencies in this country — the people much more likely than the military to actually use a pistol — insisted on sticking with some variant of a .38 caliber revolver.

Since that time, small arms technology has given birth to a veritable raft of differing revolvers and semi-automatic pistols in a vast range of calibers. Few self-respecting police officers would stake their lives on .22 or .32 caliber popguns while patrolling America's mean streets.



These two pistols would fit into the backup role. Detonics .45 cal. semiauto (above) and S&W .38 Special snubnose are not powerful enough to be used as main sidearm.

A veteran who broke me in on the LAPD in 1963 used to carry a Colt .25 ACP in his hip pocket. That was just after the incident that inspired the book *The Onion Field*, and it was fresh in every cop's mind. This old-timer said that if he ever had his service revolver taken away he would wait for the right opportunity, screw the little .25 in his captor's ear and empty it. Granted, that would get the guy's full attention, but I considered that caliber weapon too marginal in effectiveness and bought a larger weapon for back-up.

In my time, I have seen a guy killed instantly by one .22 rimfire in the abdomen, but that's the exception rather than the rule and policemen need to think seriously about the power and impact of their selected handgun caliber, so we'll deal here only with

larger bore handguns. Mostly, it's a matter of considering two families of commercial cartridges: the .38s and the .41 to .45s.

Within the .38s I include the .38 Special, .357 Magnum, .38 Super and 9mm Parabelum. I consider nothing less than these rounds suitable for police duty, and consider all of them *marginal* in effectiveness for street work. If you are confined to these choices, go with the .357 which I consider to have a slight edge over the rest.

The basic .38 Special round was probably obsolete as a reliable man stopper the day it came out of the dies. While sturdier, more well-manufactured gun frames have allowed the basic round to be loaded to equal the performance of the .38 Super and the 9mm — and to evolve into the .357 Magnum — they still don't cut it in my opinion. All of these rounds leave much to be desired in knock-down power, even when good semi-wadcutter and hollowpoint bullets are used. Velocity of at least 1,000 feet per second (fps) is needed to provide

good expansion with a hollowpoint and few commercial loads provide that. In fact, most .38s have little effect for street work at lower velocities.

I have seen many people who have taken unbelievable hits with .38-caliber rounds and lived — at least long enough to injure or kill the person (often a cop) who shot them. Consider the record of most criminal-cop shootouts. All too often the armed badasses are under the influence of drugs or desperately in need of them when they commit crimes. Their central nervous system is either impaired or screaming for impairment. These people simply don't react to external stimuli — including bullets — the way a sane, sober person does. That means a cop needs something powerful to get their attention or bring them down hard before they can do more damage.

Some recent ballistic reports indicate that liquid-center and exploding bullets in .38 caliber provide fantastic stopping and shocking power. While I have not tested these on living targets, I suspect their effectiveness may be limited to initial impact on a target. The available data suggests such rounds have limited penetration capabilities except for the gaping hole they blow in the surface of the object they strike. If a criminal obtains cover in a shootout as most people are prone to do, liquid-center or exploding rounds may not penetrate to reach him. That leaves the cop chipping brick or concrete while the criminal takes careful aim and nails him.

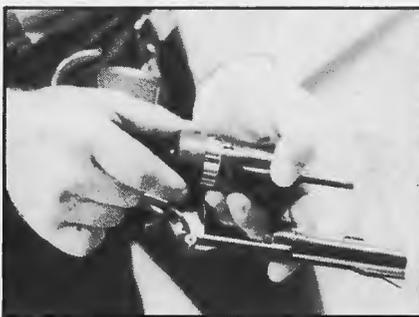
Even if the penetration of such projectiles is improved, it's unlikely they will be publicly accepted or officially condoned for on-duty use in the near future. These rounds may breathe new life into the standard .38 Police Special — the ballistics experts should concentrate on perfecting them for larger calibers.

Devel Corp. of Cleveland, Ohio has manufactured a new 9mm round for their present and future custom Smith & Wesson M-39s. Charlie Kelsey, President of Devel, promises great things over and above the regular 9mm Parabellum. He offers the most complete, concealable combat package I have ever seen and the quality is tops. It would certainly be an excellent choice for plain-clothes policemen.

The .41- to .45-caliber bullets are a better answer for police work. They do everything the lesser calibers do at combat ranges — only better. The .41 offers great potential as a police revolver cartridge in the .41 Police and .41 Magnum loads. The latter performs to about 90 percent of its big brother, the .44 Magnum. The .41 Police is a milder version of the same round that will cycle in the magnum gun.

The generally overlooked .41 Police load is an excellent duty cartridge, especially with the right bullet. Hopefully, this caliber will soon be offered in a semiauto version, with a good pistol chambered for it.

Some police officers want all the punch they can get and consider the .44 Special or .44 Magnum. In most areas, the full-tilt



**Speedloader makes revolver reloading easier, but it's still not as fast as an autoloader.**

magnum load is just too powerful for general duty while the .44 Special isn't powerful enough as loaded from the factory. To the frustration of many cops, most departments require their officers to carry only factory ammo. What they would welcome in areas where policemen are allowed to carry large caliber handguns is a factory .44 load that pushes a 200- to 230-grain bullet at about 1,100 fps. That threat would give the bad guys second thoughts and insure the alert, well-trained cop comes out a winner in almost all shoot-outs.

And then there's the .45. The only round worth considering is the .45 ACP. Although the .45 Long Colt is an excellent round, at present no modern police duty-grade gun is made for it. More has been done to perfect the .45 ACP as a combat cartridge than any other, thanks to guys like Jeff Cooper. Even though it has been around for more than 70 years, this old war horse remains one of the best cartridges in the world — as evidenced by the number of makes and models chambered for it.



**Wheelguns have long been the workhorse weapon of most police departments. Colt makes some of the most popular ones. Lawman Mk III, Trooper MkIII and Python.**

Standard factory and military load for the .45 ACP is a 230-grain jacketed bullet that moves out of a five-inch tube at the published speed of 850 fps. While an impressive man stopper in itself, the usual bullet varieties are available as factory loads with velocities above 1,000 fps. The .45 ACP is also the only cartridge of those discussed to be offered in both a revolver and an automatic for police duty.

Its proponents defend the revolver vehemently, insisting it cannot jam and is sim-

pler to operate than the automatic pistol with its safeties and buttons. While it is true that most revolvers are fairly simple to operate, they are not all that simple or quick to reload, even with the various speed loaders on the market. And any experienced handgunner will tell you they *can* jam.

It's extremely difficult to load a revolver quickly with one hand and there are no end of instances where police officers have had to do that. Gunfights don't occur under strictly controlled circumstances. Debris in the front end of the chambers of a cylinder can prevent it from turning or make it difficult to turn. Lead and fouling between the crane and frame can cause the cylinder to bind.

Binding can also occur after reloading if unburned powder falls from extracted cases and sticks under the extractor, causing it not to seat against the cylinder and acting as a brake against the rear of the frame. These fairly common failures are easy enough to reduce — unless someone is shooting at you.

Excepting such dangerous occurrences, the revolver is a simpler gun to use, especially if the guy on the business end is not an experienced shooter as is the case with many policemen. The typical double-action revolver is automatically on safe until the shooter decides to pull the trigger. At that point, he is simply faced with hitting the target in six shots or less — before the target shoots back. Simple.

A semiauto pistol presents different considerations. It may have a separate safety that is generally kept on until the shooter is ready to fire. It has a magazine release which may be found in several locations, depending on the model, and it usually has a slide or slide release which must be used to chamber a round after reloading. Actually, most of the semiauto's functions can be compared to similar ones on a revolver. The difference is primarily the location of function controls. Depressing the magazine release compares to releasing a revolver's cylinder. Depressing the slide release is like closing the cylinder.

Some semiauto pistols are double action but many expert shooters consider that a redundancy. Jeff Cooper is one of them. "Double action in an automatic is the answer to a problem that doesn't exist," says Cooper. I agree and I like his sentiment so much I may have it engraved on the slide of my pistol. If the arms companies are willing to go to so much trouble to make the automatic double action, they should offer it only with a *good* action. I have not been impressed with those double-action-only guns I have seen, but the idea is sound.

With a little training and basic understanding of the firing cycle, most shooters find the semiauto pistol easy to handle, reliable and fast. It can be reloaded faster than the revolver — using just one hand — and it can hold more ammunition. That makes it a fine weapon for police work.

**Continued on page 97**

# WHO KILLED PEDRO CHAMORRO?

**A Single Assassination Sparked  
the Sandinista Revolution**

by Dr. John Padgett





**P**EDRO Chamorro breakfasted early with his family and then left his spacious suburban Managua home. Each day he drove across town to the dreary industrial sector not far from the airport. It was an unusual place for a newspaper office but *La Prensa* was no ordinary newspaper.

The January morning was crisp and bright, and his jeep made good time through the dead zone of what had once been bustling downtown Managua. The heart of the Central American city had been ripped out by the 1972 earthquake that killed 10,000 people.

Another vehicle loomed ominously in Chamorro's rear-view mirror. It was nothing unusual in Managua's helter-skelter traffic, but this vehicle appeared to be closing the gap too rapidly. Then Chamorro noticed the gun.

Pulling alongside with a screech of protesting tires, the chase car matched Chamorro's speed. The publisher stared in shock as a man leaned out of the window with sinister intent clearly etched on his face. A booming report echoed through the deserted neighborhood and Chamorro's car careened off the road and into a utility pole. The assassins' car rolled to a stop and the occupants strode toward the wreck in the ditch to finish the job.

Chamorro struggled to get out of the bloody jeep, the left side of his face and shoulder pitted with bluish holes from the shotgun pellets. The assassins moved in

**A constant thorn: Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, editor of *La Prensa* was an outspoken opponent of Somoza until a shotgun blast silenced him. Photo: AP/Wide World**

**Chamorro's buckshot-riddled body became the catalyst for Nicaragua's revolution. He accomplished in death what he could never do in life — overthrow Somoza. Photo: AP/Wide World**

with handguns, pumping round after round into the body that crumpled behind the splintered windshield. The job was done. The killers jumped back into their own vehicle and sped away. No one had witnessed the carnage.

A few minutes later a taxi driver, followed closely by a pickup truck full of commuters, arrived at the bloody scene. Within hours, the story was all over the city, then the country, then the world. The main opposition voice, the man often called Somoza's conscience, had been stilled permanently. The Nicaraguan people had lost a supporter but the Sandinistas had gained a martyr for their revolution.

They certainly needed one. Often referred to as "the National Mutiny," the Nicaraguan revolution was a failing movement in the days prior to the violence of 1979. What was needed by the revolutionaries was a catalyst to spark the interest of a reluctant people. Chamorro's murder provided that.

The FSLN (Frente Sandinista para Liberación Nacional) had fallen on hard times. Named for Cesar Sandino, the guerrilla leader who fought the U.S. Marines in the 1930s, the movement included the entire spectrum of Nicaraguan society in its ranks. Non-communist Marxists, socialists, communists, conservatives, liberals, moderates, students, businessmen, Catholic clergy and peasants; they all placed their hopes for a better future in FSLN promises.

Hope was really all the movement pro-

vided at the time. There was no clear direction and agreement could not be reached on how to pursue the downfall of the Somoza regime. That was bad enough from a political point of view but it was only half of it. The FSLN's military arm, the guerrillas, were consistently shredded by a tough and competent, U.S.-trained National Guard. Every time the rebels stood to fight, they were creamed. If they ran, they were chased and then creamed. Like many guerrilla movements before them, they were an annoying — but generally ineffective — thorn in the government's side.

The Nicaraguan resistance could not establish a direction and the crafty old dictator Somoza consistently exploited their confusion. Adept at divide-and-conquer tactics, he deftly maneuvered the splintered factions against each other. World observers could hardly be expected to take the anti-government movement seriously and few expected the FSLN would be able to mount a successful *coup*. All that changed with a *single* shotgun blast.

The assassination of Pedro Chamorro brought the opposing factions together in a fury. The torrent of popular rage and frustration was focused on one issue. Somoza — the man most often lambasted by Chamorro's newspaper — must have been responsible for his death. It seemed only logical. After his death, the people of Nicaragua moved away from the middle ground. They lined up on one of two sides: for the regime or against it.

The FSLN found itself flooded with recruits. Prior to Chamorro's engineered martyrdom, the anti-government movement could expect only the unskilled and chronically unemployed who had nothing to lose to volunteer for guerrilla service. Now they

were enlisting ordinary citizens, students, housewives and *campesinos*. All of them liked Chamorro and respected his stand as an anti-Somoza gadfly. They urgently wanted to avenge his murder and the FSLN offered an opportunity. That was music to the ears of the organization directing the FSLN's budding revolution — the Communist Party.

The communists were fairly well rooted in Nicaraguan society at the time of Chamorro's assassination. They operated in three organizational branches: political, military and auxiliary. The political branch had unofficially established relations with neighboring Central American countries, particularly Panama and Costa Rica, neither of which cared much for Somoza, and with the Communist Bloc. Cuban advisors served on the staff to maintain political purity and international relationships gave the Nicaraguan communists a degree of legitimacy.

The military branch brought the war to Somoza. The guerrillas under arms coordinated scattered and ideologically diffuse groups who pulled robberies and kidnappings to finance the movement. Under the direction of the political wing, the guerrillas ran a campaign of terrorist bombings, arson and selective assassinations in the larger cities of the country, principally Managua.

Although they got little attention, the Sandinista auxiliary did a lot of the damage. They were a loose confederation of students, children of the middle class, housewives, street people and the disadvantaged and disaffected of Nicaragua. Disruptive tactics included burning buses owned by Somoza loyalists, spray-painting revolutionary graffiti on walls, and holding "political education" meetings for neighbors on their block. There were thousands of seemingly innocent citizens in the Sandinista auxiliary forming an unpredictable, active mass that melted away into the throngs of street people when government pressure was applied. Chamorro's assassination served to swell their ranks.

Without making too much overt effort, the Nicaraguan communists found themselves dictating the direction of the Sandinista movement and Chamorro's death sparked their confidence in the ability to stage a successful rebellion. They quickly parlayed organization, training, and ruthlessness to capture and focus the outpouring of grief and indignation toward the intended target — Somoza. The result is history.

Was it all serendipity? Did the communists simply stumble on an act of domestic violence and turn it to their advantage? Or did the Sandinistas provide their own good fortune? Did they — knowing full well that this one murder would completely polarize the country — kill Chamorro to turn the people against his old enemy? It's a question that may never be fully answered, but it provides for some intriguing speculation.

There are some interesting American parallels. What if the Democrats had been able to demonstrate — using even the most flim-



A Sandinista guerrilla dashes for cover as Nicaraguan National Guard troops open fire on a barrio in east Managua. The National Guard bombed the barrio using 250 lb. bombs which were pushed out of helicopters. Photo: AP/Wide World

sy and circumstantial evidence — that the Republicans had been behind the assassination of President John F. Kennedy? Even with a 200-year tradition of tolerance and constitutional government, Americans of both parties would likely have lynched avowed Republicans by the score. It's not an incredible scenario in view of the grief and rage that swept this nation in the wake of Kennedy's assassination in Dallas. No one cried very hard when Jack Ruby exacted his personal revenge against Lee Harvey Oswald.

When grief turned to violence following the killing of Martin Luther King by a white

assassin, American blacks torched and ruined property belonging to both black and white people. The focus of their anger was on the establishment that could allow such a tragedy to occur. That's the way Nicaraguans reacted to the murder of Pedro Chamorro. Somoza was the visible and powerful symbol of a despotic government in which murder of a popular hero was not only condoned, but likely staged by the establishment.

He was also an easy man to hate. Home-ly, stocky and never charismatic, he ruled the country with an iron fist in the form of the oppressive *Guardia Nacional*. As a legacy of American foreign policy in the 1930's, Somoza had absolute power and it corrupted him absolutely. American diplomats and policymakers tended to ignore his excesses since the situation in Nicaragua was of little international consequence relative to larger problems with the Soviets and



and was especially strident in demanding that Somoza come up with suspects or identify the guilty party in Chamorro's murder.

Domestic and international press coverage provided a slowly tightening stranglehold on Somoza's power base. The American press, which never cared much for Somoza anyway, gave column space to righteous conjecture as to where the blame lay for the assassination and other deaths that came in the wake of rioting near Chamorro's *La Prensa* offices. Ripples of diplomatic pressure from Washington were also reaching Managua. Congressmen set to work slashing any military appropriations for Nicaragua and only reluctantly authorized funds for other types of foreign aid to the country.

Most knowledgeable observers of the Central American scene — especially those who are familiar with Somoza's chicanery — believe his police simply reacted to such pressure by picking five poor saps who could be conned into taking a public fall for Chamorro's murder. They were likely paid handsomely for their service as sacrificial lambs and guaranteed preservation from real slaughter. We'll probably never know for sure. We do know that all five turned up conveniently dead before they could be brought to trial.

We also know that after the assassination of Chamorro, the Nicaraguan revolution gained speed and force. Recruits, donations and arms poured in from friendly countries and veteran Cuban guerrilla advisors showed up regularly to direct training. Most Nicaraguans threw their weight behind the revolution. It looked like a winner that would restore their civil rights.

The United States was caught in a quandry. Although Somoza's Nicaragua was an old anti-communist ally, U.S. support had been low key for nearly three decades. The American public would never stand for sending back the Marines despite the fact that Somoza was becoming increasingly unpopular with his people and had turned the *Guardia Nacional* into an army of occupation in their own country. Somoza's government was clearly shot through with corruption but America could not afford to take much of an overt hand in correcting the situation. The CIA had used Nicaragua as a base of operations for the abortive Bay of Pigs operation against Castro's Cuba and U.S. companies had large investments in Nicaragua.

That situation virtually precluded direct American intervention which would be viewed by Nicaraguans as a return to the gunboat diplomacy that installed Antonio Somoza's father as Nicaraguan strongman in the 1930s. The presence of foreign troops on their soil is still a bitter pill to the Nicaraguan people and anyone who opposes it is virtually guaranteed national hero status. Among his other popular opinions, Pedro Chamorro was strongly against foreign intervention in the affairs of Nicaragua.

All that is not to indicate Pedro Joaquín Chamorro necessarily deserved his hero's

their puppets around the world.

His guilt in the murder of Pedro Chamorro quickly became an accepted fact despite a lack of hard evidence to link him with the crime. Those few Nicaraguans who questioned his involvement and speculated that other domestic factions may have been in on the assassination were viewed as heretics at best, *Somocistas* at worst. The investigation of the murder didn't help matters.

It was bungled from the start. The police didn't have much to work with: a few spent cartridges, some vague tire marks, a couple of rumors. As the days passed, some arrests were made. The suspects turned out to be five men in their late 20s and early 30s who shared one thing in common: they were virtually unknown to anyone outside their circle of family and friends. Some had contacts with the National Guard, others did not. Official reports of their interrogation indicated they all stuck to the story that they

had been hired by an unknown man who paid them through a series of dead drops and intermediaries whom they did not know and could not find. Eventually imprisoned, their fate was overshadowed by the violence of the Sandinista revolution.

Questions were raised about these men from the start since there was no solid link between them and the crime. There was intense pressure on the Somoza regime to find the killers quickly and it's quite possible that the five men arrested may simply have been convenient scapegoats. In the heat of the immediate, violent reaction to Chamorro's death, the Somoza government needed suspects to channel blame away from their doorstep. Demands for justice were flooding into Nicaragua from the countryside and the diplomatic community. The American government under human rights advocate President Jimmy Carter had loudly trumpeted its stand on human rights,

## KEEPING AN ARMY ON ITS FEET

The old suitcases, purchased at a local Salvation Army Mission in San Juan, Puerto Rico, were about to come apart at the seams by the time our plane landed in San José, Costa Rica. Each one was stuffed full of medicines which I planned to distribute among the thousands of needy *campesinos* and ARDE guerrilla fighters in southern Zelaya province, Nicaragua. I hoped it would do some good.

It had certainly not been easy to get this far. Before my departure from San Juan, I marched up to the local U.S. Public Health Service clinic for the necessary immunizations. With a dilapidated copy of a National Geographic map of Central America tucked under one arm and my yellow, international vaccination card in hand, I looked like some kind of demented tourist. Behind thinly-veiled smiles, the health officials warned me that the area I planned to visit was full of "very interesting and unusual" diseases and a simple vaccination card wasn't enough. After a painful series of shots, I was informed that I would be safe from all but the most persistent jungle rot. That nearly changed my mind about the trip but I took some time to reflect on my motivations.

Several months before, a friend had told me about the murder of Hector Jovet, an American citizen fighting with ARDE against the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua. He had been killed by Cuban-trained intelligence personnel of "El Castillo" during ARDE's April 1984 offensive. The confusion surrounding Hector's death and the reports of a lack of medical supplies among members of Eden Pastora's faction of the ARDE alliance, prompted me to travel to San José where my medical background and collected supplies might do some good in the fight against communist tyranny.

In the *San José* customs line, a young official smiled as he knowingly eyed the open box of hypodermic syringes scattered over my jungle hammock and field equipment. He knew exactly what was up and he wasn't going to stand in my way. I passed on without a hitch. His attitude was typical among the Costa Rican officials I met provided they were not members of Martin Castro's leftist Costa Rican National Security police.

The next day ARDE guides took me to a series of base camps located near the San Juan River in southern Zelaya Province, Nicaragua. The last leg of the trek was by motor canoe and my freedom fighter escorts nervously scanned the skies for marauding Sandinista aircraft. Heavily-armed sections of Soviet-made Mi-8 Hip helicopters have been a major threat to ARDE formations in this area

and no one wanted a demonstration of their deadly capabilities.

The first campsite to appear out of the lush green jungle wasn't what I expected. I figured it would be rough but I did not think I would encounter a complete lack of sanitary facilities for thousands of men, women and children. Nearly everyone was sick in one form or another. The open latrine was simply marked with a sign reading "watch where you step" and was swarming with insects. Most of the guerrilla cadre didn't seem concerned with the situation. They were running a war, not a health club. It was difficult to convince them that a suppurating dental abscess is as effective as any Sandinista sniper in eliminating a good soldier from the battlefield.



Oral hygiene is lacking in the jungle. This trooper tries his hand at some on-the-spot dentistry. Photo: Ricardo Davila

There were no formal medical facilities. ARDE's one and only field hospital, a reasonably-equipped facility with a real roof, at Base Camp Tango had been abandoned after the guerrillas lost a fight with Sandinista forces on 8-11 July. What served as a sickbay at the camp was a large jungle hut with a leaky thatched roof and resident pigs. Filth wasn't the only health threat to the guerrillas. They had no mosquito nets or medicine and malaria was rampant.

The health complaints we heard were typical for the environment. Gastrointestinal problems, dental abscesses and F.U.O. (Fever of Unknown Origin) topped the list. Local remedies for such ailments would have confounded the AMA. I remember one treatment for intestinal worms which practically all the guerrillas and their supporting civilian populace carried around in their guts. "Take three or four teaspoons of papaya milk (the sap from the fruit or tree stem), mix it in a cup of black coffee and force it down." That one seemed to work and it was certainly cost effective.

Dental problems weren't treated so easily. Available antibiotics were given if the infection was acute and the tooth required extraction. Nobody was free from dental problems but Commander Zero's lieutenants and bodyguards usually had their teeth fixed in San José and Ciudad Quesada. The rank and file

guerrilla *campesino* couldn't afford that. They had teeth pulled while sitting on a tree trunk in the middle of a swamp or jungle by whoever had the guts and a handy pair of pliers.

Like any jungle, Costa Rica's bush country has its share of parasites. One day a fellow asked me if we had anything for worms. We had brought some medicine with us and he was told to take several pills a day until he flushed the parasites out of his system. He innocently informed me that wouldn't help since the worms were in his head. Assuming the guy was putting me on, I said I'd believe it — and treat it — if I could see it. He brushed aside enough hair for me to see a half-inch white worm wriggle up through a hole in his scalp. I found out that they weren't all that rare. The natives call these parasites *torsala* and the best way to remove them is to hold a lighted cigarette near the bore hole. The head worms come out to avoid the heat and they can be brushed off like a common tick.

Skin diseases are rampant in the jungle and the guerrillas have their share of them. Crude, eroding lesions are evident on the face and hands of most troopers who have done hard time in the bush. Most are a form of tropical leishmaniasis, locally called "mountain leprosy." A series of local injections with Glucantime usually clear the lesions up in a couple of weeks. But there is no Glucantime available most of the time.

Many fungus thrive on the wet feet of soldiers forced to march through Nicaraguan swamps for days at a time. Any gel-based anti-fungal product will kill the fungus but there is never enough of that to keep infantry feet in shape for combat. We tried to convince the guerrillas to keep their feet dry and carry extra socks. They said they would if they could but it was clear that they could not. Fungus-ravaged feet are a fact of life among the Nicaraguan Freedom Fighters. They learn to live with it.

The jungle has always been the happy home for many animals which are potentially dangerous to man. Not the least of these are poisonous snakes. Unfortunately for the anti-Sandinista guerrillas, anti-venom is prohibitively expensive. We encountered several snakebite cases and could do little to help. The MISURA Freedom Fighters operating in other parts of the country have dealt with the problem for generations using home remedies. Many of them work well and we passed along some advice. There was not much else to provide.

If the freedom fighters want to overthrow the Sandinistas, they will have to get organized and stay healthy. Right now, they can't seem to do either. That hasn't stopped them, but it has slowed them down considerably.

— Dr. W. Ricardo Davila, N.H.S.C.



based on hard evidence.

Typically, culprits are found by assessing motive, ability and opportunity for committing a crime. Somoza certainly had the ability and opportunity to have Chamorro killed but he was not likely the culprit. In fact, he needed Pedro Chamorro. The publisher was his vocal and visible opposition, a known and identifiable figure that Somoza could use to prove he was running a democratic government. He could pick up a copy of *La Prensa* and wave it in the faces of skeptical U.S. Congressmen and reporters on fact-finding junkets in Managua to demonstrate his tolerance of political opposition. He could not be labeled a dictator if he allowed differing and diverse opinions to be published in the local press. And here was an example in *La Prensa*. Chamorro's continued survival and Somoza's tolerance of his tirades was the key to the vault of U.S. aid money for Nicaragua. No one knew that better than Antonio Somoza.

There is continuing speculation that Somoza's son, a volatile young man who held a captaincy in the National Guard, may have been behind the killing. If so, he assuredly arranged it without his father's approval. Captain Tachito Somoza was enraged by the *La Prensa* attacks on his father and could have ordered Chamorro hit by his men but even that speculation is farfetched. While the younger Somoza was not as worldly or experienced as his father, he wasn't stupid. The young officer was active in intelligence and counterintelligence and was surely astute enough to predict the response to the killing of such a popular figure.

So who killed Pedro Joaquin Chamorro?

Ask Edgar Chamorro, second cousin to Pedro, and a leader of the FDN Nicaraguan Freedom Fighters. He is certain he knows the answer to the mystery.

"You must ask yourself who would benefit from such a deed," said Edgar Chamorro during a quiet conversation last September in Las Vegas. "Surely not Somoza or the United States. No, it was the communists. We are certain."

The cousin of the slain Nicaraguan activist paused to reflect on the event. "You know, it was done so perfectly—the people who were accused of being the hit men had some peripheral connection to Somoza. They died under mysterious circumstances shortly thereafter, and the world press got hold of it immediately. There had to have been KGB involvement. We Nicas aren't that sophisticated."

The murder may remain a mystery, but the result is clear. Pedro Chamorro's assassination threw a red-hot ember into the Nicaraguan powder keg. The national mutiny no longer smoldered. It flared into revolutionary zeal and brought the communists into power. He didn't live to see it, but Pedro Chamorro got his wish. Somoza was dethroned but the revolution was betrayed by communist chicanery. And the strident voice of *La Prensa* is not permitted to complain. ✕

reputation. He had never been innocent of involvement in Nicaragua's turbulent political scene and he was not above using a gun to change the status quo. In the early 1960s Chamorro earned his revolutionary credentials by leading an abortive invasion of Nicaragua from Costa Rica hoping to dislodge Somoza. He never rallied any popular support and the whole escapade collapsed under pressure from the National Guard. His ragtag army of 100 or so malcontents became history and Chamorro spent one year of a three-year sentence in jail. Being from a good family, he was not stood against a wall and shot in traditional Latin American fashion. Chamorro went back into the newspaper business and continued his attacks on Somoza in a steady stream of virulent editorials.

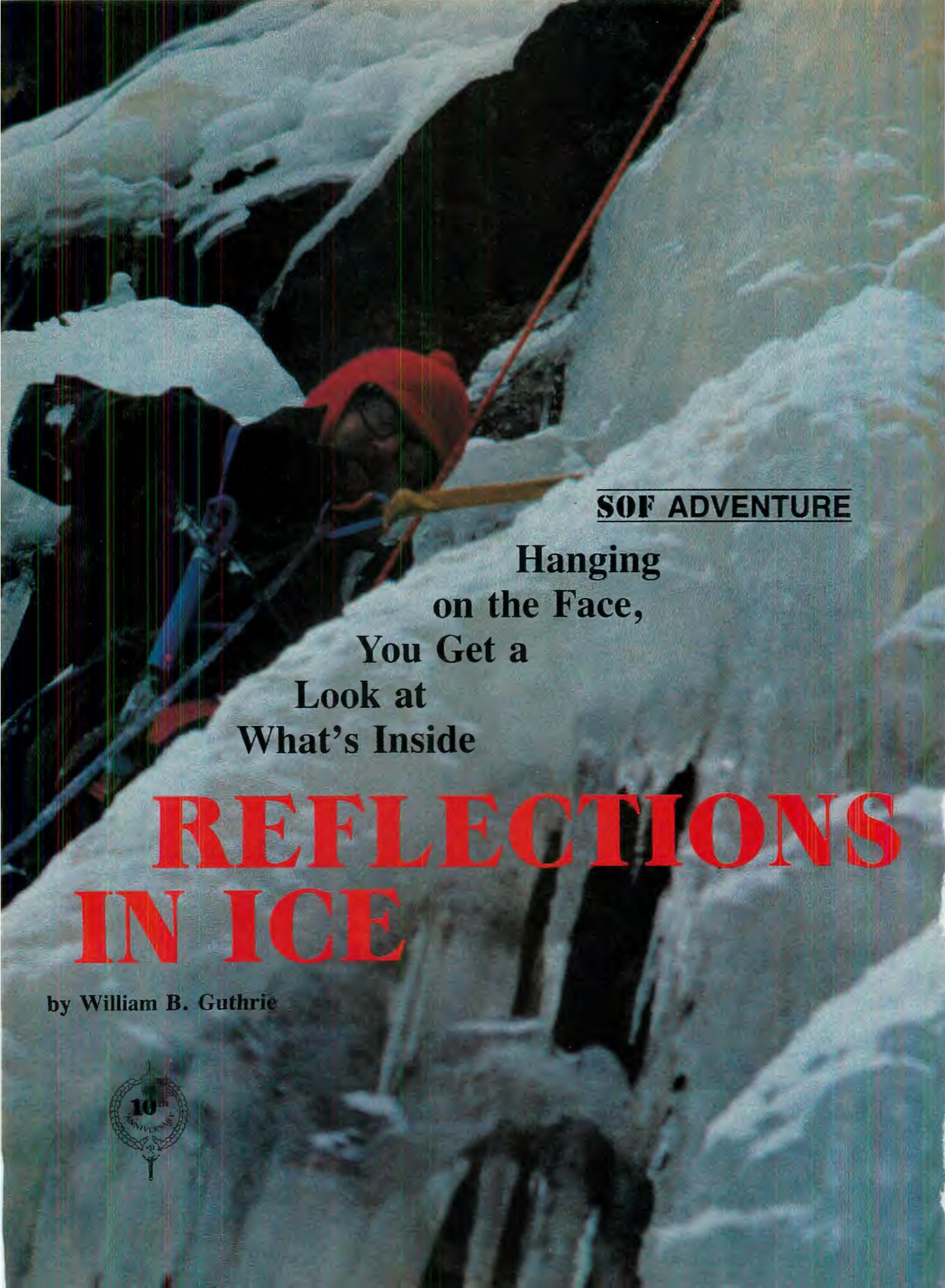
Chamorro was wily and politically astute. He openly opposed Somoza and managed to profit from keeping the situation in Managua unstable. His goal was to gain power in the government and break Somoza's stranglehold on the economy but he was fighting a losing battle. He was from his country's wealthy upper middle class, people who had time and money enough to complain about their government. Somoza would tolerate their complaints as long as

"No More Gringo Bombs Against the People?" A celebrating mob surrounds the National Palace to await the arrival of the provisional government after the downfall of Somoza's regime. Photo: AP/Wide World

they continued to pay their taxes. Chamorro's assassination upset that delicate balance.

The policy of peaceful co-existence between Somoza and the business community collapsed with the roar of an assassin's shotgun. If one of the most popular and visible men in Nicaragua could be killed with relative impunity, why not others? The wealthy families of Nicaragua began to fear for their lives and lost all confidence in the ability of the Somoza government to protect them.

Within hours of Chamorro's death violent demonstrations ripped Managua apart like the tragic earthquake of several years previous. People were killed or seriously hurt and many businesses collapsed in flames or were looted during the mad rioting. Not surprisingly, most of the owners of the gutted businesses were sympathetic to Somoza. The mobs thought they knew who to blame for Chamorro's death but their violent reaction to the event was hardly



**SOF ADVENTURE**

**Hanging  
on the Face,  
You Get a  
Look at  
What's Inside**

# **REFLECTIONS IN ICE**

by William B. Guthrie





**W**HY am I perched precariously up here like a fly clinging to a crystal chandelier? Why risk it all and trust my continued well-being to a couple of puny icepicks and a pair of pointy platforms that buckle on my boots like kids' rollerskates?

The questions cut through the fatigue that's been fogging my brain at 10,000 feet up into the Colorado Rockies. There are no answers to be found in the cloudy crystal of the ice face covering this ancient granite cliff. All I can see are rivulets of rime as my panting breath melts the ice just inches from my nose. Looking down doesn't help and my knees only tremble more if I contemplate a fall from this rest where I'm carefully trying to flex the cramps out of my ankles and insteps.

Maybe if I lean back slightly and crane my aching neck to see the pinnacle I had wanted to reach so badly an hour ago when we began to climb. No. It doesn't seem worth it right now. I feel the ice crackle through my beard as a grin spreads across my wind-chapped face. The last time I'd paused under pressure to ask myself if the pain was worth the gain, an Army drill sergeant had been screaming into my ear.

But it had been years between Fort Leonard Wood and my current predicament. Wrenching my right-hand ice axe from a purchase and jabbing the crampon of my right boot into a fresh stand on the milky ice, I began to climb again, certain that I had my answer. There are some things people simply *have to do*. Soul-searching only dilutes the achievement. And the achievement is the sum total of the motivation. We try it to see if we can cut it. The question is its own answer.

It was why I joined the U.S. Army as a 30-year-old Ph.D. in some obscure discipline and it was why I challenged this ice face five years later.

My climbing partner — world-class mountaineer Duncan Ferguson — had questioned my motivations for our trip into the Rockies the previous day as we made camp at the foot of this 2,000-foot slope. His queries had prompted me to review the reasons why a desk-bound magazine editor might want to try something like this. I'd climbed mountains in one form or another most of my life, but this trip involved something more. Talking with Duncan over the roar and whine of mountain winds made me realize what it was. When the trip was suggested, I never considered not going. Thinking back on the reflex decision at the frigid basecamp, it seemed about as irresponsible as a similar impulse which led me to join the Army.

I cautioned Duncan against misinterpretation as we prepared equipment for the next day's assault on the ice. Joining the Army — or the Marines, or the French Foreign Legion, or a Trappist monastery — is a good idea . . . if you do it at the right

**Welded icicles demanded concentration and good tool placement. Icicles show true vertical. Photo: Dale Andrade**



## DR. ICE

Bill Guthrie, 34, worked his way through school as a pipefitter, ditch digger, water pump installer, brick stacker and teacher of everything from Japanese monster movies and freshman composition to Middle English and palaeography. He studied archaeology, history, English language, and medieval Northern European languages and completed a doctorate in Comparative Literature.

Then his department chairman found Guthrie reading arms-transfer tables in the library stacks. Guthrie explained he had always been interested in military affairs. His chairman reminded him that he was supposed to be a humanist. Guthrie replied that he saw no contradiction.

A few months later, he enlisted in the U.S. Army as a 30-year-old private. Assigned to Army Intelligence, he washed out of the service for feet that wouldn't hold up to combat boots. Then he joined the staff of *Soldier of Fortune*.

His feet supported by orthotics and heavy boots, Guthrie has climbed from McKinley to Mexico, and from Rainier to the Cairn Gorms, specializing in winter mountaineering.

time; for the right reasons.

Despite my academic achievements and the potential for a commission, I volunteered as a private soldier because I thought that was the most effective way to serve the country that had given me and my family so much. As a teacher, I'd have to award myself an "A" for motivation.

On the other hand, I was certainly no match for my 18 and 19-year-old platoon mates as a somewhat worse-for-wear, flat-footed, university lecturer who read Old Norse tracts in the original language for fun.

And I'd missed the Vietnam War by nearly 10 years. "C-minus" for timing. "F" for common sense.

But I made a go of it. Assigned to Army Intelligence — 98 Golf/Voice Interceptor (Russian) — I finally got bounced by the medics for flat feet, stress-fractures, and skeletal incompatibility with issue combat boots. But I'd discovered something significant during my brief stint as a soldier. I'd found that conquering fear through facing danger and stress makes you a much stronger, more capable human being. It was no longer a mystery to me why military experience played such a major role in so many people's lives.

And I understand why those people want to renew the challenge every so often.

We planned a campaign in Rocky Mountain National Park in central Colorado. I wanted to attack the Notch Couloir, be-

tween the exposed pyramid of Mt. Meeker and 14,000-foot Long's Peak. I'd climbed it, dodging snow-sloughs, 15 years ago. It had been an exhausting trek in flexible, jointed crampons (steel frames with vertical points under the foot and horizontal claws at the toes) and two long ice axes. This time I would use rigid crampons and shorter tools. Duncan vetoed the route. Snowfall had been heavy at that altitude, winds were high, and the snow-loading of moderate slopes was dangerous.

Wind-driven avalanches would make chances of survival slim. The great slides of slab snow grind downhill at varying speeds from different directions and can crush victims into pulp or tear their bodies apart with alternating forces. Only high-angle ice (70 degree grades or better) would provide the necessary challenge and a margin for survival. The standard climbing routes were

out. The steep Rocky Mountain *couloirs* (a French term for an alpine gully) would serve to funnel avalanches down on top of us. We needed higher slopes and ice-coated rock faces of the sort that could be found in Glacier Gorge.

Glacier Gorge is typical of the area's glacial valleys. Great gouges mark where heavy ice has cut into the face of the earth. Cross-sections resemble deep U-shapes with near-vertical walls at the head. We would pick one of these and climb it — if skill, determination and luck held.

After struggling up a snow-filled streambed under heavy packs, our first view of the Gorge showed us we'd made the right choice. The terrain looked promising but the weather did not.

Like a herd of monumental zinc buffalo leaping a ditch, low, bulky humps of sinister cloud raced across the valley, skipping

## FLAT-FOOT OR FRONT-POINT

Believe it or not, ballet dancers and ice-climbers have a lot in common. Both disciplines require you to spend time on your toes and flat on your feet. Ballet dancers alternate depending on predetermined choreography but climbers may use either or both techniques in a given climb, depending on angle, equipment and experience.

Flat-foot — or French — technique usually means limber-topped boots, flexible two-piece crampons and a single medium-to-long (60cm-90cm) general-purpose ice axe. Like a slow-motion parody of the old angulated parallel ski style, the flat-foot ice climber bends and twists ankles, knees and hips to keep his crampons flat on the ice. Progressing more like a friction-climber on slabs, the flat-foot ice climber goes from walking forward normally, through a sidling ascent with the lower foot pointed down the fall-line. He may even point his body away from the slope as he reaches backward and up with the pick (the point on the head of the axe) to climb slopes from 50 to 60 degrees.

Experts at flat-foot technique can use this fluid, relaxing method of ascent on slopes over 60 degrees. And it saves strain on his weakest assets, his arms. But it takes balance and practice. At extreme angles it's nearly impossible to use this technique while carrying a large pack.

Flat-foot takes fewer tools than front-point but you can't flat-foot vertical ice at all. Only front-point technique will allow climber to ascend such faces.

Three-, six- and 10-point crampons have been developed by mountaineers over a span of 500 years. Usually swivel-jointed in the middle and strapped to the feet, they took men from herding flocks in the mountains of 14th Cen-



These claws on Foot Fangs hold the climber's weight in front-point climbing. Glimmers of black and point penetration show thinness of ice. Photo: Bill Guthrie

tury Europe to the great Alpine ascents of the 1920s. But in the early 1930's — when more conservative mountaineers were still quibbling whether crampons were "fair" or if there was a need for crampons if climbers had hobnails on their boots — Laurent Grivel invented crampons with two teeth pointing forward from the toes. This new 12-point design opened a new world of face-forward, over-70-degree ice climbing. Fifty years later, some mountaineers still call front-point crampons "Grivels."

Instead of one medium-to-long axe, the vertical ice climber needs one short tool for each hand. A short (say, 50cm) axe in the strong hand alternates hits with a 40cm axe or even a 30cm ice hammer. An ice hammer may have the grip and shaft of a framing hammer, but its face is a drooping pick, and the claw has been replaced with a wide-faced hammer for driving pitons and ice screws.

The crampons may look the same as flexible crampons, but they are rigid and joints only allow adjustment. Check out a pair of Foot Fangs and you'll see what the state of the art is. Rectangular, decked in red corrugated plastic and clamped

to boots like downhill skis, the 20-point crampons are half-again the weight of 12-point Chouinard rigids, but their handling, security and strength are exceptional. For severe-condition mountaineers, they have the advantage of attaching to the boot's welt instead of passing straps across and around the boot. Straps cause two problems: they may restrict circulation, and it takes several minutes of hand exposure to mount and adjust strapped crampons correctly.

Good front-point technique is little more than free-climbing translated to ice faces. As Duncan Ferguson says: "Your picks are little fingers, and your front-points are little toes."

Front-pointing in good ice demands little technique compared to flat-foot climbing. It's mostly a matter of strength and enormous endurance. But since it is an essentially hard-ice technique, and the structural strength of ice itself holds you up, front-pointing takes just as much experience as flat-footing. In other words: before you try front-pointing up a vertical face, you've got to *learn* ice.

Ice may be stronger or weaker than normal if it's wet. Surface conditions are not the key to strength. You've got to examine other factors. Color is usually a function of density and strength but it may be caused by nearby vegetation, water mineralization or underlying rock. There are no real color keys. Look for fault lines running through the ice face and for grit frozen into the ice which may work as a binder. But don't be fooled by that either. It may indicate the ice is more shatter-resistant — or that it will come apart in big chunks with a blow of an axe.

Obviously, experience is the key to judging ice strength and most climbers develop this through long hours on the slopes. Most of the time they are giving new meaning to the term "walking on thin ice."

## MOUNTAINEERS' MATERIEL

Winter alpine conditions challenge materiel as much as men. Climbers and other adventurers who want to survive need to stay warm, eat and see. Those requirements depend largely on the proper equipment.

You have to stay warm and dry which means clothing and equipment which protects from cold and wet conditions. Most of the world's armies are learning about synthetic pile garments. Fiber-pile is uniquely well-suited to cold-environment military operations, since it's light, rugged, dirt and water resistant and requires little maintenance. Brand is immaterial. Be sure it fits, get a suit with a hood or buy a separate hood. Specify polypropylene if it's available.

To keep water out of insulation, cotton just won't do. SWAT Viper's cotton and cotton-blend suits gave tangle-free freedom of movement for a day with light breeze and shaded ice (Delbert Gilbow makes SWAT suits of Goretex or any other material on special order). But there are a number of fabrics used for building modern shell garments that will breathe and keep water out (they work better than you'd think, though they aren't perfect) like Klimax and Goretex. Absolutely waterproof coatings, such as polyvinyl chloride (PVC) will keep you dry in weather so bad you won't want to be there at all.

As any soldier or mountaineer knows, sleeping warm makes up for a lot of hardship. Sleeping bags get treated a lot better than your pile suit, so down is great, if you can afford it. But new synthetics like Quallofill and Polarguard are nearly as warm. And for winter alpine use, you'll want a sleeping-bag cover or bivouac sack, or even a sleeping bag with a Goretex shell. That waterproof outer layer may save your life some day if you're stuck in an exposed position.

In winter, food and water are even more important than usual in the outdoors. No, you don't need a stove. I used to melt water in a "shmoos" (Al Capp, *in memoriam*) which was a flat, wide-mouthed polyethylene bladder. Filled with ice and snow, and hung around your neck next to long underwear, it melted the contents with body heat. I also ate granola covered with clotted milk powder floating in cold water to avoid cooking. I even slept in a half-bag pulled up over my insulated parka to save two pounds over a real sleeping bag . . . In my own defense, I was 20 when I last behaved like that, and probably had a frost-bitten brain.

Unless you feel a compulsion to suffer in the mountains (*I don't any more*) a reliable stove is one of your most trea-



Markill Stormy, the vertical adventurer's cook-kit. Photo: Fred Borchardt

sured possessions. I haven't really changed my mind about the dangers of gas stoves from years ago. They have high centers of gravity under a filled pot, can blow up, valves can clog or break, you can forget about field repair, and — unlike kerosene — you can't pour the broken stove's fuel into a pot full of sand, light it and go on cooking. But there's a new cooker on the market that only uses gas-cannister stoves, and it has made other mountaineering cook-kits obsolete.

Latok Mountain Gear is selling a cooker called the Markill Stormy. It costs \$38 (without stove), hangs so it can't be knocked over, the contained flame won't blow out, the bottom of the pot is wrapped in flame as it sits inside the windscreens, and the lid melts snow on top as the pot cooks food. If they made a pressure cooker to fit, it would be perfect. I've had the Stormy one month, and I've already put the rest of my cooking-gear collection in storage. Maybe I'll turn it into a climbers' culinary museum.

Seeing is nearly as important as eating in mountain travel and dangerous storm conditions can make good vision critical. Weight considerations won't usually allow full-sized binoculars, but Bausch & Lomb makes a pair of compact, rubber-armored, shock-resistant, immersion-proof, fogproof binoculars that'll fit in most shirt pockets. Check a camera shop or sporting goods store or write Bausch & Lomb for details, but I've seen new models at gun shows for under \$100 (retail is higher, of course). The only trouble I've had with these glasses is keeping them away from Bob Brown on hunting trips.

Goggles? You don't always need them, but you can move as far with a

broken back as you can with snowblindness or rock chips in the eyes. Jones poly-carbonate, double-lens goggles in cadmium brown are cheaper than most fashionable, breakable ski glasses. They won't fog or break and reflect all UV and IR radiation. Nothing else competes.

You also need light to see. Leave your flashlight at home and get some thick candles. At 30 below even alkaline batteries go dead in seconds. A headlamp with a separate battery pack is essential using non-lithium batteries. The battery pack fits under your parka or inside the sleeping bag while reading. Chouinard's focusable headlamp mounts a single lithium cell on the headband, and lithium batteries work to unbelievable temperatures and last several times longer than other batteries in normal conditions. Check mountaineering shops and catalogs for headlamp selections.

Much of this equipment may not be commonly available if you live outside of mountaineering areas but several companies market these specialized items by mail-order catalog:

—Latok Mountain Gear, Dept. SOF, 443-C Main Street, P.O. Box 380, Lyons, CO 80540. Foot Fangs, Lowe ice tools, ropes, rope bags, a carabiner you can't hold the wrong way, revolutionary mountaineering clothing and the Markill Stormy cooker.

—Recreation Equipment Incorporated, Dept. SOF, P.O. Box C-88125, Seattle, WA 98188. Probably the most complete selection of general mountaineering gear in the world and members of this co-op get rebates. For \$5 you can't afford not to join.

—Jones Optical Company, Dept. SOF, 6367 Arapahoe Road, Boulder, CO 80303. Unbreakable polycarbonate eyewear.

—Bausch & Lomb, Dept. SOF, 1400 N. Goodman St., Rochester, NY 14602. Affordable outdoor optics.

—SWAT Viper Systems, Dept. SOF, 2701 S. Susan St., Santa Anna, CA 92704. Police and military equipment, including rappelling gear, designed by working professionals.

—Quartermaster Sales, Dept. SOF, 7201 Avenida La Costa NE, Albuquerque, NM 8701. All kinds of military and paramilitary equipment, and weapons accessories. Owner Bob Provance furnished a slip-on rappelling seat — primarily designed for SWAT use — it was much faster to get in and out of than climbers' harness, but limited leg movement to a slight degree. I was grateful for its exceptional comfort and security when I got stuck on one climb.

—SOF Exchange, P.O. Box 687, Boulder, CO 80306. Outdoor gear, including polypropylene long underwear for \$9.95 (about half normal retail-outlet price) for either tops or bottoms.





from ridge to ridge at speeds over 100 knots. Glacier Gorge was a three-mile-long, strobe-lit kaleidoscope of color as the sun dodged the cloud cover to reveal the sparkling patches of ice. It was Colorado Rocky Mountain *kitsch* and we were anxious to conquer it.

Balancing on ski poles against a growing gale, we had to find a basecamp and get under cover for the night. But the magnetic attraction of a nearby ice face was too much. We'd pitch our camp in the dark if necessary. I had to see if it was going to work for me this time.

We dove into a side canyon and stared into the gathering gloom at a 150-foot shelf with a northern exposure to the wind. We blinked and dodged a shower of wind-driven icicles, determined to get axes and crampons into this ice. The approach was a broad, rounded ramp barricaded by a four-foot-thick fluted column. Easy footing and rocky handholds brought us to the pillar. We sidled around it, crabbing easily in the sort of alpine waltz familiar to all climbers. Our partner in the dance was hard, cold and unyielding.

"This is like waltzing with a fat stiff," I huffed.

Duncan laughed politely. He was already at the foot of the first vertical pitch, abstractedly checking the color of the ice, and testing it for strength and elasticity with his short axes. I started rumberling "The Tennessee Waltz," and he joined me in the chorus. It reminded me of the chanting we had done on unit runs in the Army. Ignore the pain, disregard the reason; lose yourself in the rhythm and song.

Without losing a beat, Duncan placed a polished, tear-shaped aluminum chock in a crack and clipped a blood-colored runner to its loop with a black carabiner. The rope ran through a second 'biner at the end of the red nylon loop. He started to climb as I belayed from below.

Duncan Ferguson is four or five inches shorter and probably 60 pounds lighter than I am. He's also a professional climbing guide who typically spends as many hours a week with air under his heels as I spend at a desk. His pick blows are loose, light and precise. He examines the points of impact minutely, looking for cracks. He could be a pathologist looking at tissue through a microscope rather than a famous ice-climber in search of adventure and challenge. It was hard to emulate his style.

He is fluid and precise where I try to muscle the ice and manhandle my tools. His heels droop in classic position to put the tension on bone and tendons rather than muscles. I cramp and tremble with pressure on all the wrong points. His hands are relaxed in tool loops. He leans left and right to play the face like a chessboard.

I'm sad to see him disappear above me as the safety rope snakes over the cliff. When the line stops moving we exchange ritual

**Guthrie does vertical low-crawl to second belay stance. Photo: Duncan Ferguson**



**"Bob Brown's *Soldier of Fortune* Death To Tyrants Precipice of Mortal Doom" — center, a new ice route in Rocky Mountain National Park's Glacier Gorge — illuminated through wind-torn cloud. Photo: Bill Guthrie**

responses to insure each man is secure in position. My shout echoes off the sparkling ice walls.

"Climbing!" It's time for my clumsy version of his flawless ascent.

Duncan waits patiently while I contemplate the tools I haven't used for five years. It's like a first look at your service rifle in the Army. Here's a medium-length spike-faced axe called a Hummingbird in my right hand. In the left is a Chacal hammer which has the downcast, sidelong look of a depressed pelican. My feet shuffle at the top of the ramp as I try to recover the body-memory of this ballet.

My grandfather must have felt this way as he cringed under artillery in the trenches in France. The worst part is that first move over the top. There's nothing for it — then or now — but to push ahead. Lifting my right leg I swing it back and kick like a Karate master to implant the pointy toes of the crampons into the uneven surface of the knobby ice. Putting too much weight on the hand-loops, I'm able to gain a similar, precarious hold for my left foot. It's forward march and I'm trying not to anticipate the command.

Lowering my weight gingerly to my feet (you can't climb any *distance on your* hands, there's not enough strength in your arms) I find that these crampons are nothing like my *old jointed* SMCs. Space-age, red-plastic Foot Fangs transmit energy directly to the ice. I'm beginning to be able to use my legs properly.

Duncan had struck the ice like a sculptor carving a delicate image. My strikes into this unyielding surface are too heavy but

I'm gaining altitude — and confidence. It's exhilarating. There's freedom on ice that climbers don't find on rock. You choose the route; you force the face into your image — if you're good enough.

Climbing was exhausting but not as bad as some of the glacier slogs and couloir crawls I'd been on at Mount McKinley and elsewhere in the world. I beat and kicked my way up the milk glass wall. Then the tricky bulge at the top of the first wall taught me the error of over-confidence.

Front crampon points wedged into a pair of too-narrow vertical ice gutters, left axe barely scratched into thin ice, and right tool stretched for a better purchase I found myself trembling and in trouble. My arm wasn't long enough to reach over the bulge and I knew that simply striking it could be disastrous. A solid strike with an ice axe would simply chip the bulge away from the face and down onto me.

My achilles tendons screamed with the strain of the weight on my feet. It was a rugged 40-foot fall into a pit of jagged rock from an earlier slide in this area. I was spending too long on the move. I felt like a recruit faced with some esoteric military task and no instruction on how to get it done. I had stumbled in those situations before and I nearly did the same this time.

Suddenly I found myself in real trouble. My right crampon broke loose from the ice and I leaned toward the face to begin recovery. It was an overreaction. My left heel came up and levered the front points of the remaining crampon out of purchase. Only a single ice axe held my weight from plummeting down into the rocks below. I pendulumed left on that tool and felt it begin to slip and scratch down the ice. It was the ultimate challenge. What are you going to do now, Private Guthrie? Will you simply stand there and die in place or will you — for Christ's sake — *do something*.

My crampons scraped along the ice face as I strained to hold onto the shaft of the *single* axe keeping me from falling. My mind fired off a volley of technical terms. In an emergency, I remembered, you strive for "three solid points of contact and move the fourth point."

I had to get into this face or fall. I thought of letting Duncan know I was in trouble down here but rejected the idea. That would have been whining before I was really hurt. Potential embarrassment makes you do dangerous things like the deadly freeze some guys find themselves in on the live grenade range. If they'd only let someone know they were afraid.

As I swung left, I could feel torque grinding the delicate, angled sheet-metal pick of the Chacal out of its tiny hold. Pulling straight down on the hammer-sized left axe to stabilize it as I fell, I gained a few inches. The long right axe came back grazing my right ear and I swung hard from the shoulder.

Unaccustomed to the borrowed axe I had simply reached high and right and hoped for the best. Point of impact was six critical



inches above a blue-green translucent depression which would have yielded solid placement. The toothed, drooping pick hit the front of the bulge and showered me with shattered ice. I stared anxiously up at a four-inch-thick plate of ice, spalled from the face and shattered from the center of impact. The pick shouldn't have stuck.

But it did. My strike had been straight and hard, probably more out of desperation than skill. Half the steel pick was anchored in opaque, green ice but my troubles were far from over. The violence of my lunge had finally dislodged the left axe and I was again dangling from the face from a single purchase. I hung by one arm from the wrist loop of the right ice axe. Looking left I spotted a china-blue hollow in the ice and drove the loose axe into it. I pulled up on the wrist loops, kicked my right crampon into a broad concavity, and stretched the left foot to rest the inside points on a frothy ice crust oozing out of a crack in the nearby rock.

Finding myself in a safe perch (everything's relative, and that right-hand axe wasn't going *anywhere*) I let my wrists hang in the loops, rested my hands and arms and took a comfortable seat in mid-air.

A musical voice above me was still repeating the same verse of "The Tennessee Waltz" we'd started singing 20 minutes before. Duncan had been doing a solo and finally stopped to inquire about my situation.

"You all right down there?"

"Just dandy."

Duncan began to sing again. Standing easily on my claws, I selected a dimple just at the bottom of the outward curve, gently swung the reverse-curved pick into the center of it, tested with a straight-down pull, and kicked up three more steps. My shoulders were level with the top of the bulge and my chest touched its outermost curve. Trained in an older technique, I did not re-set the right axe and simply moved my hand carefully to the axe head, hooking my fingers over it from the outside.

It was a violation of the classic form of front-point style, but I was more secure on that deep-driven pick. The key here was to *think* and get to the top before my confidence eroded like mountain ice in the Spring sun. A groove pointed from the back of the shelf right at my throat, and it ended well behind the bulge . . . a solid placement. I kicked up two more steps and my waist was even with the ledge. My right hand rested on the axe head like a cane.

Solidly planted on two feet and the left tool, I grabbed the right axe by the adze at the back of the head, levered the pick out of the ice — it was *stuck* — flipped the head down behind my leg, catching the handle, and reached for the wall behind the ledge with the axe at full extension. Up two more, off the wall and over the top. Duncan was still warbling.

"Do you really like that song?" I panted.

Evening rappel down side of icicle route.  
Photo: Dale Andrade



Author tests long axe placement on vertical section of fairly thick ice. Photo: Fred Borchardt

Ferguson rigs up to start icicle route. Photo: Dale Andrade



Duncan just grinned and finally broke his thousand-yard stare into the majestic scenery.

"Hadn't heard it in years. Funny how a song will suddenly run through your head." I'd had a similar experience.

"I hummed 'Please Help Me, I'm Falling' in the Alaska Range five years ago. Drove everybody else nuts."

We hastily set up the rappel for descent. Only hotdogs and military mountaineering instructors attempting to build confidence bounce on ropes. Mountaineers always cringe when they see it and prefer not to use ropes owned by people who engage in such activities. We slid easily to the foot of the slope and re-packed our survival gear to find a basecamp. Darkness and a cold, driving wind were closing in on the area.

We skied to a rock bowl protected by thick trees and dug in. In the last long shadows cast by sunset, we jumped, slogged, jiggled and otherwise tromped around to pack a level surface for a tent platform. Working rapidly, we pulled the streamlined Stevenson's tent into the wind, and staked it with scaled down versions of the big aluminum plates called "deadmen" which are used for protection on high-angle snow climbs. Then we threw our gear in the tent, pulled out our sleeping bags so they could fluff in the zero-degree air and settled down for the night.

Duncan and I had seen each other rarely since high school and dinner stretched into the night as we talked about climbs, the military, writing, Central America, wives, his son and an article on climbing thin ice he was preparing for publication. It was a good time, full of the comradeship, bluster and pride at having done something that marked us as people who are not afraid to perch out there on the razor's edge. I'd spent a lot of other nights like that one. Only the uniform had changed.

Reveille the next morning was the shriek of high wind. It was accompanied by the drumbeat of tent material snapping and popping. Mindful that we'd have little opportunity to replenish energy this day, we brewed two quarts of tea, two quarts of cereal and two quarts of dried-fruit stew in a hanging cooker and skied off for the Gorge. The wind might mean treacherous climbing conditions. Like light infantrymen ranging far ahead of their support, we would be at the mercy of the weather.

Duncan — unroped and climbing alone — had been blown off these cliffs a few years ago. Torn from a face by high winds and spinning, he saved himself by swinging backwards with a hammer, anchoring it deep in the cliff's ice coat.

We were in *luck*. The wind was worse than yesterday but conditions were better. At the entrance to the gorge it was clear and a relatively-warm 20 degrees. The bright sun would make the ice a little wet but the ambient temperature at this altitude was enough to keep it strong and elastic.

Continued on page 89



# Belgium's MAGnificent MG

Text and Photos by Peter G. Kokalis

**S**AY what you will about artillery, tanks or helicopters, the machine gun remains the ruler of the infantry battlefield. It took a first formal curtain call during World War I and has never missed a combat performance since. The result has been a great deal of military concern regarding the proper form of the machine gun.

When World War II ended the winners opted for a concept conceived by the losers. By the early 1930s the German Army had formulated requirements for an Einheitsmaschinengewehr (universal machine gun). This single gun — fitted with a variety of mounts and accessories — was to serve as a squad automatic weapon, a wheeled vehicle and tank machine gun, antiaircraft gun and medium support weapon. The German Army even proposed its use as an aircraft gun to the Luftwaffe. Production, maintenance and training could be simplified with a standard MG. The result of this attempt to cover all bases with a single runner was the impressive, sinister-looking, less-than-perfect MG34 (maschinengewehr, 1934).

A machinist's nightmare, the MG34 has more than 100 finely-fitted components. Even the heavy mount for the MG34 had some 200 parts. Overly sensitive to ammunition and environment — as battlefield performance demonstrated — it was followed by the far superior MG42. This roller-locked, recoil-operated Grossfuss design had a cyclic rate of 1,200 rpm. For this reason, it was soon dubbed "Hitler's zipper" by Allied troops who became all-too-familiar with its rapid roar. The gun intrigued Allied small arms technologists who wanted to convert it for use by their troops. An attempt by U.S. ordnance personnel to convert the MG42 to caliber .30-06 failed due to dimensional errors but a number of the MG42's features — and the multi-purpose philosophy — were incorporated into the two most prominent post-war "general purpose machine guns" (GPMGs).

One of those is the U.S. M60 which is a very bad machine gun. The other significant example is the Fabrique Nationale *Mitrailleuses D'Appui General* (machine gun of



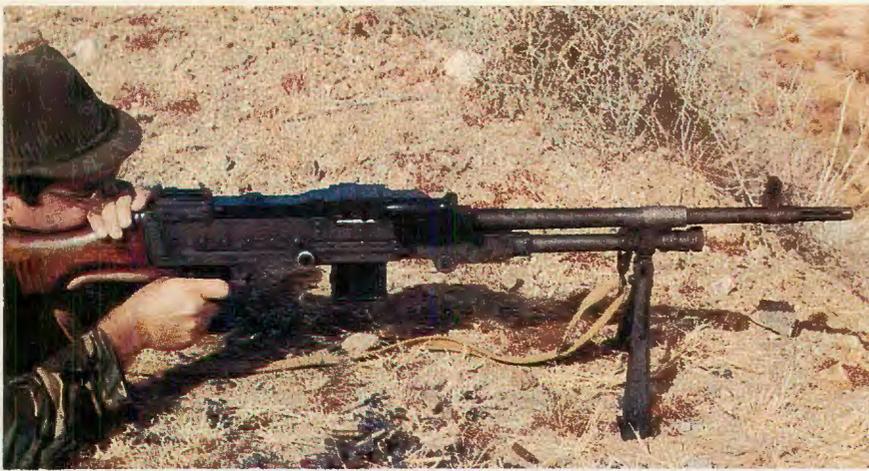
general purpose), otherwise known as the *Mitrailleuse a Gaz* (gas-operated machine gun). This Belgian entry is even more distinguished than its name. Commonly called the FN MAG 58, this epitome of the GPMG genre was the crowning achievement of FN's premier designer M. Ernest Vervier.

The MAG is belt-fed, gas-operated and fires from the open bolt position. It is air-cooled and its 21.4-inch barrel is designed for quick-change by the gun crew. In the ground version, it weighs 23½ pounds with an overall length of 49.2 inches. Its adjustable gas regulator permits the cyclic rate to be varied from 650 to 1,100 rpm.

Some of the MAG's features are fascinating but it helps understanding to summarize the gun's method of operation and firing cycle. With the bolt retracted, the first round of a belt in the cartridge way, and the top cover closed, pressure on the trigger will drop the sear and release the bolt. The bolt's

feed horns come in contact with the base of the cartridge and move it towards the chamber. The locking lever contacts the ends of the front guides inside the receiver and begins to move downward. The bolt chambers the round while the extractor slips over the rim. At this point, the piston extension continues its forward movement and accelerates the downward swing of the locking lever until the face of the lever is in position in front of the locking shoulder. The system is now in battery. The piston extension keeps charging onward a short distance causing the firing pin to protrude through the bolt face to strike the primer. The piston extension stops all forward travel when its shoulder strikes the face of the gas cylinder.

After the shot has been fired and the projectile passes the barrel's gas vent, some of the propellant gasses pass through the vent into the gas regulator and cylinder to drive the piston and piston extension rearward.



Firing FN MAG 58 GPMG from the prone position off the bipod.



As the firing pin is withdrawn, the link connecting the piston extension and locking lever pivots upward. As the link lifts the locking lever away from the locking shoulder, the bolt's front cams exert a backward leverage on the locking lever. The bolt's rearward travel is thus retarded and primary extraction is initiated. This system, taken from the Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR), insures particularly smooth and effortless functioning. Free of the locking shoulder, the locking lever pulls the bolt rearward completing extraction of the fired case. The empty case is tipped downward and out through the bottom ejection slot by the bolt's spring-loaded bump ejector. As the recoiling components continue their rearward travel, the recoil spring is compressed. Rearward travel ceases when the end of the piston extension strikes the buffer. If the trigger has been released the piston extension will be caught by the sear and the bolt

will remain retracted. If not, the firing cycle begins again.

The FN MAG receiver is constructed similar to the Browning machine guns. The steel side plates are attached to the bottom plate by means of rivets. The front is reinforced to accept the barrel nut and gas cylinder which are permanently mounted. Guide rails which support the bolt assembly and piston extension during their reciprocating movement are riveted to the side plates. The bolt's guide rails are shaped downward to drive the locking lever into engagement with the locking shoulder — also riveted to the side plates. The right side plate is cut out for the retracting handle and the bottom of the receiver body is cut away in front of the locking shoulder to eject empty cases. A spring-loaded dust cover of the MG42 type covers the ejection port. A notch milled into the receiver floor retains the recoil spring and guide rod. The rear of the receiver has been reinforced and slotted to accept the buttstock. Rivets may start to fatigue at about 70,000 rounds on the MAG, although the guns usually will remain serviceable for more than 90,000 rounds. This can cause the side plates to separate. If they break away at the front end, the bolt group might literally fly out the side during a firing cycle. Most often they will fail at the rear and spread the buttstock slots — impeding removal and assembly of this component. One of the Nicaraguan MAGs that I worked on in El Salvador exhibited this problem. The receiver's interior surface is chrome plated to facilitate maintenance.

The piston, piston extension and bolt group have been taken from the BAR with the exception of the locking action which has been moved from a recess in the top of the receiver to a locking shoulder on the receiver floor to permit belt feeding. The piston is chrome plated and has a cup-shaped end. While it is more difficult to clean this type of piston head, it will operate longer without servicing and seems to provide a sharper initial recoil impulse. There are two models of piston assemblies. The earlier variant featured a floating piston. The current version has a fixed piston. While they are interchangeable, the fixed piston requires a shorter firing pin. There are two types of gas cylinders. Model A will

accept standard barrels only. Model B, fitted to the British L7A1 and L7A2 GPMGs, will take both standard and heavy barrels. The piston extension is cut out to permit the empty cases to eject downward. At its rear is a massive piston post to which is attached the locking lever link by means of a removable pin. The firing pin is retained in the piston post by a roll pin which is not easily removed. The Israelis have improved this by use of a split-pin that can be removed without a punch.

The firing pin moves through a cut in the locking lever link into its channel in the bolt body. It is not spring loaded. The locking lever link is connected to the locking lever by two nonremovable pins. The front arms of the locking lever are pinned to the bolt body where they ride and rotate in recesses on each side. The recoil spring and guide rod are housed within the hollow interior of the piston extension. Both multiple strand and single strand recoil springs will be encountered. Multi-strand springs avoid the "surging" (wave movement) associated with high cyclic rates by increasing friction. These springs last longer and offer better performance under adverse conditions. An actuator roller which operates the feed system is mounted on top of the bolt body. It is spring loaded. If the top cover is closed with the bolt in the forward position (which some bolt is always trying to do) neither the roller or feed channel will be damaged. In addition, the spring-loaded actuator-roller acts as a self-timing feeder. If the roller is not in the feed channel, as the bolt moves rearward, the second phase of the feed cycle will not take place. Thus, rounds can never be out of sync with the bolt movement. Try this sometime with the M60 and see what happens.

The gas regulator of the MAG 58 infantry machine gun is of the exhaust type. Propellant gases go through the gas block on the barrel and pass into the gas regulator assembly. The gas plug is drilled with three gas escape holes. As the regulator knob is rotated, the gas regulator sleeve slides along the gas block varying the exposed area of the block's three escape ports in alignment with the three gas holes in the plug. In this manner the amount of gas permitted to act upon the piston is controlled. When the gas regulator knob is rotated clockwise all the way home, the three gas-escape holes are completely closed and all of the available gas strikes the piston cup. The rate of fire is at its maximum as is the stress on the gun's operating parts. As the regulator knob is backed off (counter-clockwise), the regulator sleeve progressively exposes the three gas-escape holes and an increasing amount of gas is vented into the atmosphere rather than striking the piston. When the gas indicator is turned counter-clockwise to position "3," the maximum rate of fire permitted is obtained — 900 to 1,100 rpm. Position "2" will yield 750 to 900 rpm. The lowest rate of fire occurs at position "1" — 650 to 750 rpm.

The infantry MAG's rates of fire are too

high in my opinion. Without a chronometer it's impossible to distinguish between the highest and lowest cyclic rates. Four rounds is the shortest burst possible, even at the lowest rate. The trade-off is a smaller cone of fire down range when firing four to six-round bursts — desirable when engaging point targets, but certainly not when area targets are to be covered. To minimize component failure, conserve ammunition and maximize hit potential always operate the MAG 58 with the regulator knob at position "1" unless fouling and adverse conditions require more gas to be diverted into the system.

The MAG 58 infantry version can be seriously faulted in only one area. Two split rings hold the gas plug onto the barrel's gas block. When the gas regulator sleeve is unscrewed and removed during maintenance, one or more of these rings will invariably fall into the weeds. I always carry an extra set.

The MAG's air-cooled, quick-change barrel is 21.4 inches long and weighs six pounds with flash suppressor, carrying handle and gas regulator. The bore and chamber are chrome lined. The flash suppressor resembles those on the M14 rifle and L4 series Bren guns. The barrel has two sets of external interrupted threads which mate with the barrel locking nut threads on the receiver. To change the barrel, first retract the bolt and push the trigger mechanism's cross bolt to the right to the "safe" position ("S"). Depress the barrel locking catch button (located on the left side of the receiver) and at the same time rotate the carrying handle up to the vertical position without pulling out on it (old style — Model A with ribbed handle and integral barrel nut catch) or pulling up on the separate barrel nut catch of the new style carrying handle (Model B with smooth plastic handle grip). This will rotate the barrel's threads out of engagement with the receiver's locking nut threads. Move the barrel forward and lift it off. Replace in the opposite manner. This method is taken from the Belgian FN Model D Browning Automatic Rifle, except the direction of rotation has been reversed.

The front sight is a blade type with a threaded base. Two blades are available — a high blade (11.8mm) and a low blade (9.8mm). The blade is screwed into a dovetailed block with heavy protective ears. Elevation zero is adjusted by screwing the blade down to raise the mean point of impact (M.P.I.) or up to lower the M.P.I., after the retaining stirrup has been lifted. This can be done only with a special spanner wrench issued to armorers. The MAG is usually zeroed at 200 meters. Horizontal zero is altered by use of the same tool. To move the M.P.I. to the left, the sight block must be slid to the right in its dovetail. Securing screws on each side are alternately loosened and tightened. Front sight adjustments are always in the opposite direction of the desired change.

The folding-leaf rear sight provides a peep aperture in the down position for



FN MAG 58, field stripped.

### FN MAG 58 SPECIFICATIONS

<b>Caliber:</b> .....	7.62x51mm NATO (also has been manufactured in 6.5mm Swedish).
<b>Operation:</b> .....	Gas. 3-position adjustable gas regulator. Piston, piston extension and locking system based on that of the Browning Automatic Rifle.
<b>Cyclic rate:</b> .....	Adjustable. 650-1,100 rpm.
<b>Feed mechanism:</b> .....	Belt fed. Two phase system based on that of the MG42. Can be ordered for feeding either the DM6 nondisintegrating belts or the M13 disintegrating links.
<b>Weight, with bipod and buttstock:</b> .....	23½ pounds
<b>Overall length:</b> .....	49.2 inches, with flash suppressor.
<b>Barrel:</b> .....	Air cooled, quick-change type. Four Grooves with a right-hand twist of one turn in 12 inches. Chrome lined bore and chamber.
<b>Barrel length:</b> .....	21.4 inches
<b>Sights:</b> .....	Front protected blade adjustable for windage and elevation zero. Protected folding leaf rear with peep aperture for ranges from 200 to 800 meters and open U-notch from ranges from 800 to 1,800 meters — 100 meter increments. Sight radius: rear sight folded, 33.4 inches; rear sight raised, 30.9 inches.
<b>Accessories:</b> .....	Tripod, sling, 50 and 100-round assault packs, optical and dial sights, night vision equipment, blank firing adapter and armorer's tool kit.
<b>Manufacturers:</b> .....	<i>Fabrique Nationale</i> , Branche Défense et Sécurité, B-4400 Herstal, Belgium. Made under license by the Royal Small Arms Factory, Enfield Lock, England (L7A2); Chartered Industries of Singapore, India, Israel, Sweden and others. M240 vehicular version manufactured by FN Manufacturing, Inc. (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 104, Columbia, SC 29202).
<b>U.S. Distributor:</b> .....	FN MAG 58 infantry version — Gun South, Inc., Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 6607, Birmingham, AL 35210.
<b>Status:</b> .....	In service with the armed forces of more than 80 countries, including: Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Cuba, Ecuador, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Israel, Kuwait, Libya, Malaysia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Peru, Qatar, Rhodesia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, South Africa, Sweden, Tanzania, Uganda, United Kingdom, U.S.A., Venezuela and others.

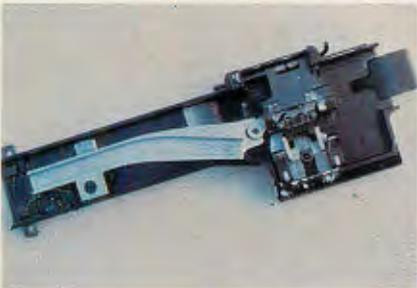
ranges from 200 to 800 meters in 100 meter increments. When raised, an open U-notch is used for ranges from 800 to 1,800 meters in 100 meter increments. The rear sight leaf

is hinged to a base with protective ears that is integral with the receiver's upper forging.

The FN MAG 58 bipod is attached to the end of the gas cylinder about 12 inches in



South African 100-round assault pack for the FN MAG 58 can actually accommodate 116 rounds.



FN MAG 58 top cover and feed mechanism is a two phase system patterned after that of the MG42.



FN MAG 58's distinctive wooden buttstock houses the "hard" buffer with 11 Bellville washers required for a high cyclic-rate machine gun.

back of the muzzle. Its aluminum legs, with their distinctive splayed appearance, cannot be adjusted for height. They can be folded back — for carrying or use as a crude forearm — and secured in slots under the receiver by their hooks and a spring-loaded catch. When firing in the hip assault position, the bipod legs should remain extended and the left leg grabbed as a brace by the support hand. The bipod can be removed from the gas cylinder by inserting a punch through the hole in its head and tapping the roll pin in the gas cylinder head until it's flush and the bipod can be rotated enough to clear the gas cylinder's retaining lugs. I recommend this procedure each time the weapon is cleaned



Confusing array of FN MAG 58 armorers' tools, including blank firing attachment (red).

FN MAG 58 gas system: gas block on barrel, gas plug, gas regulator sleeve and the infamous split rings.



New (left) and old (right) chrome plated feed trays, each with cartridge stops for the DM6 nondistintegrating belt. Both will be soon replaced by a stainless steel investment casting.

FN MAG 58 trigger mechanism is that of the MG42. On the right is the end of the sear — at the other end is the sear trip.



New (left) and old (right) carrying handles with different types of barrel nut latch releases.

back at the barracks after a combat operation, as considerable carbon fouling accumulates in this area.

The tripod is elaborate, complex, beautifully designed and executed and practically worthless. It is what we call a "soft mount." Which is to say, the gun is attached to a spring-buffered assembly on top of the mount. By this means recoil is further diminished and the accuracy potential at extreme ranges is enhanced. The gun's components are also subjected to less mechanical stress. Mounts of this type were designed by the Germans in WWII for the MG34 and MG42 GPMGs. They are supposed to overcome the lightweight GPMG's disadvantages as a long-range, sustained-fire support weapon. While they certainly increase the weapon's hit potential, they do not address its inability to provide heavy, sustained fire without frequent barrel changes. Tripods of this type are expensive (the FN MAG 58 or Minimi tripod will set you back close to \$2,500 — the cost of the gun itself) and contain far too many components for rugged field operations.

The trigger housing is an anodized aluminum casting. Early versions had an enlarged trigger guard for winter firing with gloves. Current models have a removable trigger guard. The trigger mechanism is exactly that of the MG42 and a fine one it is. The cross bolt safety operates directly on the sear and can be manipulated only when the gun is cocked. Pushing the cross bolt all the way to the right will expose the letter "S" (Safe) and engage the safety catch against the heel of the sear. Moving the cross bolt all the way to the left will expose the letter "F" (Fire) and disengage the safety catch from the heel of the sear. There is no provision for semiautomatic fire.

Because of its high rate of fire the MG42 trigger mechanism incorporated a unique sear trip which has been wisely retained on the FN MAG 58. The sear trip is spring loaded and attached to the top of the trigger. The front of the sear passes through this sear trip and a T-bar at its end restricts the sear trip's forward rotation. When the trigger is pulled the sear trip descends, allowing the front of the sear to rise while the rear end is lowered, releasing the piston extension. As long as the trigger is held back and ammunition remains, the piston extension/bolt group will continue to reciprocate back and forth. When the trigger is released, its front end rises, taking with it the sear trip as well as the front end of the sear. As a result, the rear end of the sear is lowered even further. The sear trip now projects into the piston extension's path of travel. The piston extension's heel shoves the sear trip rearward. This frees the front end of the sear and permits the sear *spring to drive* the rear end of the sear upward to grab the piston extension with the full face engagement in one sudden, sharp movement.

The sear trip fulfills two important functions. It keeps the sear bent in a low position

*Continued on page 80*

# ZAMBEZI VALLEY MANHUNT



## Tracker Combat Unit Trails Terrors

by David Scott-Donelan

**R**HODESIA was hardly a nurturing environment for an experimental military unit. Most soldiers were concerned with simple survival, particularly in the country's no-holds-barred bush war against communist guerrillas. In those times, the government's troop strength was low and resources to patrol a 1,000-mile border and 150,000 square miles of hinterland were severely limited.

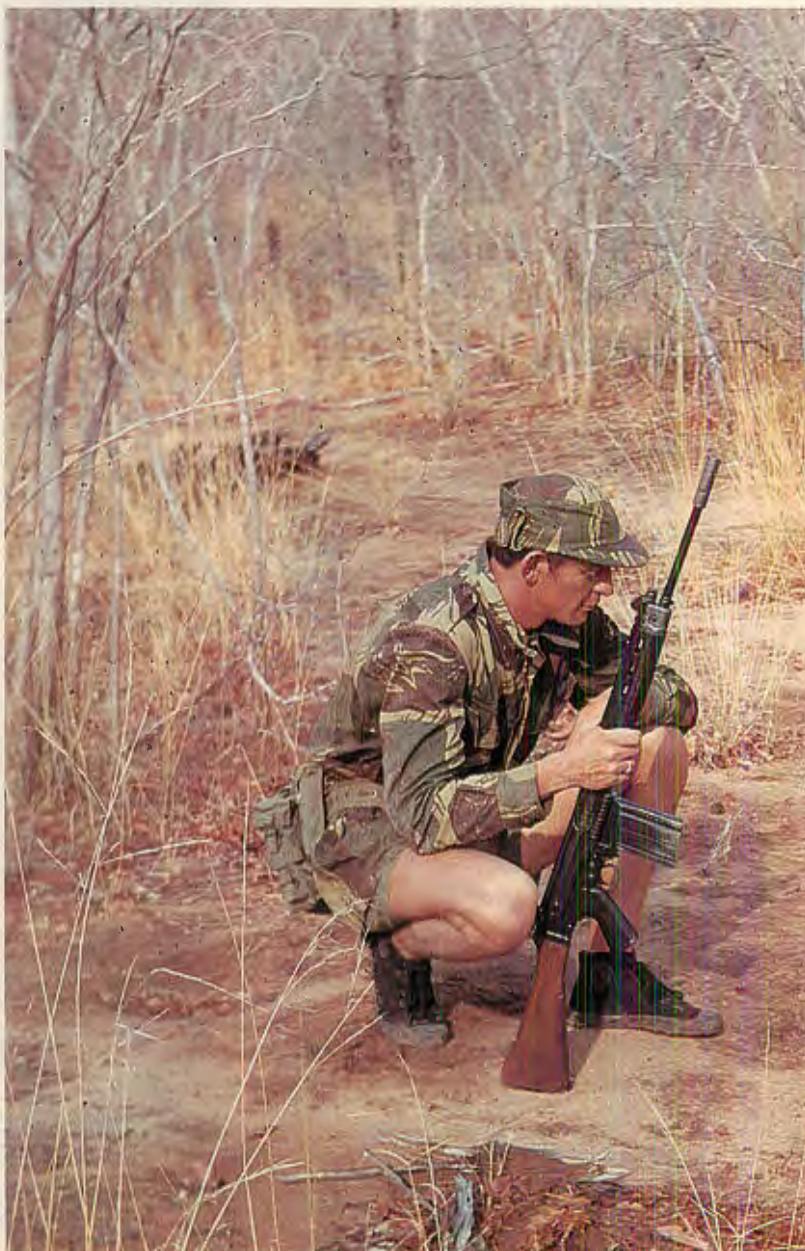
But history demonstrates some of the toughest life forms spring from harsh environments. In Rhodesia, when you talked tough, you talked about the Army's Tracker Combat Unit.

From TCU's small nucleus of original members came an impressive roster of military leaders including Andre Rabie and Allan Franklin, founding members of another innovative and deadly organization, the Selous Scouts. Other original TCU members included Brian Robinson, who later commanded Rhodesia's Tracking School and Special Air Services at the height of battlefield commitment of that unit. TCU plank-

owner Joe Conway was decorated for tackling four terrorists while armed only with a bayonet. And "T.C." Woods survived an underwater battle with a crocodile, even after the man-eater chewed off one of his balls. The original members of the Tracker Combat Unit were veterans and genuine hard-cases. They had to be.

TCU soldiers also had to be innovative. They formed their unit out of not much more than a concept and an urgent necessity. Short on resources but long on initiative, the Rhodesians "waged a campaign of extreme professional competence that will deserve a place in the world's Staff College courses for many years to come," according to John Keegan's *World Armies*.

Rhodesia's problem was engaging hostile guerrillas in a large area with limited manpower. And as important a part of military field operations as it is, patrolling was often an ineffective means of contacting the enemy in the vast bush of southern Africa. Without luck or adequate military intelligence there was generally no contact, particularly if the insurgents had the assistance of the local population.



Fighting terrorists — when they could be forced to fight — was easy. Finding them is another story and the genesis of the TCU. In 1965, foreseeing the fundamental problem of covering large areas with limited troops in heat that often exceeded 110 degrees, the Rhodesian Army adopted a solution suggested by ex-game ranger turned ecologist, Allen Savory. They began experimenting with trained tracking teams which could react to any incident or reported presence of terrorist groups. That may seem simple enough. American Indians have tracked human and animal

quarry for centuries and the British used Iban trackers in the Malayan Campaign. But the Rhodesians developed the basic fieldcraft into a tactical science that later accounted for the deaths of many terrorists who mistakenly thought there was no danger in leaving a track of communist-supplied boots across the African veldt.

Savory's concept took native tracking and turned it into a military discipline. He argued that a soldier already skilled in patrols, ambushes and tactical maneuvering could better

**A TCU trainee discusses spoor patterns with an instructor.**



almost anyone in the man tracking game once trained in the necessary techniques. From Rhodesia's SAS he selected eight men which he felt had demonstrated special potential to form a test group.

Savory put them through a spartan, rigorous training program in the Sabie Valley adjacent to the Mozambique border. Eight weeks in the field, two weeks back in town and another eight weeks back in the bush was just enough to bring his men to what he felt was the required standard.

It was just in time. The insurgency situation projected by Rhodesian military commanders soon became a reality. In 1966 the war began with the infiltration of a combined Rhodesian and South African terrorist gang into the Wankie National Park in the northwestern corner of the country.

The Rhodesian Army made initial mistakes in reacting to the threat but field soldiers quickly learned some vital lessons. Government troops took several casualties but all 40 terrorists were killed or captured. The need to track and locate similar guerrilla bands became obvious.

Military authorities approved the TCU as a permanent unit. Savory began looking outside the

**Original TCU after training completion. Unit founder, Allen Savory, stands at left holding an M2 carbine. Others are armed with FN FALs. The author stands in the back row, fifth from the left.**

Army to avoid the charge that his priority tended to strip units of their best men. Since he'd served several years in Rhodesia's Game Department, he already knew the type of man he wanted. Over the next few months he contacted former colleagues and his fledgling unit began to take shape. He selected 12 bush veterans who were excellent marksmen and trained soldiers. TCU was officially born.

The early lessons learned by the pioneer SAS trackers were strictly applied to the vast font of bush knowledge most men brought into TCU and a rigorous training schedule was designed to teach tactical application. They began their training by tracking in pairs; one tracking the other over increasing distances.

Bushcraft and survival skills were perfected and much time was spent on jungle ranges to improve reflexes and instinctive shooting. Great care was taken to practice silent

movement. All communications were by hand signals. Silent dog whistles were also employed. When blown in a certain way they produced a sound similar to that of a local beetle, recognizable to a trained ear but meaningless to the uninitiated.

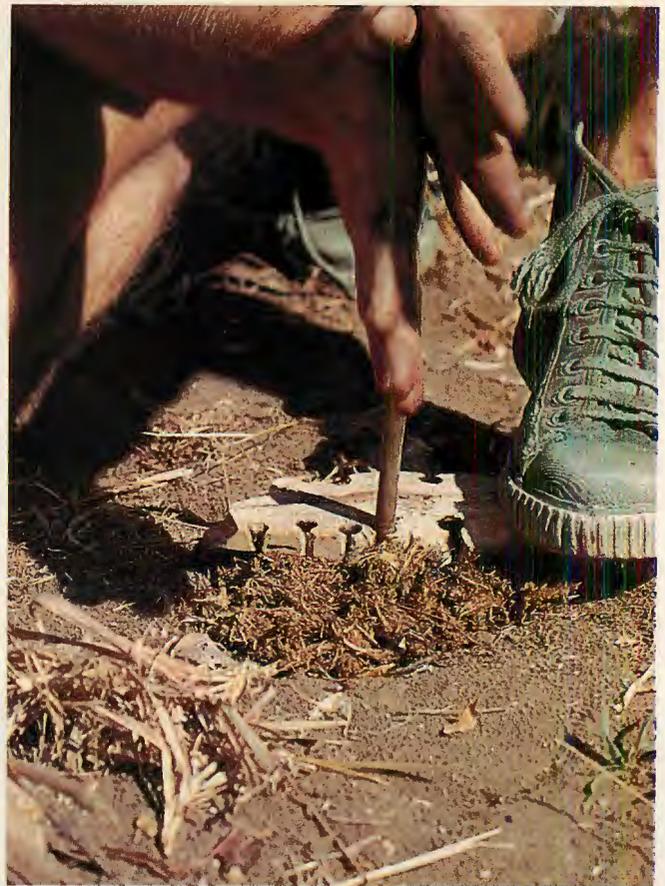
Once individual tracking was learned, the trainees were introduced to team tracking. This involved a four-man team: a controller, a primary tracker and two flank trackers. The team was deployed on the spoor in a Y-formation with the two guard trackers placed slightly forward and to each flank to protect the main man whose concentration would be locked onto following the spoor. The controller was placed in the rear of the team to coordinate and

**Firemaking techniques using such readily available materials as elephant dung were practiced extensively in TCU course.**

control tactical movement. Team members were trained in all four positions and periodically rotated to prevent fatigue.

Some of the most effective training was accomplished when one team would lay a spoor of a fairly long distance and then prepare an ambush for the tracking team. They would ambush their pursuers with slingshots. This method enabled trackers to spot likely ambush sites and also helped develop a good eye for the selection and concealment of ambush positions. A painful welt

**Trackers discuss dropoff points with Rhodesian pilot of Gazelle helicopter prior to takeoff to investigate report of terrorist spoor.**



from a slingshot missile was the motivation to avoid carelessness. Longer and longer reaches were worked by TCU teams until they could hold on a spoor for several days with comparative ease.

After a training segment which taught them how to cover their own track and avoid detection, the trainees were ready for the final tactical exercise: a competition between three four-man teams. Wearing only shirts, shorts, boots and hats each team member was given rations consisting of four tea bags and a four-ounce packet of shelled rice. They were assigned a series of map coordinates to follow over a seven-day period. The exercise was planned so that routes would cross and the objective was for each team to track and hunt down the other two groups.

The rules were simple. If a team caught another team, they were allowed to confiscate anything from their prisoners. It was not unusual to see naked trackers slinking through the bush in pursuit of their confiscated uniforms. In the final phase of training, live ammunition was used to accustom trackers to the realities of combat.

Once training was completed, the TCU members returned to their homes or other duties until there was a need for their specialized services. Generally, it was not a long wait.

The first real operation for Rhodesia's TCU was in 1967. Zambian-based terrorists made a significant incursion into northern Mashonaland. Several guerrilla base camps across the Zambezi Valley floor were set up by 110 terrorists who had infiltrated Rhodesia undetected. A game ranger — David Scammel who later became a tracker team member — found their

## TERR TRACKER

This is the first appearance in SOF for Capt. David Scott-Donelan. The 43-year-old career soldier is presently assigned to 5 Reconnaissance Regiment, South African Defense Force, but his military service spans two-and-a-half decades and several countries. From 1961 until 1980, when the government was turned over to Marxist insurgents, he served in Rhodesia's most outstanding military units, including the Special Air Service, the Rhodesian Light Infantry, the Selous Scouts and the Tracker Combat Unit. Among other duties, the British citizen has served as an SAS troop commander, intelligence advisor, manager of counter-insurgency operations, commandant of the Rhodesian Army Bushcraft and Tracking School, and as a training officer and group commander for the Selous Scouts.

spoor while checking disturbed wildlife patterns. The newly-formed and trained TCU was mustered and given the task of locating the guerrillas. After some significant reconnaissance, an attack was mounted on the primary terrorist base camp and many of the gang were killed in the ensuing action. Some managed to escape the Army's attack, but they were not home free.

A second phase of the assault was opened including a series of pursuits by trackers. In this operation, TCU member Joe Conway tracked four guerrillas 60 miles over three days across broken terrain. The chase ended when the thoroughly demoralized terrorists raised their hands and surrendered. The captured comrades complained profusely at their Rhodesian government trial about having been tracked down like wild animals. Conway and the other TCU trackers just beamed at that.

In December 1969, the terrorists struck again in attacks on Victoria Falls Airport and a police base while using explosives to cut the Rhodesian/Zambian rail line. Within eight hours, two TCU teams

were on the trail and they discovered that 22 guerrillas had been involved in the three-pronged strike. Before they could run the terrors to ground, a heavy thunderstorm washed away the spoor. Several days later, after police found suspicious tracks, a second TCU team was choppered in to investigate. They followed the trail for several miles to a place where a deliberate effort had been made to obliterate the tracks.

The spoor seemed to be the same one that had been washed out earlier and indications were that the terrorists had moved into a heavily wooded ravine. The TCU members skirmished forward. Not 30 yards into the bush, one tracker found a Russian-made pack hastily concealed in a hole. A thorough search of the area revealed 22 sleeping spaces and 20 more packs containing ammunition, grenades, food and clothing. The signs clearly indicated the terrorists had fled when they discovered skilled trackers were on their trail. Despite the lack of contact, the TCU had managed a victory. The guerrillas lost their base camp and were forced to split into smaller groups which made them vulnerable to Rhodesian patrols.

More heavy rains prevented the TCU from staying on the track but at first light the next morning an Army patrol discovered

fresh spoor and called the unit into action. The trail appeared to be leading to an abandoned stone quarry several miles away which was a likely location of a terrorist rendezvous. A TCU team was inserted along the anticipated route and they quickly spotted three terrorists squatting under a tree to escape the rain. Using their bush skills, the TCU members crept to within 20 yards, and counted coup: three shots, three confirmed terr KIAs. The entire guerrilla unit was ultimately located and liquidated.

The TCU was involved in virtually every incident of insurgent infiltration over the next few years. Hundreds of successful pursuits were launched based on TCU information and intelligence. Large numbers of terrorists were killed with only one TCU combat death.

In one of the world's classic military ironies, the TCU's success ultimately led to the unit's demise. The tactics and techniques which the Tracker Combat Unit pioneered and proved led the Rhodesian government to decide that similar training should be mandated throughout the Army. As a first step, the TCU was ordered into the ranks of the Selous Scouts while some veterans were seconded off to form Rhodesia's widely-acclaimed Tracking and Bushcraft School on the shores of Lake Kariba (the famed Wafa Wafa).

*Hundreds of soldiers, both black and white, were trained there, including several from friendly Western countries. Much of the Rhodesian Army's success against insurgents from the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) can be directly attributed to the school and Allen Savory's foresight and wisdom.* ✕

# O'DUFFY'S IRISH LEGION

## Blue Shirts and Shamrocks in Spain's Civil War

by Robert Roman



A Kelly green page was inserted into the history of the Spanish Civil War on 17 February 1937 when the Irish *Bandera* advanced to the frontlines and bolstered Franco's army surrounding Madrid. The first action for the quirky Irish Foreign Legion was a comedy of errors.

As they approached the perimeter of Franco's siege formation, they encountered another combat unit in thick smoke and winter fog. Their jerry-built uniforms were new to the Spanish battlefield and the Irish leaders did not recognize the battle dress worn by the troops they met. Both outfits halted in confusion and attempted to decide who was who.

Irish officers conferred with their Spanish advisers and decided the other troops were probably friendlies. Leaving nervous troopers in march order, the Irish officers and Spanish compatriots crossed the open ground to within a few paces of the unidentified force. Saluting formally, the Irish officers reported, "*Bandera Irlandesa del Tercio*" (Irish Flag, Foreign Legion).

The opposing unit commander promptly shouted an order and his troopers opened up on the Irishmen, killing two of their Spanish advisers. The Irish officers ran back to their unit through a hail of bullets and directed a brief, vicious firefight. Two Irish volunteers were killed in the action and one was wounded. But they gave more than they got. Twenty of the opposing troopers fell. It was still unclear to all concerned about the identity of the other unit on this chaotic Spanish battleground.

When the gunfire finally slackened, the Irishmen managed to determine that the people blazing away at them were Nationalists — militiamen from the Canary Islands. Despite the casualties on both sides, the Canary Islanders apologized for firing on the Irishmen. Their commander stated, "We didn't recognize your uniforms." That was understandable. It was also an omen of the bad luck which plagued the Irish legionnaires during their brief, check-

ered involvement in Spain's civil war. Given the situation in the Mediterranean circa 1936-39 it's not really surprising.

The Spanish Civil War which broke out in 1936 polarized emotions and political convictions throughout the Western world. It was a war of ideals and romance fought primarily by idealistic volunteers. Supporters of the insurrection saw a struggle between democracy and fascism. Franco's Nationalist backers believed they were defending Western civilization and religion from godless communism. The issues were fairly clear cut and controversial. That led to involvement by idealists, mercenaries and adventurers who totally obscured the real picture.

Troops and formations of foreign volunteers flooded the country. Italian units and Germany's *Legion Condor* arrived to fight for the Nationalists while Russian combat

flight crews and political commissars aided the Republic effort to preserve status quo in Spain. Their interests were obvious but much stranger fellows entered the picture and the civil war quickly became a comic opera.

Troops with no apparent interest in Spain other than idealism were arrayed on both sides. Republic forces included people with a plethora of labels: Republicans, Democrats, socialists, communists, anarchists, Basque and Catalonian separatists. Foreign volunteers served the Republic also in the *International Brigade*.

The Nationalists mustered the Fascist Falange Party, monarchists, career army officers, Franco's African Army (Tercio and Moroccan regulars), the Catholic hierarchy, Carlist traditionalists from Navarre — and General Eoin O'Duffy's scrappy band of Irishmen.

As leader of the *XV Bandera Irlandesa*, O'Duffy saw the Spanish Civil War as some sort of *jihad*. A short, slightly-built, red-haired man from Ulster, O'Duffy was a fanatic Catholic and Irish Nationalist. He had the strut and bluster of a bantam rooster but backed his philosophies with action. Although he was a heavy drinker, no one could prove his bluster was booze-inspired. His convictions were firm but often contradictory. He described himself as "a military man, a man of action — not a politician."

Originally trained as an engineer, O'Duffy later became an auctioneer. During the Anglo-Irish war (1916-21) he joined the Republicans, was imprisoned several times and by the end of the War commanded the Northern Brigade of the Irish Republican Army. After the treaty with England was signed he organized and headed the *Garda* (Irish National Police) during the bitter, bloody civil war of 1922-23.

The treaty backers — or "Free Staters" — were accused by their former IRA comrades of having sold out to England by allowing Ulster to remain British and granting other concessions to England. When



O'Duffy had the strut and bluster of a bantam rooster. Here he is shown addressing Blue Shirts in Dublin. Photo: Irish Press



The Spanish Civil War was a war of ideals and romance fought by idealistic volunteers, amongst them, General Eoin O'Duffy's Blue Shirts shown here in a parade in Dublin, 1934. Photo: Irish Press

Eamon DeValera, the first American-born Prime Minister of Ireland, was elected President in 1932 he booted O'Duffy out of *Garda* leadership. It was the first step on a long trail that eventually led him to Spain.

When he was ousted from the Irish establishment, O'Duffy began an unsuccessful political career as head of the Army Comrades Association, which came to be known as the "Blue Shirts." Though he openly admired Hitler and Mussolini, O'Duffy denied his followers were true fascists. That didn't wash well among observers. His Blue Shirts had all the trappings of fascism, including a stiff-arm salute, sinister uniforms and regular brawls at political rallies. The uniforms, according to O'Duffy, "were needed to keep our lads from beating each other up by mistake at political rallies."

Fights between Blue Shirts and the IRA hard-liners were regular features of political meetings between 1933-34 when O'Duffy

was at the peak of his power. At one point, the poet W.B. Yeats supported the Blue Shirts and wrote marching songs for them. Yeats remarked, "Doubtless I shall hate it (a Blue Shirt government), but not as much as I hate Irish democracy."

O'Duffy was delighted with the situation but his conservative backers were not so happy with the way he was bringing the issues to the public in Ireland. Despite intense pressure from his funding sources, O'Duffy refused to stick to prepared speeches. His ad libs delighted the press but did not serve well to communicate the status of the Blue Shirts in Irish politics. Refusing to give in to his supporters' desires, O'Duffy resigned from the organization and failed in two subsequent attempts to organize his own Blue Shirt-type groups.

At the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War he was at loose ends and looking for a piece of any available action. He was approached

**General O'Duffy remarked that uniforms "were needed to keep our lads from beating each other up by mistake at political rallies" — rallies such as this one in Dublin in 1934. Photo: Irish Press**



by a Franco representative who proposed formation of a unit of Irish volunteers to support the government. It didn't take much talking to induce O'Duffy to visit Spain, where he was royally entertained by Spanish noblemen and the Catholic hierarchy. After a meeting with Franco he flew back to Ireland burning to begin a crusade.

Despite evidence to the contrary, O'Duffy believed the war in Spain would involve simple military operations and remain free of the political intrigues which frustrated him in Ireland. It was obviously wishful thinking on his part. In comparison with the situation in Spain, Irish political shenanigans were pristine and uncomplicated.

After returning to Ireland, O'Duffy lost no time in making his feelings known to his countrymen. He was typically eloquent. "Ireland is behind the people of Spain in their fight for the Faith . . . the cause of Franco is the cause of Christian civilization . . . the patriotic, God-fearing Franco will deliver Spain out of the hands of Satan and his communist legions."

Franco's fight, O'Duffy said, "is a holy war against the anti-Christ monsters who advocate the rights of man, free love, Free Masonry, and the abolishment of private property." Here was something a man like O'Duffy could sink his teeth into. Not only was he backing Catholics and Nationalists, he had the chance to kill a few communists and Englishmen backing the insurrectionists. He even had a historic precedent for Irish involvement in Spain's war. The original Spanish Tercio which defended the country in the 16th Century Lowland Wars included 700 Irish volunteers. O'Duffy began serious recruiting among his cronies.

It wasn't difficult. Many Irishmen saw Franco as the White Knight of Catholicism defending the faith. O'Duffy's call to arms attracted many old *Garda* and Blue Shirt buddies who were bored with inactivity in their own country. He also got a number of volunteers from among the IRA members who had battled his Blue Shirt formations a few years earlier. O'Duffy eventually claimed to have 6,000 recruits, but his figures were always questionable.

He once announced 30,000 Blue Shirts would attend a rally. When only 3,500 appeared, he explained, "each man actually represents a much larger group."

The Irish government was not thrilled with what it perceived as a threat to the country's traditional neutrality. They threatened volunteers for O'Duffy's Irish Legion with a £500 fine or two years in jail. It was mostly an idle gesture. Irishmen were leaving every day for service in Spain.

None of the government efforts bothered O'Duffy. Police aborted an attempt to embark a large contingent from Waterford but an advance party of 10 filtered into Spain via London and were followed by a group of 84 others. O'Duffy managed to send 500 more by German freighter from Galway. The eventual total of 594 Irish volunteers in Spain wasn't up to the typical *Bandera* strength of 700, but Franco wel-

## NO WAR IS AN ISLAND

Ernest Hemingway tried to convince his worldwide readers that the issues in the Spanish Civil War of 1936-1939 were clear-cut, black and white. The truth is that the confused situation in Spain made things a murky shade of Mediterranean grey.

After dictator Primo de Rivera fell from power in 1930, King Alphonso failed to rally support of the country's army establishment. Power was seized by a series of unstable coalitions which ruled Spain and struggled feebly with each other while trying to redistribute large properties from the traditional aristocracy. There were continuing attempts to provide for a government-controlled education system and moves to discredit the Catholic church. These efforts alienated everyone but bureaucrats. Rightists construed the reforms as an attack on everything from private property to God the Father, and the Leftists wanted to know why rich people weren't being publicly executed simply for being rich.

No one was happy with the situation. Ethnic separatists, political extremists and military officers turned ill will to terrorism. In the middle of July 1936, the country exploded as nearly every army garrison in Spain mutinied in the name of one cause or another. General Francisco Franco led his troops to revolt in Morocco and Spaniards scrambled to find a side they could suitably support in the coming violence.

Arrayed in a variety of uniforms and under a confusing plethora of banners were military rightists, military leftists, separatist groups purporting to represent nearly every region of Spain, middle-class liberals, violent moderates, fascists, Republicans, pro- and anti-clerical parties, and a wild profusion of communist and anarchist splinter groups. It was hard to tell the players without a program — and no one seemed to have a program.

The Franco movement looked like the bet to back. He tended to draw the support of people who wanted a united nation and a return to law and order. If that meant putting up with a repressive central government, so be it. It was better than anarchy in the streets. Anti-Franco forces were badly beaten in the opening skirmishes mainly because opposing factions could not stop squabbling and deal with his threat.

An obscure Spanish faction known as Anarcho-Syndicalists fought a bloody, week-long, house-to-house revolt against the other Barcelona-based Loyalists in May 1937 while other Loyalist factions continued to lose to the Nationalists led by Franco. Meanwhile, worldwide attention and sympathy were focused on the innocent Spaniards being

enthusiastically slaughtered by all the warring elements. The Nationalists bombed Guernica with the whole Basque town as a target and staged mass executions in several cities. The Loyalist coalition — aside from killing each other — systematically murdered thousands of Catholics, including hundreds of priests and 10 bishops.

Army units loyal to Franco clearly had the upper hand and they were staunchly anti-communist. That situation prompted the USSR to begin contributing aid to help keep the communist Republicans in the fight. The first payment into Loyalist coffers was 12 million rubles. It was donated by the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions within two weeks after the fighting began and marked the first significant outside involvement in the Spanish Civil War.

It was also the first wave in a flood of money, men and materiel, primarily from Russia, Germany and Italy . . . all of whom had signed the August 1936 non-intervention pact. In October 1936, Soviet-supplied aircraft, tanks and artillery were transported to Spain and entered the battle beside the Republicans. Their war chest was filled almost exclusively by Soviet contributions but the effectiveness of the largess was greatly weakened as the donors insisted on

spending huge sums to keep communists in important positions of power.

German and Italian aid was more effective. The governments of those two allies were primarily interested in field testing the weapons of their war machine on the eve of World War II and were not overly-concerned with the ideological purity of the Nationalists.

Of little military use — but great publicity value — were the International Brigades. Idealistic leftist youth from around the world flocked to Spain to fight fascism. Recruiting was haphazard. Most of the men were legitimate volunteers but they were not allowed much ideological latitude after enlistment. Trained communist military leaders from outside Spain were assigned to most of the volunteer units. Among the leaders of the Brigades, there were four future marshals of the Soviet Army, and Karol Swierczewski who was the post-World War II Minister of Defense for Poland.

Exact strengths for these units are hard to establish. Public records of the time were based on wishful thinking and emotional attachment rather than head-count. The Spanish government is tight-fisted with access to what Loyalist records remain. There were probably less than 40,000 foreigners involved on the Republican side from 1936-1939, and it's unlikely that more than 15,000 were in service at any given time.

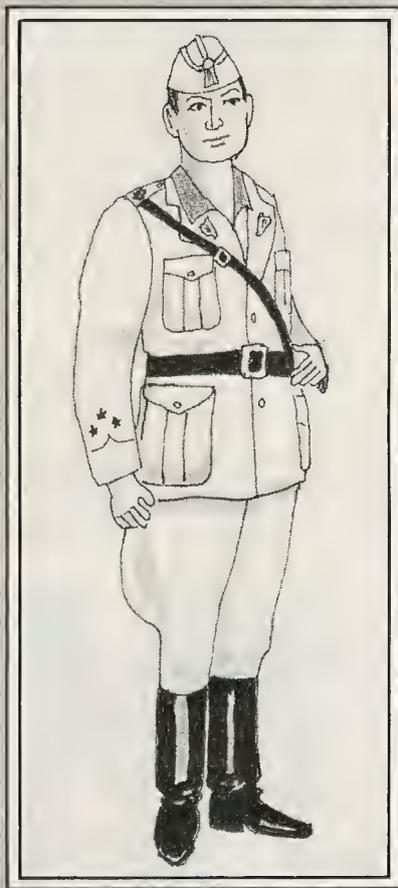
The Spanish Loyalist Army stood at about 700,000 troops so the International Brigades's contribution was fairly inconsequential. Nearly 10,000 Frenchmen, 5,000 Austrians and Germans, 3,400 Italians, 3,000 Americans (almost all students, serving in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade) 2,000 British and lesser numbers of Scandinavians, Canadians, Irish and Eastern Europeans fought to reinstate the coalition government.

The Nationalist forces were aided by a couple of thousand Portuguese, French, Irish and White Russians. More organized — and effective — help came from pro-Franco governments. Germany and Italy were conspicuous, but the Portuguese also sent somewhere between 15,000 and 20,000 troops.

As aid poured in through leaky blockades and in spite of unenforceable treaties, the Spanish Civil War raged. The Spanish had already proved they could kill each other. Foreign assistance simply meant they could keep doing it longer. By 29 March 1939 Loyalist forces had been emasculated and driven back into a pocket along the French border. Hundreds of thousands of refugees fled into France, the various Republican presidents escaped with them and 200,000 Nationalist troops marched into an undefended, starving Madrid.

Act One of World War II was over.

— Bill Guthrie



Irish officer of the "XV Bandera Irlandesa del Tercio" (Irish Flag, Foreign Legion).



comed them to the war.

Spain's *Tercio* was organized by Colonel Millan Astray in 1920 following smashing defeats of Spanish regulars by Moroccan Rifis. The early unit was composed of two *Banderas*. During Spain's civil war those totals increased to 20 *Banderas*. Each included two rifle companies, one machine gun company and units of sappers, supply troops and transport formations. Millan Astray encouraged fanaticism with battle cries of *Viva La Muerte* (Long Live Death) and *Abajo con la Intelligencia* (Down with Intelligence). O'Duffy had no problem with that.

There was bitter hatred between the men of the *Tercio* and the soldiers of the International Brigades, who routinely killed each other's prisoners. During the Civil War, the *Tercio* paraded with severed enemy heads and ears. There is no evidence to indicate soldiers of the *Bandera Irlandesa* followed such customs, although Republicans suggested they were barbarians and called the Irish volunteers "the Catholic Moors."

Most of O'Duffy's troops enlisted for six months (December 1936 through May 1937). It seemed sufficient time since Franco's African Army had driven from the southwest toward Madrid, occupying a full quarter of the country while Gen. Mola's Nationalists swept down on Madrid from Navarre. Both armies reached Madrid by October 1936, but were stalled at the outskirts of the city by stubborn resistance from the capital's militia defenders. It was a stand-off for both formations and the troopers promptly dug in to hold their ground.

Once in Spain, the *XV Bandera Irlandesa* trained at Ceceres, where O'Duffy bragged that his troops were greatly admired by the Spanish establishment. Awards and honors were exchanged between the Irish and Spanish and special masses were said to insure the *Bandera's* success. English-speaking Spanish officers and NCOs were attached to the unit. Most of these were cadets from the national military academy who O'Duffy described as "sons of grandee with titles."

Apparently contradicting his avowed sympathies for the Spanish establishment,

**The Blue Shirts had all the trappings of fascism, including a stiff-arm salute and sinister uniforms though O'Duffy denied his followers were true fascists. Photo: Cork Examiner**

he also complained that "grandees and landlords have prepared the soil for the communists." Almost in the same breath O'Duffy praised "the noble and cultured Spanish people," while grumping that "their food is swimming in olive oil, the siesta is a great waste of time and one can't get a decent cup of tea."

O'Duffy was apparently suffering some disenchantment. He told a reporter, "Our lads are unhappy if there isn't water to bathe and shave, but the Spaniards don't mind going a fortnight without cleaning up." None of these things stopped the fiery Irishman from honing his troops for combat.

Half the Irish *Bandera* had previous military experience gained during the Anglo-Irish War and many had served in the British Army. The most experienced legionnaire was Jerry McCarthy, who had served with the IRA, Irish National Army, British Navy and U.S. Navy. The other half were totally untrained. Food, equipment and medical supplies were of poor quality and in short supply, but O'Duffy did manage to design a distinctive uniform for his unit.

He scrounged enough materials to outfit his people with a green shirt featuring Irish harp insignia on the collar. When the troopers wore out their original issue, they changed to a regular Spanish *Tercio* tunic but kept the gold harps on the lapels. There was also a unit flag which originally featured a red cross on a green field with the motto, "In Hoc Signo Vincas" (In This Sign Conquer). It was later changed to a green banner showing an Irish Wolfhound on a green field.

Six weeks of training (1 January-17 February 1937) may have been an adequate refresher course for the veterans, but it was only a short, basic combat introduction for the inexperienced Irish Legionnaires. After the accidental battle with the Canary Islanders, the *Bandera* was moved to protect an eight mile stretch of terrain along the Jarama River front in the perimeter around Madrid.

The Irishmen crouched in trenches for days, pounded by Republican shells and sniper fire. O'Duffy was well aware of the opposing forces facing him. He wrote, "We could hear English Cockney voices from the opposing trenches of the International Brigade."

In March the Irish went over the top in force to cross an open plain in front of the enemy trenches at Titulcia. O'Duffy was moved to later describe the scene in emotional terms. "All 700 of our lads disappeared in a cloud of explosions and smoke. At least 400 shells were dropped on them and I was sure 300 must have been killed, but when they returned (without having reached their objective) there were no dead and only a few wounded." Actually, one man was killed and another died of wounds soon afterward.

It was a fiasco, but the Irishmen were clearly courageous and highly-motivated. Despite the lack of definitive results, Nationalists and German professionals gave the Irishmen high marks for individual bravery. Between March and June of 1937, 150 men were listed as sick from poor food, inadequate sanitation and low medical supplies. Of those stricken, four died, equalling the number of Irish volunteers killed in combat.

In June, at the end of their enlistments, 654 Irishmen elected to return home and only nine decided to stay in Spain. O'Duffy was not upset. "They all would have stayed," he remarked, "if I'd asked them to."

Franco loaded the departing Irishmen with praise but could never manage to supply return transportation. Most of the weary troopers traveled as far as Portugal, where they booked passage to Ireland with money sent from home.

O'Duffy became a tragic figure in Spain. His hopes for glory faded with the departing legionnaires. He returned home shortly after his troops arrived and became a sort of Irish Don Quixote unwillingly forced into an early retirement. He last made news in 1939 when he was contacted by a Nazi agent seeking an IRA introduction. O'Duffy did not cooperate with the German but he did not turn him in to the authorities either.

When World War II began, O'Duffy offered his *services to the government* "in any capacity," but was politely refused by his old antagonist, DeValera. When he died in 1944 at the age of 52, he was granted a state funeral.

O'Duffy's personality was as contradictory as his public statements. He was a soldier who got confused by politics. When he entered the political fray, he was out of his depth — both in *Ireland* and in Spain. His direct action approach, disdain for compromise, dogmatic and contradictory statements, and exaggerated claims supported by manufactured *statistics*, posed him as an enraged bull, repeatedly confounded by skillful political matadors such as DeValera and Franco. Despite all that, his personal sincerity and affection for his troops repeatedly rallied brave men to his causes. ✎

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SOF staff extends special thanks to Mr. and Mrs. C.J. Stevens, the parents of John W. Stevens, and to John's estate for exceptional generosity in its continuing support of the Afghan Freedom Fighters Fund.

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SOFer R.G. Wheaton figured that 20 years in the Navy entitled him to shop at his AAFES exchange without seeing Jane Fonda Workout tapes. His protest to Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger drew a response from Deputy Assistant Secretary Edgar A. Chavarrie. Lt. Gen. Chavarrie (USAF) explained that, as of July 1984, Jane Fonda's Workout records are being dropped from the Armed Forces Exchange catalog, "because of a slackening of mail order purchases." No mention was made of stock in BX and PX outlets and Wheaton's objection was not addressed.

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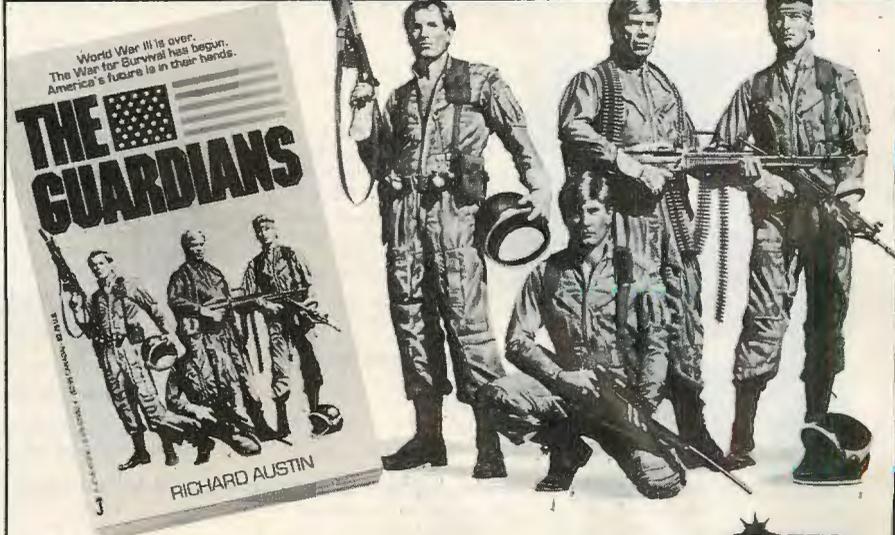
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**MAG**

*Continued from page 69*

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When the piston extension reaches the end of its rearward movement, it slams against the buffer's face, or "bush," forcing it to recoil slightly. The bush transfers its movement to a braking cone which penetrates the braking ring, causing it to open. As it expands, the braking ring contacts the interior wall of the buffer cylinder, exerting a braking action through friction. It also moves back, flattening a series of 11 Belleville (saucer-shaped) washers. When this strain energy is released as the washers return to their original shape, the energy surge throws the recoiling parts forward with almost the velocity they possessed on contact with the buffer.

The FN MAG 58 can be had in versions that accept either the German DM6 non-disintegrating belt or the U.S. M13 disintegrating links. The position of the feed tray's cartridge stop differs and the pawl angles in the top cover are different. MAG's set up for the DM6 belts can be field altered to accept the M13 link (See "Gunning for Gs," SOF, December '84), but the reliability will be reduced slightly.

The feed mechanism operates in two distinct phases. When the bolt begins its forward travel, the actuator roller moves in the straight part of the top cover's feed channel rail and the feed pawls remain stationary. During this movement, the bolt's feed horns chamber the first round. During the second half of the forward movement the actuator roller reaches the bend in the feed channel, forcing it to pivot to the right on its axis. This movement actuates the feed link, pushing the upper feed slide to the right, taking the front and rear feed pawls with it. At the same time, the lower feed slide moves the next cartridge to the right until it's in contact with the sloping face of the cartridge guide pawl. With its springs compressed, the inner feed pawl rides to the left over this cartridge. All three pawls are engaged behind the cartridge when the bolt ends its forward movement.

In the second phase, the actuator roller's rearward movement pivots the feed channel rail on its axis to the left. The upper feed slide, with the front and rear pawls, now moves to the left. The lower feed slide, with the inner pawl, moves to the right. The inner feed pawl pushes the cartridge on top of the bolt, as the cartridge guide pawl rises into position behind the inner pawl. The front and rear pawls are now riding over the third cartridge moving into position to recommence their cycle. The pawls do not move as the actuator roller travels rearward down the straight portion of the feed channel. As the bolt clears the feed tray the second cartridge takes its final position in preparation for the cycle's repetition. Thus each set of pawls acts, in turn, as feed and stop pawls as the cartridge slides half way across with each forward and rearward motion of the bolt. This method, adopted from the MG42, produces a smooth belt flow instead of a series of herky-jerky movements. A similar system is employed on the M60. The feed

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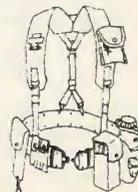
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channel rail, feed link, both feed slides and the feed tray are chrome plated. The top cover body is an anodized aluminum casting.

Two types of assault packs can be used on the FN MAG 58. The Belgians and British produce a sheet metal box that clips onto the left side of the receiver and holds 50 rounds. The South Africans issue a metal and rubberized-fabric soft-pack that snaps in place and holds 100-plus rounds. This latter is the best I have ever used. Metal and plastic assault packs jam you in the guts, M60 cotton bandoliers rot in the bush after a few days and 25-round teaser belts are a pathetic field expediency.

In July 1961, the British Army, after extensive trials dating from 1957, adopted a modified FN MAG known initially as the L7A1. A heavy barrel with stellite lining was to be used for the sustained fire role. The stellite liner — a non-ferrous alloy of cobalt, chromium, tungsten and molybdenum — will maintain its strength at high temperatures. They were an interference fit and FN was unable to manufacture them to the close tolerances required. The project was abandoned with success at hand and a conversion kit consisting of a tripod, dial sight and two spare light barrels was issued for the sustained fire role. The current L7A2, as manufactured by Royal Small Arms Factory (RSAF) at Enfield Lock, differs in several minor, but significant ways

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from the FN produced weapon. The gas regulator has 10 positions (the minimum rate of fire is obtained at adjustment notch "8"), the bipod legs are adjustable for height, the buttstock is made of plastic, the gas cylinder permits installation of a heavy barrel (which does not exist), the chrome bore plating is thicker, the sear has two bends to engage a special piston extension (for safety when cocking, should it slip accidentally from the operator's hand) and the cartridge guide pawl is a two-piece component.

By 1974 the deficiencies of the M73/219 had overwhelmed even its most resilient supporters (See SOF, FULL AUTO, October '82) and tests commenced to find a replacement coaxial machine gun for U.S. fighting vehicles and tanks. The MAG 58 was pitted against the M60E2, M219, German MG3, British L7A2, French AATNF1 (vehicular version of the AAT 52), Canadian C1 (Browning Model 1919A4 in 7.62mm NATO) and the Soviet PKM. By 1975 all were eliminated except the M60E2 and the MAG 58. Heavy emphasis was placed upon reliability. Two criteria were closely examined: Mean Rounds Between Stoppages (MRBS) and Mean Rounds Between Failures (MRBF). Stoppages are malfunctions which require no more than a minute to clear. Failures require more than a minute to correct and usually involve component breakage. The test results were as follows.

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M60E2	50,000	846	1,699
M219	19,000	215	1,090
Minimum specified		850	2,675
Minimum desired		1,750	5,500

Only the MAG 58 met the specified minimum. In fact, it even exceeded the "dream sheet" (minimum desired). The MAG 58 coaxial machine gun was type classified in 1976 as the M240. The first 10,000 were produced by FN in Belgium. The M240 is now manufactured by FN Manufacturing, Inc. (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 104, Columbia, SC 29202).

The M240 is distinguished from the infantry version in the following ways. There is no bipod or carrying handle. There are no sights as the vehicle's main gun sights are employed. The buttstock is replaced by a special short buffer block. There is no front sling swivel and the flash suppressor is a closed type. Because it is in the interior of a vehicle, the gas regulator has no escape holes. The principle of gas inlet, rather than gas exhaust into the atmosphere is used for obvious reasons. The elusive split rings have been eliminated. The normal rate of fire is 750 rpm and this is obtained by setting the regulator on position "1." (Unlike the MAG 58 ground version, the M240's barrel must be removed to change the cyclic rate.) The retracting handle is replaced with a cocking cable and pistol grip trigger mechanism is of an abbreviated configuration.

Product improvement continues at FN Manufacturing, Inc., and reliability has now been improved to an incredible mean average of 25,600 Mean Rounds Between Failures. Current M240 top covers use steel pins and rollers, instead of the aluminum pins found on Belgian produced M240s. Very shortly the original stamped, riveted and welded feed tray will be replaced by a hardened, investment cast stainless steel version. The new tray will reduce link wear at the feed slot, preclude the loosening of the cartridge stop rivets, eliminate the need for chrome-plating and end failure of the tray's ears. U.S. tread-heads are equipped with the world's finest coaxial medium machine gun.

FN Manufacturing has designed a modular kit, called the GMAK (Ground Mount Adaptation Kit), to convert the M240 to an infantry configuration in a matter of seconds. The kit includes a skeletal buttstock resembling that of the Soviet PKM, pistol grip for the trigger mechanism, collimator-type sights, sling and a bipod. It will be marketed worldwide.

It takes no more than 10 seconds to disassemble a MAG 58. First, lift the top cover, remove the belt and clear the weapon. Ease the operating parts forward by holding one hand on the retracting handle while you pull

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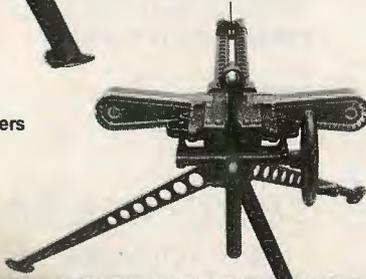
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the trigger with the other. Remove the buttstock by depressing its spring-loaded release latch on the underside. Lift it up and away from the receiver. Push in and up on the guide rod and withdraw it and the recoil spring. Pull back on the retracting handle with the muzzle tilted upward and the piston, piston extension and bolt group will slide out the rear of the receiver. The bolt group can be separated from the piston group by driving out the locking lever link's retaining pin. The trigger group and top cover can be removed from the receiver body by depressing the spring on their retaining pins and drifting out the pins. Remove the barrel in the manner already described. Unscrew the gas regulator sleeve all the way and try to keep your eye on the split rings as they disappear into the bush. Tap out the gas plug.

And now the fun begins. The FN MAG 58, especially the gas system, is more complex and difficult to maintain than the M60. The Belgians have invented, for this purpose, about a dozen fiendishly clever armorer's tools. The function of some of these esoteric appurtenances is not even addressed in the FN MAG "Bible" (the telephone-book-sized technical manual). Not to worry, as they can all be replaced by one very sharp Swiss Army knife.

The MAG gas system is a veritable labyrinth of grooves, channels, ports and inaccessible surfaces. There is a trade off. The MAG will operate far longer under adverse conditions without maintenance than the M60. One of the Somozista Nicaraguan MAG 58s I brought to the Atlacatl Battalion had a gas system so fouled that I could not remove the gas regulator adjustment sleeve no matter how hard I beat upon it in the vise or how large the pipe wrench I torqued it with. In desperation, I took the entire gun to the battalion range to observe the magnitude of stoppages that would result. The gun fired and continued to fire without malfunction of any kind. Amazing.

Lubricate everything except the gas system and piston and re-assemble in the reverse order. The trigger and feed mechanisms should be detail stripped only by trained armorers. You can teach anyone to field strip a MAG 58 in just a few minutes. On your first attempt you will probably try to replace the buttstock upside down. All else is self-evident.

Belgian, British and South African SOP specifies the MAG is to be carried with the bolt forward and a belt in the feed way. The weapon must then be cocked first to bring it into operation. No matter how you slice it, that's pure baloney. The MAG's cross-bolt safety engages the sear directly. The possibility against its failure is astronomical. On combat operations the MAG should be carried in "condition 1" with bolt retracted, the safety on (until engagement is imminent) and a belt in the feed way.

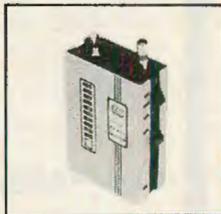
To load the MAG, squeeze the top cover's two spring-loaded catches and rotate upward to the vertical position. Retract the bolt and place the system on safe. Place the

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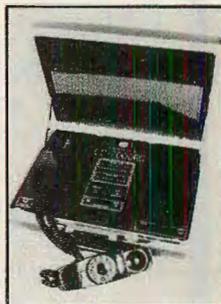
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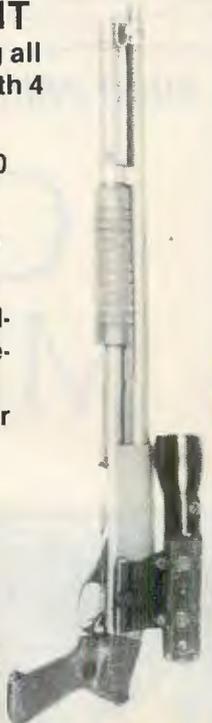
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belt, with the open portion of the links down, across the feed tray with the first round resting against the cartridge stop. Rotate the gun clockwise on the bipod so the belt will remain in position and gently close the top cover. Slamming the top cover down with an iron fist looks professional — to amateurs, but only hastens damage to the top cover catches.

The MAG should be carried by the sling with the bipod legs extended so that it may be fired from the hip assault position at the instant of contact. Carrying guns of this type across the shoulders or by the carrying handle looks cool, but it's downright dangerous. Whenever there is time to do so — and most often there is — GPMGs should be fired off the bipod from the low prone position behind cover and concealment.

Sturdy, reliable and accurate, the FN MAG 58 is the very best GPMG ever fielded. More than one million have been manufactured and issued. It has cut terrors in half from just 10 meters away on the jungle trails of Rhodesia. It shot back at itself in the Falklands. It waves proudly from the turret of Israeli Merkava MBTs. I have even set a few to snapping angrily at the communist guerrillas of El Salvador. The MAG 58 has proven itself many times over on the field of battle in the last quarter of a century.

Does that mean the GPMG concept has proven viable? I think not.

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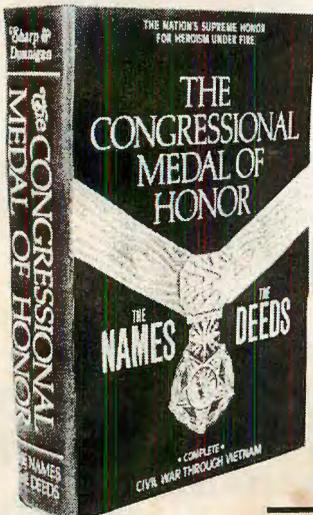
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matic Weapon (SAW) role. An Israeli "MAGist," the No. 1, must carry the gun and 450 rounds of ammunition. His No. 2, the assistant gunner, carries his Galil, nine 35-round magazines and another 500 rounds for the MAG. This is a tremendous burden for each. While the MAG 58 can certainly lay down an effective base of fire at the squad and platoon level, it fails to provide the effective sustained fire base still sometimes required during battalion level operations. Too heavy as a SAW, the GPMG is too light for the sustained fire role without the heavy barrels that have never been manufactured.

The solution is to reject this "neither-fish-nor-fowl" concept and return again to both squad automatics and medium machine guns. The M249 SAW weighs only 15.5 pounds. Its ammunition weighs only half that of the 7.62mm GPMG. The 7.62mm NATO cartridge is an excellent medium machine round. Water cooled guns like the Browning M1917A1 or the Vickers, chambered in 7.62mm NATO, would be ideal sustained fire weapons — as they already have proven themselves to be. The M249 is with us. But, it's unlikely the U.S. armed forces will ever again return to the Browning M1917A1. Instead, we can expect to see GPMGs, like the MAG 58 and M60, shuffled upstairs to fulfill the sustained fire role.

That's a mistake, as the FN MAG 58's future is clearly in the form of the M240 coaxial vehicular machine gun. We grunts rarely ever get everything we need or want. Far too much emphasis is placed on high technology these days, when all we really need sometimes is a few more water-cooled guns. ✕

## ICE

*Continued from page 65*

Fortunately, we'd been able to choose the proper uniform for the occasion. The wind, water and arctic conditions required mountaineering clothing. Polypropylene underwear went on under old pile suits. The whole was protected from wet and wind by Goretex suits. Parka tops tucked into knickers gave us a cleaner profile and less wind-flap. If snow slides had been a problem, we'd have put the parkas on outside the pants, but the wind would blow from our backs on the ice face. We wouldn't have to breathe sifting snow all day or feel ice water dripping down our necks.

Water-repellent ropes were mandatory, and the usual selection of ice screws and chocks were snapped onto packs. We left climbing helmets in the tent. This was the sort of special op that called for soft covers. If we'd been targets of rockfalls — what German Alpine troops called "mountain artillery" — the helmets would have been strapped tightly to our heads. But frequent rockfall is generally confined to couloirs

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which tend to funnel anything that falls from above down on climbers. Faces tend to disperse ballistic objects and survival is more a matter of chance than of preventive measures.

The nightlong gale had scoured the snow from bare rock, and we discovered the mouth of Glacier Gorge is paved with six-foot high humps of granite. The other end of the Gorge looks bad. Three miles up, the cirque (the half-round vertical headwall) is socked in solidly by scudding clouds. The icefall we had planned to climb is no longer visible.

Throughout the history of mountain and Arctic warfare, untrained soldiers have been trapped or killed by forcing their way into similar situations. Without the ability to appreciate the terrain and conditions they fall into a trap. If the weather or another enemy closes in they can freeze, fall or be crushed in avalanches. The only way out is to climb and that takes special skills that few soldiers possess.

From Hannibal in the snow-covered Alps to Ahmad Shah Massoud in the rugged mountains of Afghanistan, field commanders have learned that mountains and winter can be either allies or deadly enemies depending on the skill of their troops. In the Alpine campaigns of World War I, most casualties fell to exposure or avalanches. Thousands of troops also died in mountain mortar or artillery duels as gunners directed their high explosives on ledges and slopes above enemy formations. Avalanches crushed and smothered entire units who were not experienced enough to avoid such areas.

We would chance it — given an absence of enemy fire and the presence of some hard-learned mountaineering skills. We picked a spectacular ice wall and moved toward it to begin the climb.

"A first ascent!" Duncan shouted with joy as we began to rig harness and rope. I was somewhat underwhelmed.

"There's nothing too tough about this. It's your basic rock covered with ice — and it's only about 300 feet high."

"Yeah," Duncan grinned. "But this ice has never been here before. I've been climbing ice up here for nearly 10 years, and there hasn't been a quarter this much ice." He set a chock, tested the placement and started up the face. "We'll have to name it."

"Any ideas?" I asked watching him move smoothly in the wind.

"Let's name it after your boss."

"I can already see it in guidebooks: Bob Brown's *Soldier of Fortune* Death To Tyrants Precipice of Mortal Doom."

Duncan's laughter floated down to me with a first shower of ice chips. The ascent was more difficult than most I'd made. It was longer, had a steeper average angle and offered less opportunity for protection from wind, but we moved steadily upward without incident or the levity of the first climb. Duncan was studying a new challenge and I was dealing with my own.

The pull of the wind got progressively

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worse as we worked our way up the face. Sun warmed ice-water soaked our mittens. I practiced Duncan's technique of climbing thin ice like it was rock: placing axes and crampons as if they were fingers and toes while feeling my way up the cliff, instead of kicking and hammering. Snowy spindrift blew down our necks and the sun cooked our faces. At one point, my damaged feet began to collapse, and I got to sit, tied off in a webbing seat to hang 200 feet above the valley floor. It was easy to become mesmerized despite the precarious perch as I could reach out and touch clouds or stare with fascination at sub-surface water bubbling between thin ice and rock.

Cradled comfortably in this belay I also had time to add a few elements to the list of reasons why I was unnecessarily risking my neck. There was no reserved space in my experience book for surviving a bad fall. I volunteered for and gained from military service. I've been wounded in battles against nature, mourned dead friends, and hauled my share of basket-cases down off the world's mountains. This is not catch-up ball I'm playing.

Maybe the story passed on to me by an American bomber pilot in World War II had something to do with all this. Shot down and imprisoned by the Germans, he found a chance to escape from his *Stalag* and had to survive pursuit through rugged country. Bookish and unathletic before the war, he made it to safety . . . barely.

These days he's a physical fitness buff but it's not something he enjoys. He pushes himself because he's learned that he's got to be capable of meeting a challenge in order to survive. On a miserable night in Nazi-occupied Europe he swore he would never again be caught unprepared for the worst nature — or an enemy — could throw at him.

Heavy thoughts for a man hanging off an iceface with the wind whipping him around like a kite stuck on a powerline. But there they were.

Self-discipline is what it all means to me and I mustered some of that to go on, trembling and puffing up the sheer ice. The ice is darkening to deep emerald green before my

eyes but I can keep a tight-jawed perspective on the summit where Duncan waits in the throes of peak-rush — post-climb euphoria.

I felt it too as I struggled over the edge and onto a flat surface at last. I managed a grin of triumph for his clicking Rollei pocket camera. The prints conveyed an expression I'd seen in older photos. Beneath the beard was the same expression I had worn for fellow soldiers in my basic training platoon who wanted barracks buddy shots for the folks back home.

It was the confident countenance that said no matter what the Army throws at us, we're tough enough to take it. Sometimes you have to see if that still holds true. ✕

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**SLANG**

Continued from page 45

**FTS** — "First Thing Smokin." Refers to the first available aircraft leaving country. Normally what the trainer can expect to be on when he gets caught breaking the rules while serving in El Sal. If he must depart by commercial airliner, the FTS could be anybody's guess.

**GLORIA'S** — Best-known bordello in the capital of San Salvador. It is a watering hole for all types of soldiers, Assholes, Bozos, Fuckheads and what-not, although the what-nots are frequently ejected by the Man of the House because of their kinky predispositions. Good rock 'n' roll, country and western; plenty of cold beer and five choices in wallpaper. Not the best in terms of talent, some of the women are ugly as original sin. They are all greedy. Fortunately, none of them are in any danger of qualifying for college scholarships. Definitely a place to visit — just to say you've been there.

**GUNSLINGER** — Anyone who thinks Fag Bags are stupid and dangerous to one's survival, so he carries his cannon in a holster and could care less who sees it or what they think.

**MARIPOSA** — Homosexual, faggot, gay, queer.

**MILGRP MAFIA** — Those upwardly-mobile individuals assigned to the U.S. Military Group, El Salvador. Called "the mafia" because they're such a close-knit bunch. Considered by many MTT members and some civilians to be somewhat snobbish.

**MTT** — Mobile Training Team.

**"NADE"** — Short for Grenade. Grenades are neither authorized nor carried by U.S. military personnel. Many "nades" can be found on ranges being used as paper weights for rifle score sheets, however. Such uses keep "nades" handy — and legal.

**PUTA** — Whore, slut. Found at Gloria's and the Sands Motel. Used in a more figurative sense, such as "news putas," at the bar of the *El Camino Real* to describe media members who spend most of their time there cadging drinks and information from those who have really been in the field.

**SANDS MOTEL** — The best whorehouse in El Salvador. It's location is highly classified.

**SHIT** — Not to be confused with Cerote or biological waste products of the scatological variety. Shit refers to the bigger cannons now authorized for possession by trainers such as MP5 submachine guns and the new CAR-15s. Insurgents carry "shit" too, like RPG rocket launchers, FN FALS, UZIs, AKs — shit like that.

**TDY PAY** — Money rendered the trainer before he leaves on his MTT so he can buy food, rent a place to live and generally function.

**TEAM HOUSE** — Fancy prison for trainers to stay at when on R&R in the capital. It has everything you need for a

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BB SUBMACHINE  
GUN**



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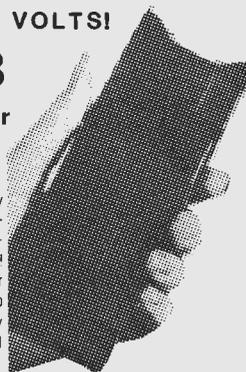
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**TRAINER** — Central American era term for Adviser. ✕

## POLICE PIECE

*Continued from page 51*

Still many of the people making decisions concerning standard firearms for their police units resist the advantages of a semiauto pistol. Some of their concerns are valid. Most semiauto pistols are ammo sensitive and subject to stoppage or jams. Dirt, rust, lack of lubrication, and abuse are as likely to affect a semiauto pistol as they are anything else mechanical. The answer, of course, is proper maintenance which is a prime consideration with weapons.

If you don't take care of your health, you get sick. If you don't take care of your gun, you might get dead. Proper care of a handgun obviously has a direct effect on how well the gun will take care of you in an emergency. That's what you are betting on if you're a cop: an emergency *will* come. So what's the bottom line here? What is

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One "Yes"? Two? Three? Then 'troop', you are 'good-to-go' with our ↘



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the ideal sidearm for a police officer to carry? It probably hasn't been invented yet.

Different police requirements demand different things from a handgun. A highway patrolman may require a gun with more muscle for penetrating vehicles and might find that a .41 or .44 magnum with full-power loads will serve best. The beat cop's needs may be met by something a bit less beefy.

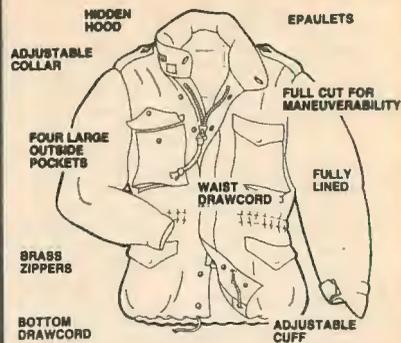
My personal choice — if I have to carry a revolver — is at least a .357 Magnum and preferably a .41 Magnum or .45 ACP using half-moon or the new two-round clips. If I can carry an automatic, I prefer a Colt Model 1911 in .45 ACP.

The ideal police sidearm is that which is ideal for you. It is the weapon that makes you feel comfortable and capable. No matter which weapon a cop chooses — presuming he has a choice — it will only be effective if he carries it regularly and can use it properly.

I have heard many policemen boast that the gun they carry has only a few rounds through it. I can't blame them for that. A conscientious cop should not brag about how many rounds he's pumped into the street but that consideration does not eliminate the need for training and experience with firearms. Policemen should take heart in how many rounds they've put through their service weapons rather than how few.

Every round fired proves or disproves both the gun and the shooter. It's better to

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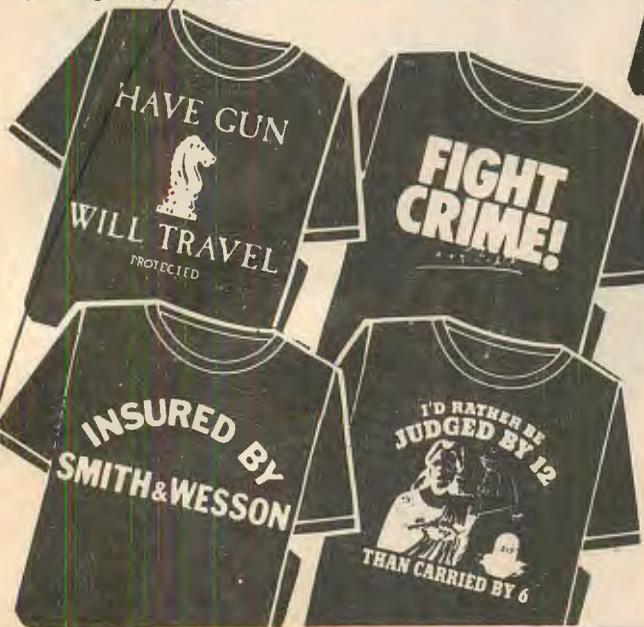
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discover weaknesses in either on the range rather than on the street. If a gun fails in training, fine. A gun can be repaired or replaced. A cop whose weapon fails in a shootout is dead meat. They may not be able to repair him and the replacement may be another cop — a live one. ✕

## FLAK

*Continued from page 9*

open ocean where they must move along the coast to offload. The only error I would correct is Mr. Salisbury's inaccurate power-package on the Piranha craft. The original twin outboards were 150s, very hot but too much for the craft to handle. Recently these engines have been replaced by twin 140s, a better match-up to the hull and still pushing 45-plus knots loaded, not the 35 given by Mr. Salisbury.

G. Walker  
Panama

*Thank you for recognizing SOF's coverage of the Salvo Navy, a service for the most part ignored by other media members. Steve Salisbury deserves credit for his willingness to go about anywhere and dig in to get the Central America story for SOF's readers.*

## COLLECTION GLITCH...

Sirs:

The article by Mr. Kokalis, "Gunning for G's," (December '84 SOF) was very interesting. I would like to offer some more information on the Solothurn S2-200 (MG30.) Sales of the S2-200 were limited, though one sale was made to El Salvador in 1932, a total of 47 guns in 7x57mm Spanish Mauser. The sale of such weapons to arms collectors could help finance their current arms needs to some extent. There could well be 'gold' in those armories.

Gordon J. Douglas Jr.  
Fullerton, Calif.

*Weapons collectors in the United States should not get their hopes up. While Central America may be a cornucopia of military small arms, unfortunately the 1968 Gun Control Act severely restricts their importation into the U.S. Their distribution by law is confined to law enforcement agencies and BATF Class III dealers only. Private collectors are forbidden by law from purchasing these automatic weapons if they are imported, so the U.S. market for them would be extremely limited.*

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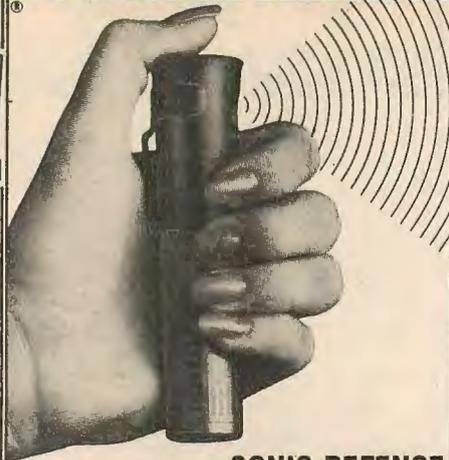
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## YOUNG, YES; FOOLISH, NO...

Sirs,

We are too young to remember the Vietnam War, but from what we have read there ARE still POWs and MIAs in Vietnam, despite what the Vietnamese and U.S. governments or anybody else says. There are a lot of good soldiers who did what their government required them to do and then were forgotten. It is well past time for something to be done. Our people are being held in their stinking, hell-hole prisons by a bunch of liars and cheats. We may be young, but we realize the importance of this issue and stand firmly along with those fighting for the MIAs.

Champ C. Brown Jr.  
Wilard A. Price  
Paul Brown  
Morrow, Ohio

*It's always encouraging to hear from young people who are so interested in their country and its causes. SOF agrees wholeheartedly, guys. The magazine has already spent a great deal of time and money trying to verify the existence of POWs and MIAs still being held prisoners in Southeast Asia. And we will continue to do so. In the meantime, we refer you to this month's SOF De-Brief.*

## KUDOS FOR BAGWELL...

Sirs:

I would like to commend you on your new department in the magazine, "Battle Blades." Bill Bagwell does an excellent job. I found his one article more informative than most major knife magazines. SOF publishes an outstanding magazine. Keep up the good work.

M. Dutton  
White Plains, Md.

*Thanks for your generous observation. SOF is very pleased with Mr. Bagwell's new column, too.*



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—Robert K. Brown  
Publisher, SOF

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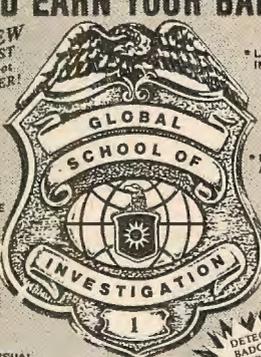
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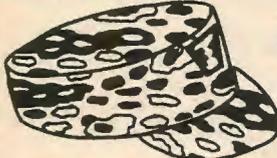
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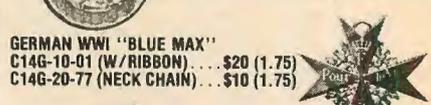
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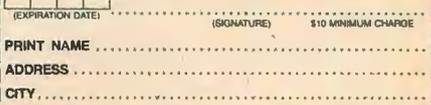
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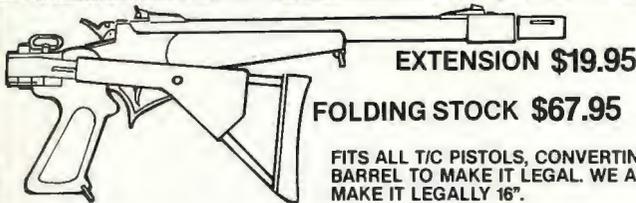
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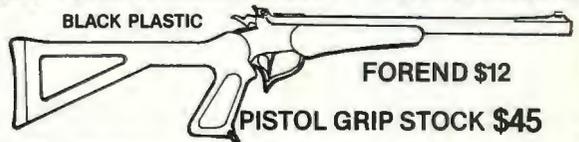
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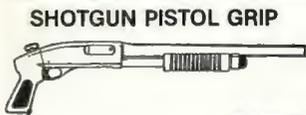
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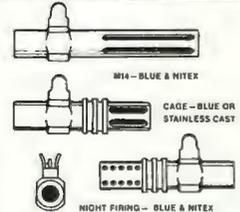
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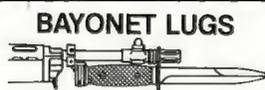
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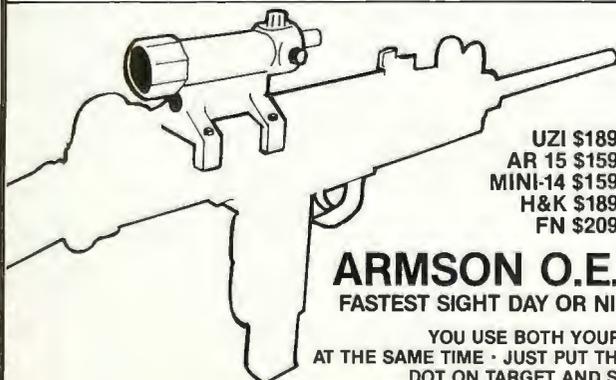
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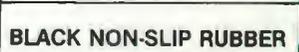
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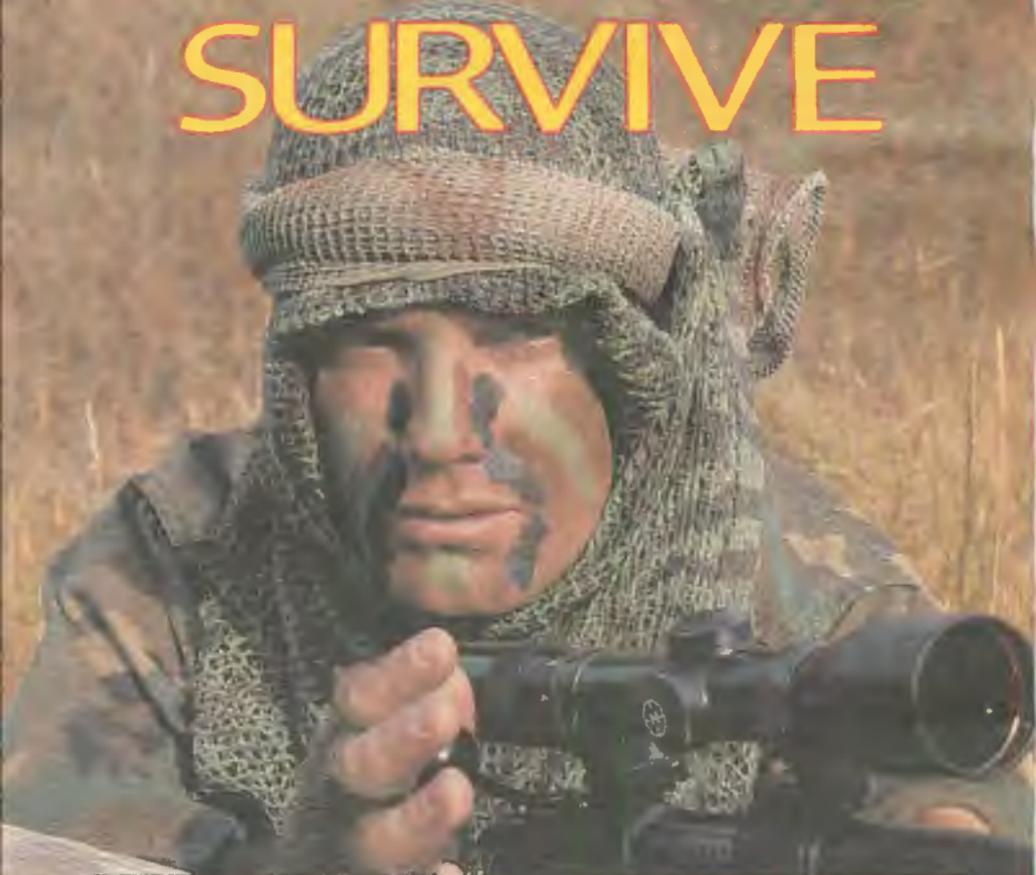
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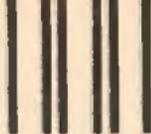
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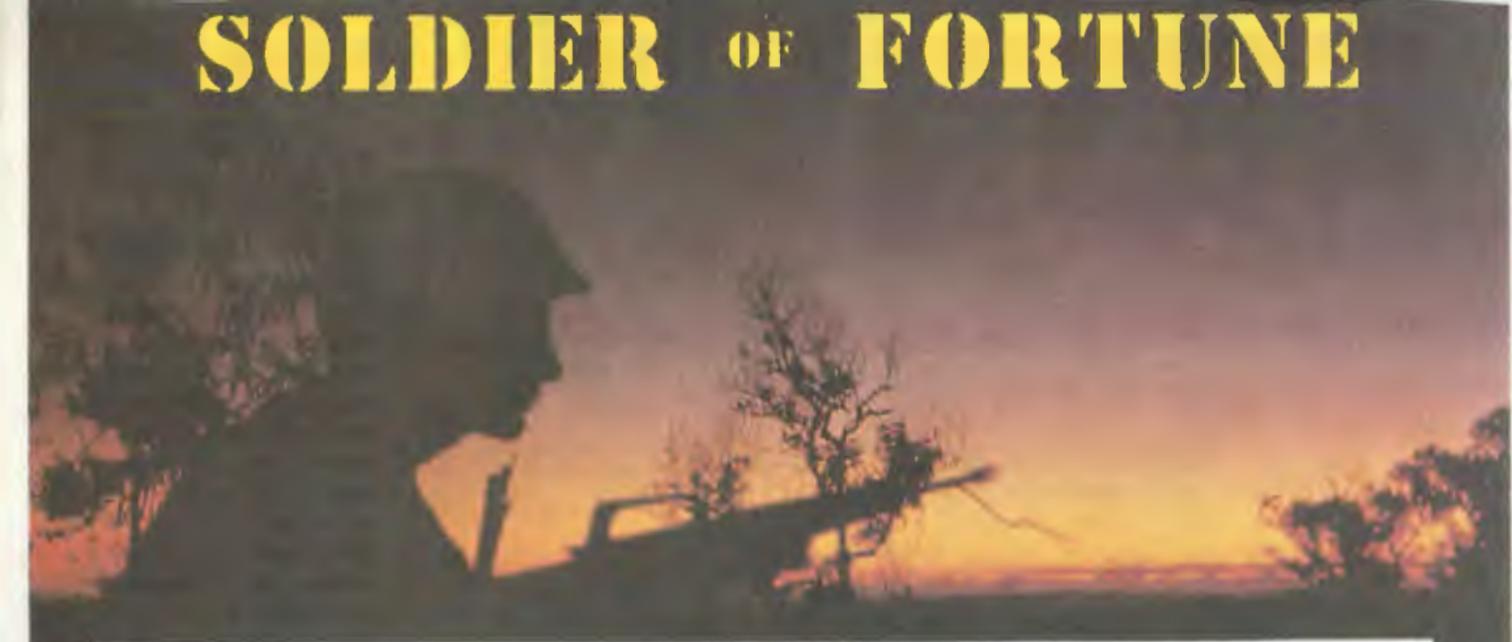
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