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Journal of Professional Adventurers

JUNE  
1985

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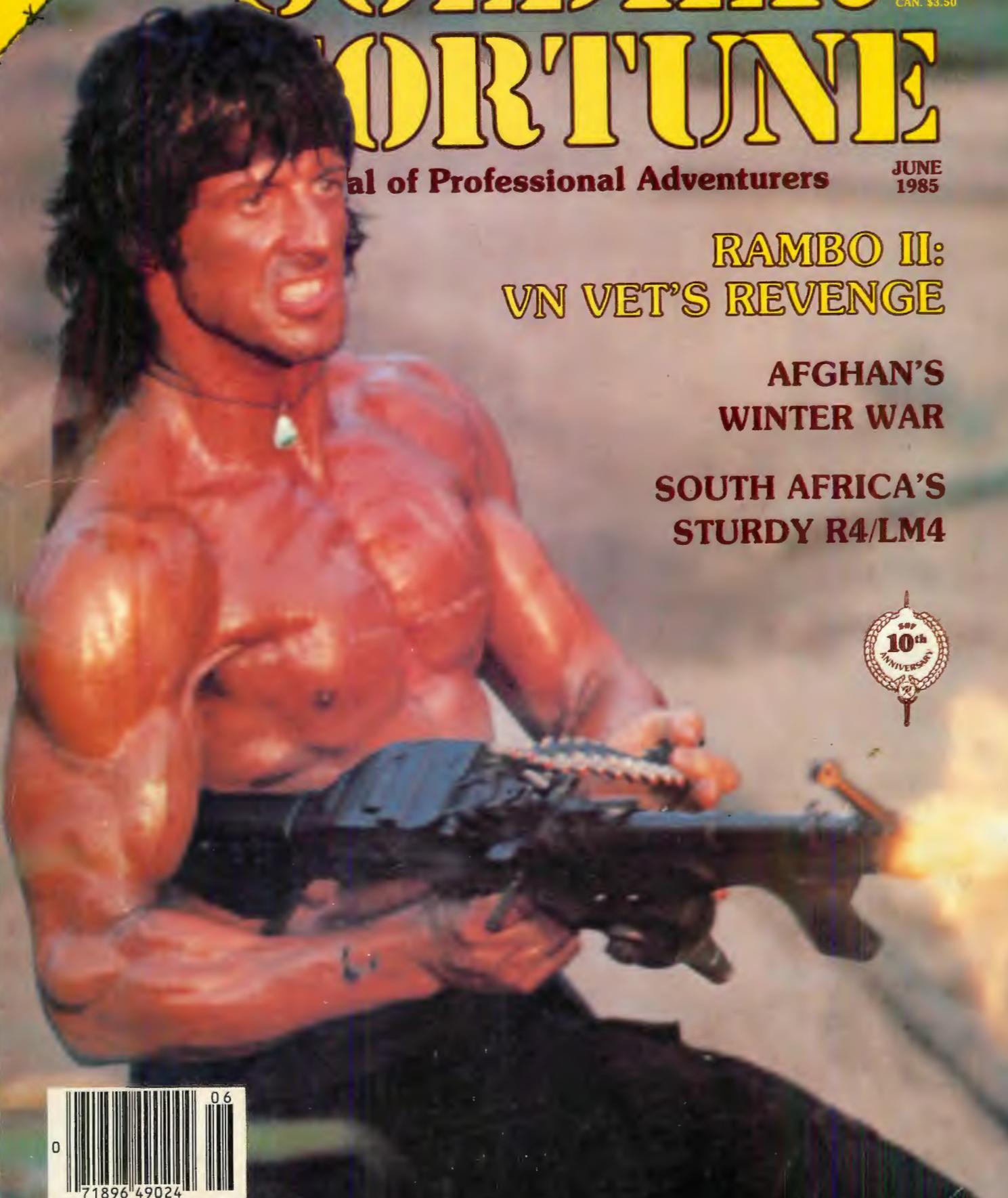
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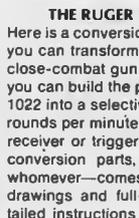
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# DE-BRIEF

by Dale A. Dye, Executive Editor

**T**HEY never showed us marble statues of blind justice or made any apologies for the apparent abrogation of civil liberties, but the officers and NCOs who welcomed most of us into the service of our country did indicate the Uniform Code of Military Justice covered everyone in uniform just like that itchy OD blanket we were issued. We were assured that anyone — private to general — who stepped over the line into what was considered criminal activity would be prosecuted in one form or another under the UCMJ.

Naturally, not many of us really believed it was true but the repeated reassurance of even-handed application gave us some confidence in "the system." That's what makes the apparent injustices in the wake of the Grenada war-trophy controversy so hard for most veterans to swallow. In case you've been asleep since February or otherwise disinterested in military affairs, these are the basic details of the case:



Following the successful U.S. military operations in Grenada, Army and Marine troops returned to the States with captured enemy weapons and some American ordinance items that had not been turned in to authorities. During the ensuing shakedown it became apparent that the trophy-takers could be lumped into four major categories. Some 300 enlisted men brought souvenirs home (legal Makarov pistols, SKS carbines, etc.), declared them with authorities and were given amnesty. These war trophies were examined, registered, brought into compliance with existing regulations and returned to the men who

captured them on Grenada.

Four enlisted Marines who served on Grenada and later in Beirut tried to bring illegal enemy and U.S. weapons (AKs, RPDs, LAWs and grenades) back with them and got caught. Three were court-martialed and one is awaiting his trial. Of the three that have had their day in court, one got a dishonorable discharge and all got busted and sentenced to brig time.

The Army's involvement stems from five soldiers (one officer and four NCOs) who stole five AK-47s from a warehouse on Grenada and smuggled them into this country. They were found out and all five men got nailed. The captain involved was dismissed from the service and the NCOs suffered similarly stringent punishments.

That's all fairly straightforward. The guys who captured legal souvenirs and followed the rules regarding war trophies can now proudly display a significant symbol of their service in combat.

Those who tried to play an illegal game for profit got their asses handed to them by Uncle Sam. And then there is the situation with Vice Admiral Joseph Metcalf III, the on-scene commander of the Grenada operation.

Claiming ignorance of the regulations regarding war trophies taken in combat, Admiral Metcalf brought 24 AKs back with him aboard his personal plane. The illegal weapons were apparently earmarked as presentation items for various officials and senior staff officers. They never got past U.S. Customs agents and the defecation hit the oscillation. To his ever-lasting credit, Admiral Met-

*Continued on page 100*

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**CONSUMMATE  
COMBAT  
HARNESS**

**Peter G. Kokalis**  
Israel's best in the field  
30

**19 CANDLES,  
1 KIA**

**Darwin Stamper**  
Coming of age in  
Vietnam 31

**SOUTH  
AFRICA'S NEW  
RANGE RIFLES**

**Brady Ridgway**  
Springbok civilians' LM4  
semiauto 33

**SL6/7**

**Peter G. Kokalis**  
HK's compact carbine  
36

**ARDE AIMS  
FOR ACTION  
SOUTH OF THE  
LAKE**

**Dale A. Dye**  
SOF training team in  
Nicaragua 40

**BRUCE JONES**

**James L. Pate**  
Real life contradicts  
media hype 50

**RAMBO: FIRST  
BLOOD II**

**Dale A. Dye**  
Standing up for the  
Vietnam Vet 52

**IRRITATING  
IVAN**

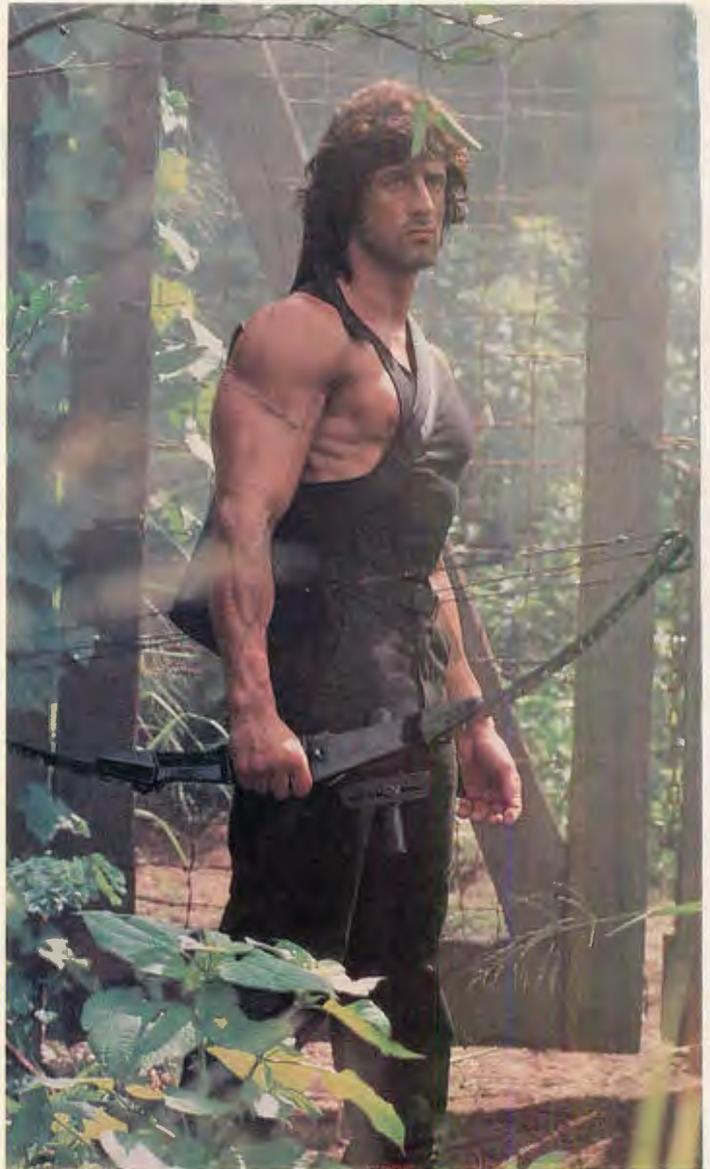
**Mike Winchester**  
The Panjsher VIII  
offensive 58

**SKORZENY**

**Blaine Taylor**  
Germany's legendary  
warrior 66

**HOLDING THE  
LINE IN  
HOLLYWOOD**

**James Monaghan**  
Can technical advisers  
keep it straight? 70



Page 52



**COVER:** Sylvester Stallone as "Rambo" sprays Vietnamese pursuers on his MIA mission in the sequel to *First Blood*. Unfortunately, even the Italian Stallion has to use blanks on a crowded lot. See SOF's sneak peek at Sly's tribute to the Vietnam Veteran beginning on p. 52.

**Bulletin Board 6**  
**FLAK 10**  
**Full Auto 12**  
**In Review 15**  
**I Was There 18**  
**Battle Blades 22**  
**Combat Weaponcraft 24**  
**Adventure Quartermaster 26**  
**Supply Locker 101**  
**Advertisers Index 106**  
**Classified 107**

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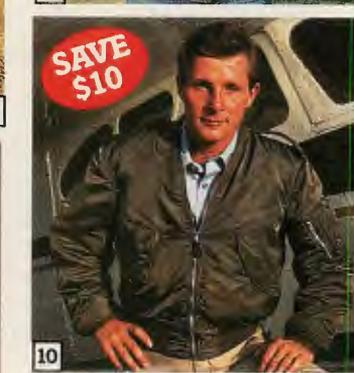
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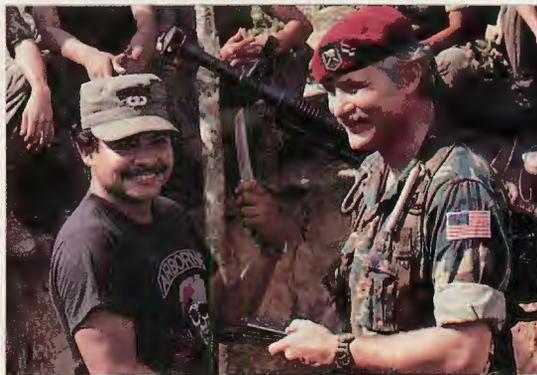
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## COL. AUSTIN?...

Before every Texan cancels his subscription, we thought SOF readers would want to know that Executive Editor Dale Dye *does* know there was no Col. Austin at the Alamo. As the May 1985 SOF went to press, we discovered that "De-Brief" — late copy, filed as we shipped the magazine to the printer — contained a reference to a mythical Col. Austin who died at the Alamo, apparently taking the place of Col. William Travis.



**Lynn Thompson of Cold Steel, Inc. (Dept. SOF, 2128 Unit D, Knoll Dr., Ventura, CA 93003) donated Tanto combat knives with his new plastic tactical sheath for distribution among the Nicaraguan freedom fighters.**

## CHOPPER REWARD...

SOF's \$100,000 bounty for delivery of an Mi-24 Hind assault helicopter applies *only* to Sandinista defectors.



**Group 5, Inc. (Dept. SOF, 206 E. California, P.O. Box 911, Gainesville, TX 76240) has donated a Para-Rescue Pack to the FDN, which Dr. John Peters delivered on SOF's most recent mission to the Nicaraguan Freedom Fighters. The 1872-cubic-inch, folding, weatherproof medical pack provides 23 pockets for field medical equipment.**

## CIENFUEGOS ASSASSINATED...

There is no rear, no safe haven, in a guerrilla war. Lieutenant Colonel Ricardo Aristides Cienfuegos is the latest sad example.

As chief press spokesman for El Salvador's armed forces, Cienfuegos divided his days between the upper class San Salvador neighborhood where he lived in a guarded compound, and his office at *Estado Mayor*, El Salvador's version of the Pentagon. He was usually escorted by body guards when he left his office for daily tennis matches at *Club Deportivo*, a fashionable private sports club.

But he was running late 7 March, so he left his escorts behind. Besides, the club has a private security force. After completing a set with Jorgé Alberto Barraza, a frequent tennis partner, Cienfuegos plopped down to rest on a shaded bench. Three young men, dressed in all-white tennis togs like those worn by Cienfuegos, approached him. Pulling a small pistol, one of the three pumped two shots into the press spokesman's head. As Cienfuegos slumped over dead, the men draped across his head a red banner reading: "F.P.L. — Farabundo Martí," and disappeared into San Salvador's streets.

*Continued on page 100*

# SHERWOOD COVERS ALL VITAL PARTS

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- A CATALOGUE COLLECTION OF 20TH CENTURY WINCHESTER REPEATING ARMS CO. by Roger C. Rule



Products authorized by Winchester (Olin Corp.) in 400 pages (7 1/4" x 10 1/2"). This volume contains a large format, individual photographs of every firearms model in this time frame (from the Turn-of-the-Century to the Great Depression). \$29.95 (plus \$4.00 ship.)

- LC-2 STEEL & ALUMINUM PACK FRAMES 1985 ISSUE

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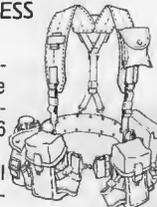
- U.S. ARMY LC-1 (ALICE PACK)

U.S. Army LC-1 (Alice Pack) \$59.95 Brand new G.I. back pack designed to carry loads up to 50 lbs. Complete with shoulder straps, quick release buckles & attachment loops for carrying extra equipment. Water repellent, rip stop nylon. O.D. green.



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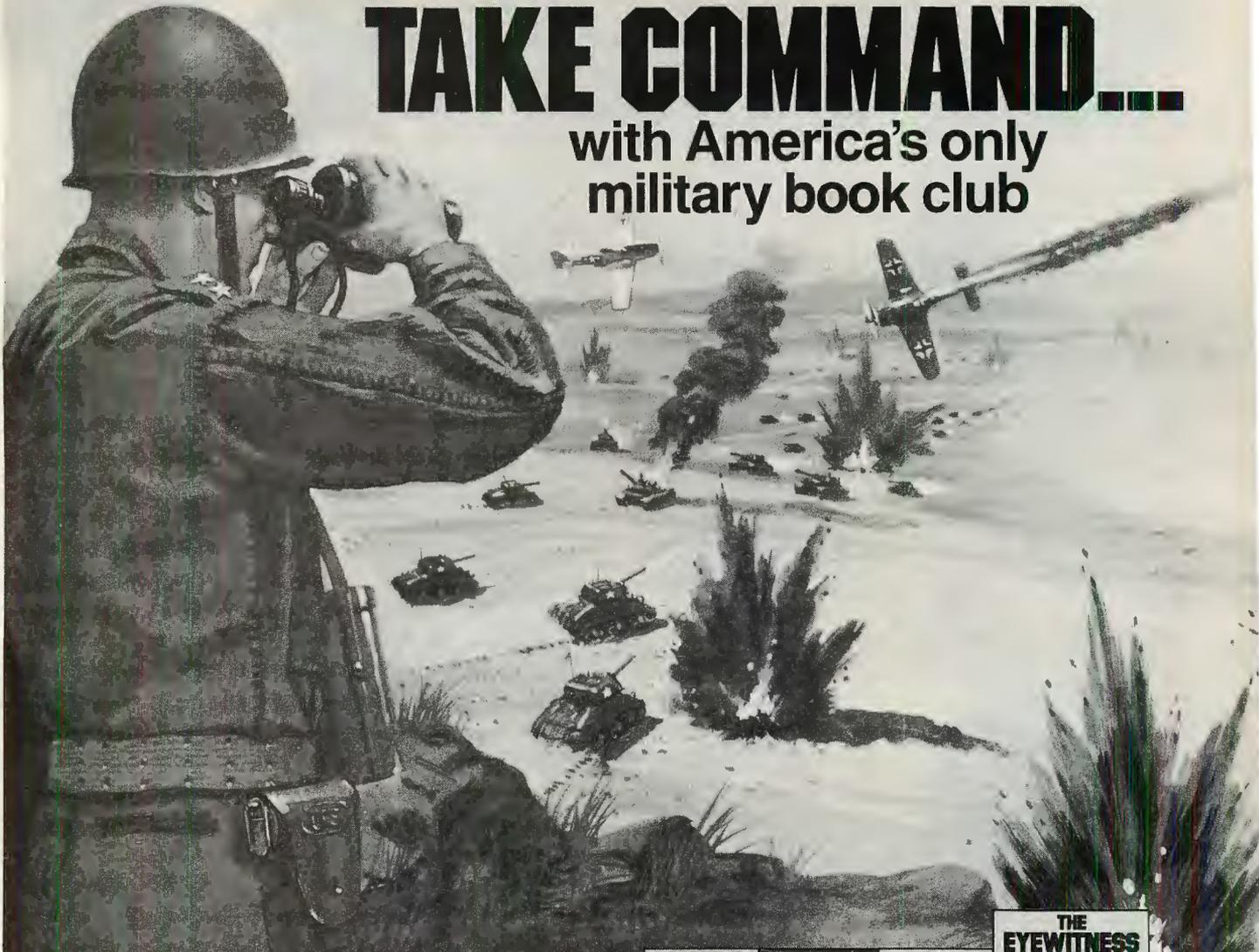
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SOLDIER OF FORTUNE 7

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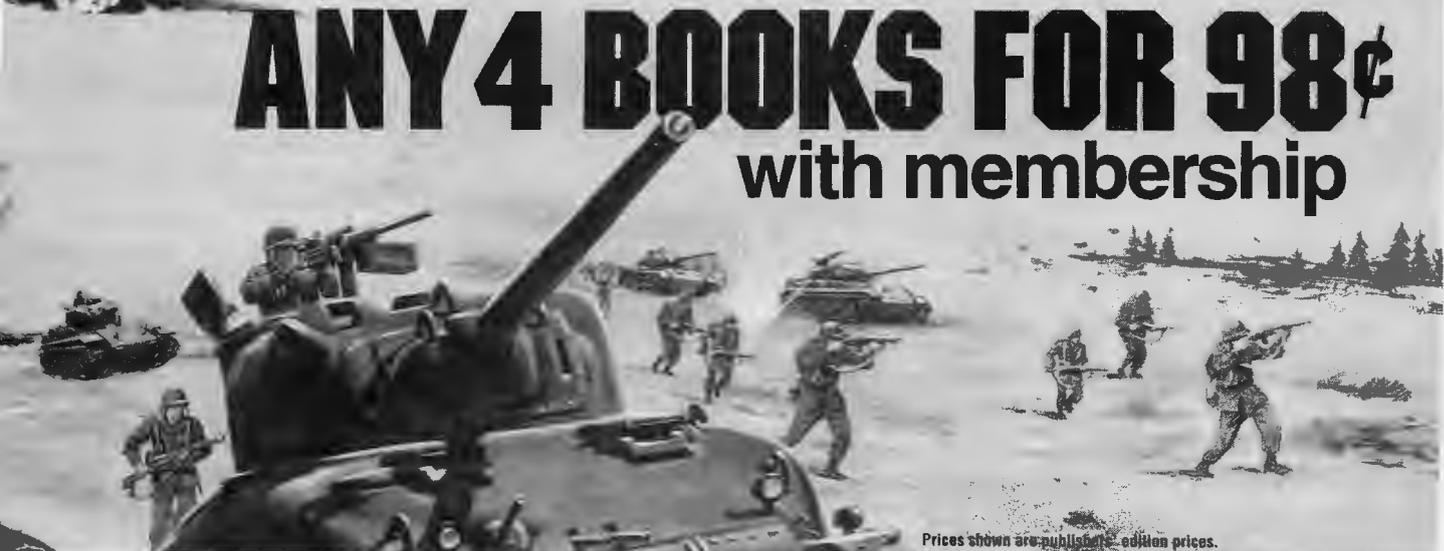
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## THE OTHER SIDE OF CLAYCO...

Sirs:

I was surprised to see that you pulled all magazine ads for China North Industries. This company makes a very fine weapon and the Chinese are not to blame. It is not fair for a few readers who hold a prejudicial grudge (we fought against the Vietnamese, not Asians as a whole) to do a hatchet job on a fine weapon just because of the ad that was published in your fine publication.

Jim Ham

Address withheld

I read month after month about those "sensitive readers" that don't seem to believe in freedom of speech (advertising included). The fight for freedom never ends, so every victory (however small) is still a victory. So let them advertise, their money makes a better SOF.

Charles M. Annis  
Somerset,  
Wisconsin

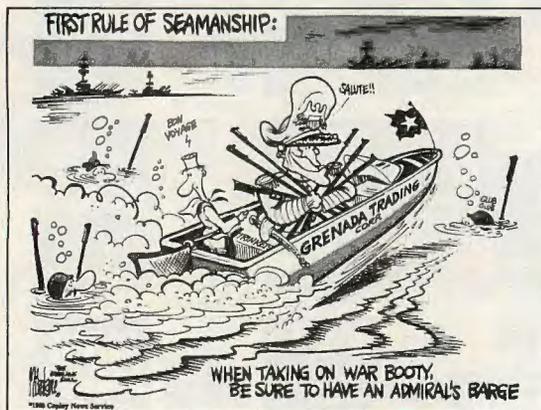
Regarding the Clayco ads: I agree with your position and also have my own position. As a soldier and a student of military small arms, it is imperative to be kept abreast of what is available, how well various weapons function, and the availability of the weapons for hands-on familiarization. Banning the ad from SOF is like sticking our heads in the sand and trying to pretend the world around us does not exist.

Don Bledsoe  
Boise, Idaho

We certainly agree with the views expressed about freedom of speech. The simple bottom line is that the Clayco ad disturbed too many of our loyal readers, many of whom are veterans. We decided to withdraw it from our advertising in support of their feelings.



## FLAK



## COYNE'S LAST STAND ON KARENS...

SOF accepts responsibility for the choice of the controversial title "The Last Battle? Karen Resistance Crushed." Our choice was made without author Jim Coyne's knowledge or agreement when his original title, "Fighting the Whole World" was not used. Karen resistance continues, and the battles go on. The article, however, stands. It is not merely Jim Coyne's opinion that the KNLA suffered military setbacks in 1984, it is fact. Given his past exploits for SOF, neither his reportage skills nor his courage are in question. Rosy reports and optimistic estimates do not insure victory on the battlefield, nor will underestimating one's enemies make them weaker. If there is a lesson to be learned here for the Karen, it is this: complacency breeds defeat.

## BREAKING OUT THE SURPLUS...

Sirs:

Army Reservists and National Guardsmen, break out that extra TA 50 you have stashed in your closets and send it to El Salvador where it will be used. It's a good investment.

SSgt. K.W. Bachmann  
Scout Section  
3/16 Inf. (Reserve)

As you know, SOF has been collecting military clothing and field gear for use by our friends in El Salvador and Nicaragua. All materiel contributions should be sent to the El Salvador/Nicaraguan Defense Fund, 5721 Arapahoe Ave., Boulder, CO 80303.

## THE METCALF INJUSTICE...

Sirs:

I am writing this letter to express my disappointment and disgust with an act by the United States military. The commander of U.S. forces in Grenada brought back to the U.S. several AK-47 assault rifles captured during the conflict in Grenada. I see nothing wrong with that. However, a U.S. Army captain and six enlisted men did the same by bringing back captured AK-47 assault rifles. The soldiers were booted out of the Army, fined, and given prison sentences and the three-star commander received no disciplinary action. Soldiers have been doing this in every war we've been involved in. So what the hell's the problem now?

Stephen D. Pelto  
Boswell, Oklahoma

A gross injustice has been offered in the affair of Admiral Metcalf. It is necessary to address the problem, and I can think of no more qualified personnel than the staff of SOF. I think the Admiral should share an equal fate, or the convicted men should be restored to their former status and all charges dropped. It is hard to swallow when the troops are offered as the sacrificial lambs and the Chief is slapped on the wrist and promoted.

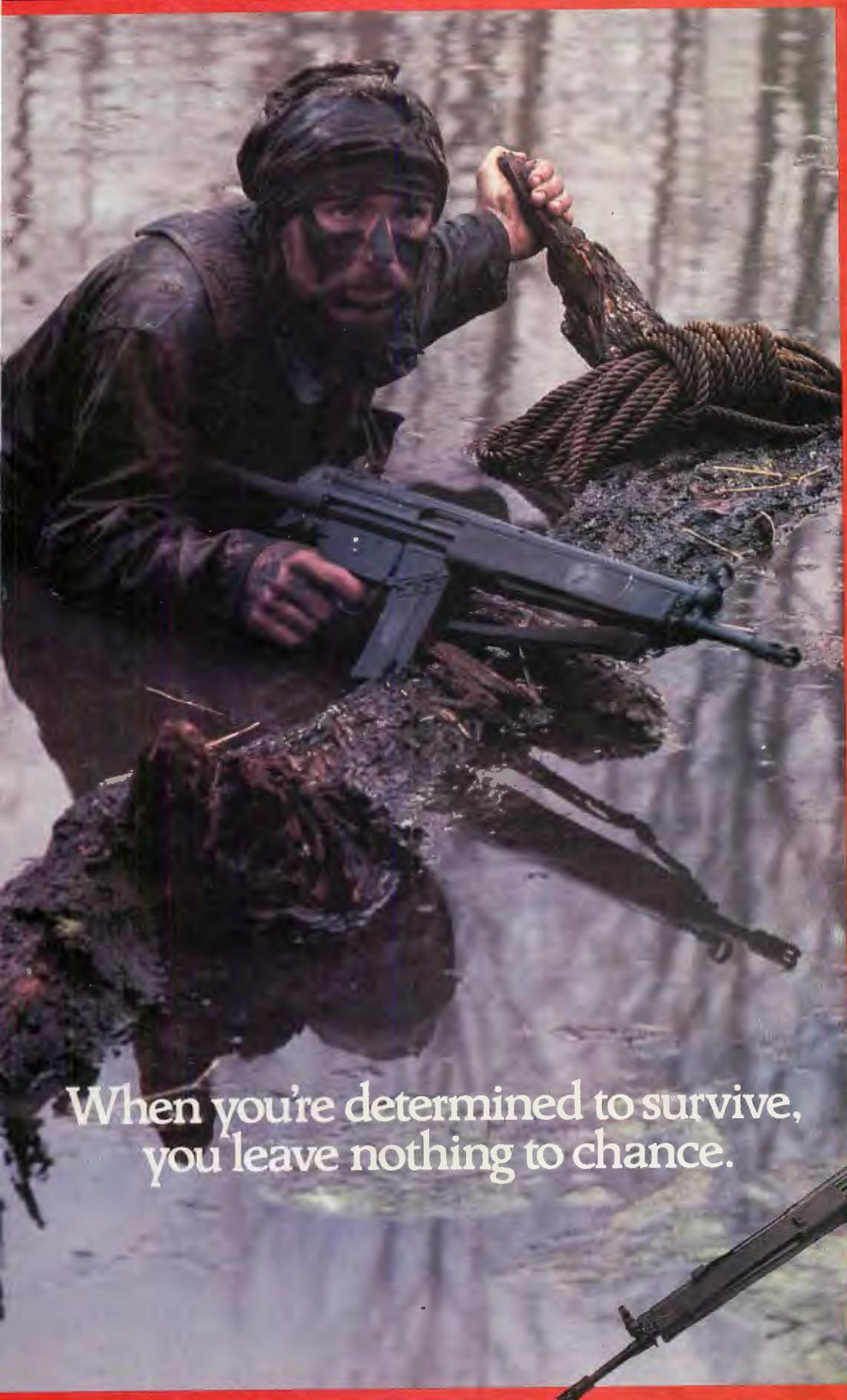
R.E. Burgeson  
Ridgeway, Pennsylvania

I recently heard about the military troops on Grenada not being allowed to take home any captured automatic weapons. I feel this is wrong because the military man who fought in these battles and conflicts put his life on the line for his country and for the preservation of democracy itself. The very least these men deserve is to be able to take home the weapon of their choice.

Chris Cook  
La Junta, Colorado

The situation with Admiral Metcalf and war souvenirs brought home by some of the men who fought on Grenada is unjustifiable. We totally agree that it's a case of selective enforcement of the Uniform Code of Military Justice. We further agree that our fighting men who risk their lives should be allowed to bring home some memorable souvenir of their experience and their sacrifice once they've complied with applicable laws and regulations.

Continued on page 100



When you're determined to survive,  
you leave nothing to chance.

In a survival situation, you want the most uncompromising weapon that money can buy. The HK 91 Semi-Automatic Assault Rifle from Heckler & Koch.

The HK 91 was derived directly from the G3. Its delayed roller-locked bolt system reduces recoil to keep the gun on target. It exceeds the most stringent NATO accuracy requirements—right out of the box. And HK's revolutionary scope mounting system guarantees that you're still zeroed-in every time you mount your scope.

Easy to maintain and take apart, the HK 91 in cal. 308 and the HK 93 in cal. 223 were both designed as parts of an integrated gun system. The HK system of interchangeable parts and accessories enables these precision firearms to adapt quickly to changing tactical situations.

Leading military operations and law enforcement agencies around the world rely on firearms that bear the H&K name. Your choice is equally clear. You can carry an ordinary weapon. Or own the most uncompromising firearm in the world.



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**HK**

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

**T**ERRORISTS creep closer to our shores, bombings and assassinations sweep across the planet like the plague and, in general, U.S. police departments continue to tool around armed with little else than S&W Model 10 .38 Special revolvers with the cylinders rusted shut. I think the boys in blue need a little more firepower and here are some possible suggestions to beef up their arsenals.

The FN FAL rifle is a classic in any of its numerous variants. The G1 (G for *Gewehr*, or rifle) model used briefly by the West German Bundeswehr is one of the most interesting. Salient features are: an unusual two-piece stamped-sheet-metal forearm with an ingenious integral bipod and removable flash hiders, grenade launchers and BFAs (Blank Firing Attachments). It is equipped with the two-piece extractor, improved firing pin with conical rear section, wooden buttstock and the selective-fire option. Some were fitted with a 4x Hensoldt scope mounted to a sheet-metal receiver cover.

These rifles were produced from April 1957 to May 1958 and the contract was for 100,000. They were used for a short time only, though. By 1959 the Germans had asked for a license to manufacture, but FN's dictatorial director, Laloux, went into hysterics and the Germans stalked away in a rage and adopted the Heckler & Koch G3 instead. ARMEM International (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 252, Broderick, CA 95605) has imported a few absolutely new specimens of the G1 FAL which are available to law-enforcement agencies and qualified Class 3 dealers only. They come with the original leather sling, removable flash hider, plastic muzzle cover and one magazine for \$695 plus \$10 shipping. Spare magazines are \$12.95 each and a few black-leather magazine pouches from the Bundesgrenzschutz (Border Safety Police) are also available. The price is right and I would like to see a few of these gleaming beauties on the racks of every police armory in this country.

Dick Swan of A.R.M.S., Inc. (Dept. SOF, 230 West Center Street, West Bridgewater, MA 02379) has original Bundeswehr .22 LR conversion kits for the G1 FAL (or any metric FAL, for that matter, except para models) in excellent condition for only \$279 plus \$5 shipping. The kit includes a wooden chest, .22-caliber barrel sleeve, breech block and bolt assembly, tool to remove the barrel sleeve and two full-size magazines adapted to .22 LR.

#### Reborn Thompsons

The Thompson submachine gun is basic equipment. Everyone needs at least one. Some of us have more.

The Thompson was simplified in



# FULL AUTO

by Peter G. Kokalis

## Cops' Cornucopia



From Africa to El Salvador FALs have been found wherever there was war. Now German FALs (G1s) are available from ARMEM International. Photo: Robert K. Brown

1942 to reduce production costs and time. The M1A1 Thompson has a non-detachable buttstock. The retracting handle moved to the right side of the receiver and the actuator and Blish lock were eliminated. Also, a heavier bolt with fixed firing pin was added and the firing-pin spring and hammer were eliminated. Other changes included a simpler buffer, no compensator, non-adjustable rear sight, no barrel finning and no provision for accepting a drum magazine.

The M1A1 Thompson was manufactured by both Savage and Auto Ordnance. Almost 1½ million were made and they're still hammering away from the Philippines to Guatemala. At 10.5 pounds, empty, it's too heavy for a submachine gun and in .45 ACP, it's overkill. But the "Chicago Typewriter" reeks of nostalgia in any of its various forms and will never lose its collector's appeal. Besides, if you don't have to hump with it, and confine yourself to balloon busting and fun houses, it can't be beat. The "Tommy-gun" has high hit potential at close range, no felt recoil whatever and excellent handling characteristics.

Pearl Manufacturing Corp. (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 728, Grants, NM

87020) is now selling M1A1 Thompson submachine guns fabricated from newly made investment-cast receivers and U.S. government-issue components for \$525. If you've got the G.I. parts they will sell you the finished receiver alone for \$325. They also make MP-40s from new receivers and German WWII parts, and legally convert the HK94 to the MP5 configuration.

#### Browning MG Tripods

Tripods are useful things to have at a machine-gun shoot. They permit you to plunk your gun down on the firing line, sit on a little inflatable toilet seat and spend the weekend shooting down model airplanes while dreaming that you're Burt Lancaster at Pearl Harbor. When used for that purpose — or defending medieval castles — the heavier they are, the better.

Cross Roads Gun Shop (Dept. SOF, 4201 Maple Ave., Pennsauken, NJ 08109) has some FN machine-gun tripods that are built like the proverbial brick shithouse. Their ads claim the tripod was made for the FN MAG 58 GPMG.

Not so.

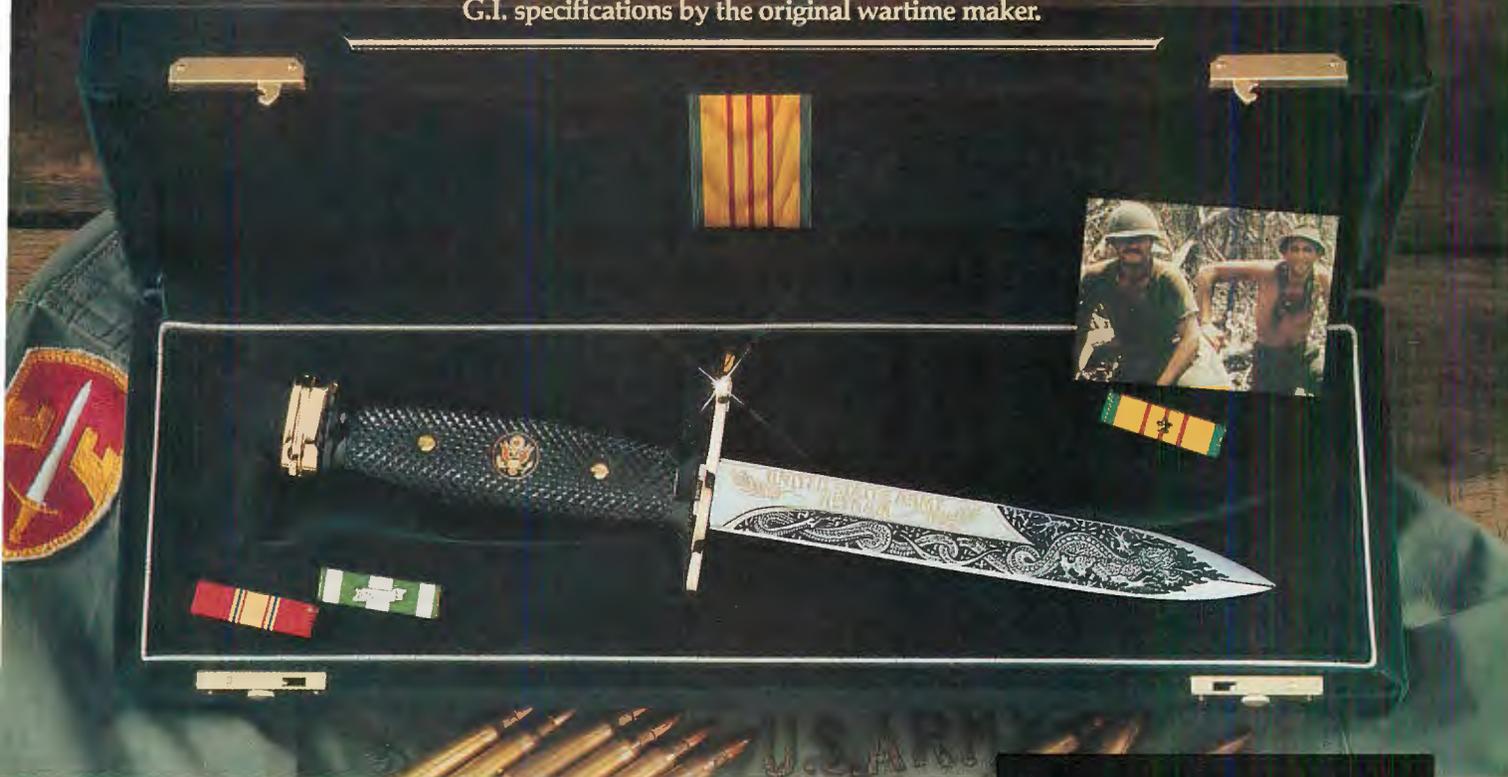
I bought one for that reason, only to find out they will just accommodate the Browning M1917A1 and M1919A4/A6 machine guns. All the better, as there are no more than nine FN MAGs in private hands in the U.S. and

*Continued on page 77*

Announcing...

# THE VIETNAM WAR BAYONETS OF HONOR

A special limited edition, plated with 24-karat gold and made to full G.I. specifications by the original wartime maker.



*"Our destinies are sometimes focused on the sharp point of a bayonet."*

President John F. Kennedy

**T**hey lost no major battle, though they fought in a strange land, against a ruthless, often unseen enemy in America's longest war.

Now, nearly a generation after the Vietnam War began, The American Historical Foundation is proud to remember these unheralded Americans and provide a truly individual memorial to them.

### Bayonet: Symbol of Combat

The bayonet is the symbol of combat—the willingness to close with the enemy and fight eyeball to eyeball. It is representative of the courage of the individual trooper who fought the many small actions that characterized the warfare in Southeast Asia.

For this tribute we selected the identical bayonet issued to combat troops for use on the M16 Rifle.

A special Vietnam War Bayonet of Honor has been created to honor each of the four service branches—the Army, Marine Corps, Navy and Air Force. The first bayonet in the series—now available—honors the U.S. Army.

Whether or not you or a member of your family served in Vietnam, each of these specially made bayonets will give you a renewed sense of pride in the Americans who answered the call to duty.

Each is first and foremost a combat-worthy bayonet, made of the identical original materials to full G.I. specifications. With a total of 16 parts, including two working spring loaded releases, each bayonet is tested to fit the M16.

### Made by Original Wartime Maker

Each re-issue bayonet for this Collection is made in the U.S.A. by the original wartime maker—Imperial Knife Company. They are using the same original tooling that they used during the Vietnam War.

However, that's where all similarity ends...

- The 6½" blade is heat treated, high carbon steel, polished to a mirror finish and deeply acid etched with a tribute inscription and a jungle scene with a dragon and serpent, symbolic of warfare in Southeast Asia. The blade is hard flash chromed to assure lasting beauty and gold-gilt and black enamel inlaid for contrast.
- The grips are specially made of highly polished black phenolic, checkered to the authentic G.I. pattern and inset with a full color cloisonne medallion of the service branch insignia.

- 24-karat gold is thickly plated on the crossguard, two releases, butt, two grip screws and two grip nuts—after they are polished to a mirror finish.
- After the craftsman carefully files, fits and peens together the 16 components that make up this bayonet, he inspects it in all particulars and tests it for fit on the M16. Then the individual limited edition serial number is engraved on the blade reverse.
- Finally, the numbered Certificate of Authenticity is matched with the bayonet, ready to deliver to you.

### Limited Edition Of 2500

Although more than 2,500,000 Americans served in Vietnam, only 2500 of each Vietnam Bayonet of Honor will ever be made, to further assure each Bayonet of Honor rarity, respect and value as a collectible. Serial No. 1 of each bayonet will be presented to the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial Fund for the recognition they have given to all Vietnam veterans.

Contributions will also be made by the Foundation to Vietnam veterans organizations, to help them perpetuate the memory of those who served and to help establish a Vietnam War Exhibit in The American Historical Foundation Museum.

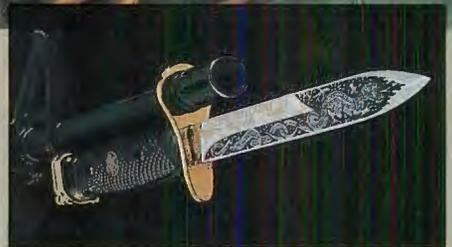
### First Option, Without Obligation

As an added advantage, you will be guaranteed the opportunity, without obligation, to reserve subsequent Bayonets of Honor in this series with the same serial number—so you can systematically acquire a complete matched set. These tributes—one to the Marine Corps, one to the Air Force and one to the Navy—can be reserved by you, one bayonet at a time, in the months ahead. Each will have different blade etchings and grip medallions bearing the symbol of the service branch.

You may also reserve the optional display case, which is covered and lined with jungle green velvet, with the silk ribbon from the Vietnam Service Medal mounted across the inner lid. It is fitted with two closure clasps to store and display your bayonet. The cases are color coordinated for each service branch.

### How To Reserve: Satisfaction Guaranteed

You may easily place your reservation with a small deposit, and credit cards are accepted. You may call toll free (800-368-8080), use the reservation on this page or personally visit. Satisfaction is guaranteed, and there are no shipping charges. For an additional \$15 we will personalize your bayonet by engraving your name, rank and serial number on the blade reverse.



When you place your reservation, you will also be made a Member of The American Historical Foundation, joining men such as yourself in 29 countries around the world who share an interest in—and who helped make—America's great military history. You will also receive special information concerning the care and collecting of military arms and advance notice of all Foundation military projects.

### RESERVATION

Satisfaction Guaranteed or Return in 30 Days for Full Refund  
To: The American Historical Foundation  
1022 West Franklin Street, Dept. A30  
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Telephone: (804) 353-1812  
24-hour toll free reservations: (800) 368-8080

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# IN REVIEW



**TELL IT TO THE MARINES.** By Jack Lewis. Charger Books, Dept. SOF, 34249 Camino Capistrano, Capistrano Beach, CA 92624. 1983. 243 pp. \$12.95. Review by Dale A. Dye.

**W**HEN my friend Jack Lewis first jammed it to the straight-laced establishment with this book back in 1966, I thought only a Marine could fully enjoy his slapshots. On second reading of the hardback edition, I've decided that's too narrow a view. It's also unfair to veterans of Korea (and ever after) in all sorts of uniforms who have run afoul or been befriended by the bad guys and good guys who populate the chain of command above and below us.

It's a brilliant, enjoyable admixture of comedy and human pathos that surpasses the strictly Marine orientation of the story. Lewis has called on his extensive — sometimes embarrassing — experiences in Korea where he served as a Public Information (it was called Informational Services back then) Officer with a Marine aviation outfit. That very setting keeps the author from wallowing in clichés while he deals with some genuinely emotional issues.

The most obvious — and the most familiar to Korea veterans — is his no-win relationship with one of the thousands of Korean orphans who populated rear areas during the "United Nations Police Action." Lewis is skillful enough with characters and plot to win this battle and the bond that develops between his virginal First Lieutenant McCorkle and Henry, the North Korean foundingling who claims to be both Marine and enemy spy, is genuinely moving.

But don't break out the crying towel when you crack the spine on Lewis' work. There are many more laughs than tears inside this book. In fact, Lewis plays many of the most familiar military scenes skillfully enough to bring a smile to even the most jaded campaigner. People who have plotted to produce "Torpedo Juice," "Raisin Jack," "Purple Jesus" or any of the infinite varieties of illegal booze while deployed in the field will love the scheme concocted to keep Lt. McCorkle's band of bandits suitably stewed and out of trouble with the brass.

There is some combat action in Lewis' book and it's a most unusual encounter for modern war literature. A significant scene involves taking mo-



tion pictures of an air strike on enemy positions. It's most unlikely and all-too-familiar for those of us who have humped a camera along with our weapons into combat. There are few writers who can hand you a believable war story involving air combat when the narrator is on the ground rather than in the cockpit, create a view through the camera lens or make an improbable foray in front of the lines. Lewis does all this and still manages to mix it delicately with sacrifice and hero-

ism. He pulls the whole thing off with panache and keeps the heavy psychological stuff to a minimum.

Particularly amusing are the repeatedly frustrated efforts of Korean-era REMFs to burn the band of Marine combat correspondents and photographers off the lunatic fringe and boil them in oil. Those of us who have defied the regulations in combat to bring a little of our own twisted personalities to the war zone can genuinely appreciate seeing guys like Lieutenant Colonel John Ethyl Lionel Barrymore (he changed his name legally from Baronofsky after serving as technical adviser on a John Wayne war movie) get demoted from Wing G-3 to glorified police sergeant after failing to nail McCorkle and his misfits.

**Tell It To the Marines** is replete with genuine Korean-era jargon and dialogue that remains fresh with continued re-reading. Lewis is a master at weaving a confrontation between his characters that tells us more about them than he could possibly build into the narrative. It is one of the book's greatest pleasures and strongest points.

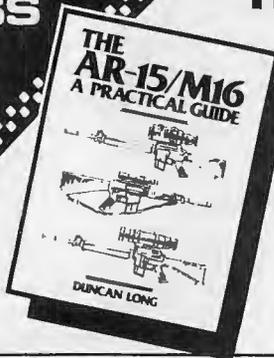
SOF readers will not have to claim service in the Corps or in Korea to enjoy this classic military misadventure. It's light reading at its refreshing best. ✕

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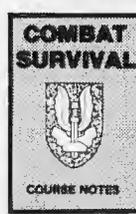
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In 1975 Richard DeLany was platoon commander in A Company, Depot Rhodesia Regiment, training center for most of the Rhodesian Army. He was working with Intake 154 and had about 50 18-year-old National servicemen under his command in three platoons. Just how easy was it to turn these young troopers into proficient bushfighters?

**G**RADUATION exercises were tough in the Rhodesian Army . . . they had to be. Rhodesian soldiers went from training straight into a war for national survival against a ruthless and well-supplied enemy. Sometimes we thought it was a bit rough to pit recruits against the gung-ho volunteers of the Rhodesian Special Air Service (SAS), but that was the best competition we could get. Thank God and the General Staff, the SAS only used blanks.

Llewellyn Barracks was known as a tough training station, but the recruits were always eager to hit the bush for the final exercises. Though ammo was blank, our bush was real. COIN (counterinsurgency) ops couldn't get any more real without bullets.

South of our barracks near Bulawayo, we trained along the fringes of the Tshatshani Tribal Trust Land (TTL). One reason our training was so much like combat was the constant care we took, so close to guerrilla sympathizers in the Tribal Trust. Mugabe's ZANLA terrorists found food and refuge too close to our training area for us to relax.

The evening of our graduation maneuvers, our troops were digging in and camouflaging our night laager. We knew we could expect the SAS recon teams by morning. All the troops had to do to score high marks was to keep these long-service veterans of Africa's dirtiest bush war from infiltrating. The recruits were as worried as they should have been.

Since we had warning, there was time to take countermeasures. We organized a mock night ambush with 20 troops and my Lance Corporal assistant instructor. We had recced a good site about two kilometers from our platoon base camp and the student group leaders went about placing their troops with the aplomb of experts.

The killing group would be located atop a small rise near the intersection of a trail and dry stream bed. Two stop groups would be positioned along the trail itself. Each man, including the two MAG gunners, had a full issue of blank ammunition, and the student ambush commander had pop-up cluster illum flares.

I would send the SAS recon patrol through the ambush area just before dawn. Three tours in Vietnam taught me



# I WAS THERE

## Where Did I Go Wrong?

by Dick DeLany as told to John W. Coleman



**Tough training in the bush is much like combat for these Rhodesian troops.**

that ambush discipline and alertness usually go to hell just before sunset.

The troops moved out just after dusk. Within an hour I received four clicks from the ambush patrol's transmit button. They were in position. Every half hour two more clicks came across. At least the radio operator was still awake.

At night, the Rhodesian bush was dead quiet. As I nodded off in my field cot, I was jolted awake by the sound of hundreds of blank rounds cutting loose. The ambush had been sprung. Intense fire lasted for about a minute, then tapered off. Occasional shots blasted the dark silence. A white star-cluster flare pierced the black sky, then lazily burned itself out as the fragments fell back to earth. Our patrol had tripped up the SAS!

But something was wrong. I glanced at my watch. 0200 hours. The SAS shouldn't have left its camp yet. I grabbed the A-30 radio handset and addressed the second-in-command.

"Sun Ray Minor, this is Sun Ray. What's your sitrep?"

"This is Sun Ray Minor," the corporal responded. "We blew the bush on seven or eight of 'em, but I couldn't see who they were. The first two goddamn pop flares were duds."

I gave the corporal "stand by" and thought about the situation. The ambush party *had* to have caught members of the SAS still training in the area. Who else could they have been?

I ordered the signalman to notify company HQ that an SAS patrol working in our area had been ambushed.

But company HQ wasn't so easily convinced.

There was just enough light to see the signaller's confused expression as he entered my tent. "Sergeant De-

Lany, I just got word from HQ. They verified with the SAS blokes that there were *no* SAS patrols within five miles of here last night."

It was time to hump to the ambush site. That's where the answers would be.

When I asked the lance corporal for a report, he told me the first stop group had seen bodies moving across its front, and had signalled the killing party. The ambush commander had alerted his group and initiated fire with his FN. As the rest of the troops opened up simultaneously, the enemy had scattered in a frenzy. A few ran through the second stop group but most had stayed within the killing zone by running directly away from the main ambush. The corporal was sure that if live ammo had been used there would have been at least a 90-percent kill rate.

Then the lance corporal and I surveyed the ambush area. Instead of boot prints, we found molds of bare feet pressed into the sand where men had run in all directions at once after the kill group opened fire, and then high-tailed down the wash, straight into the muzzles of the stop group. A textbook ambush.

Surely the SAS hadn't gone in barefoot. Someone else had stumbled into our classroom. Who? I was still trying to answer that question when I found a green-lacquered steel cartridge case. Ters.

Our "blank" ambush had attacked and defeated an *armed* ZANLA patrol headed into the Tshatshani TTL. Seven shit-scared terrorists were probably still running. I explained this to the corporal as he gave the casings an unusually careful inspection.

"You know, sarge," he said thoughtfully, "the blanks those guys were using sounded awfully damned loud." ☒





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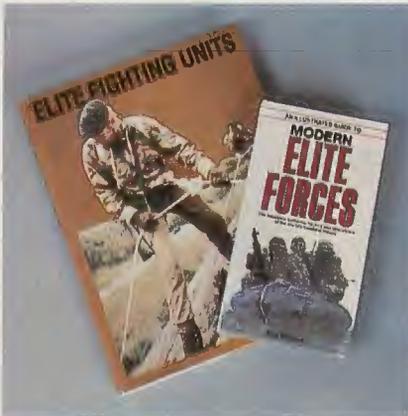


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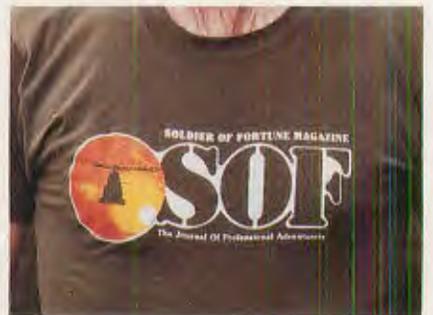
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**D**ULL knives don't cut it. Although knives are the oldest and most widely useful tools and weapons, they're as dangerous when dull as a mishandled firearm. Furthermore, except for putty and butter knives, blades are good tools *only* if they're sharp. The average pocket or belt knife is dull enough to be dangerous or practically useless in most cases.

I can't help the knife owner who is too lazy to sharpen his weapon or tool and I won't have much luck with people who are willing to accept mediocrity but there are some techniques that can turn most people into absolute sharpening geniuses. Here's my method, but be forewarned. When your friends discover your new-found skill, they will pester you to sharpen their knives for them.

Now that you have been amply warned about the perils of becoming a sharpening guru, let's put a keen edge on things. Sharpening a knife, or any edged implement, is a learned, acquired skill. There's no magic involved. It's a matter of three simple steps: establish a burr on the cutting edge, align the burr so that it can cut, and refine the burr.

You're going to need a stone. Day in and day out the best sharpening stone you can get for most knives is a soft Arkansas, or "Washita." It has been



# BATTLE BLADES

by Bill Bagwell

## Keening an Edge



**Soft Arkansas is the only stone for sharp knives, according to Bagwell. Photo: Dale Andrade**

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my experience that most of the synthetic stones are either too coarse or too fine to cut the exact burr required for a fine cutting edge. If you buy one of the honing kits that contain a hard Arkansas, a soft Arkansas, and a can of special honing oil, you haven't done too badly.

Only two of the three items are a rip-off. The hard stone gives such a fine cut that it takes forever to get an edge, and that edge dulls quickly. But the kit's oil is the real problem.

Light lubricating oil eliminates friction. That's its job. And when you want to sharpen a knife, you're trying to *grind* the edge. Oil actually prevents sharpening.

The best thing to do with the oil and the hard stone is to give them to someone you aren't fond of under the guise of a favor. He'll be happy with his unexpected windfall and amazed at your sharpening skill. You can sharpen a knife with your stone and he won't be able to with his.

The stone that *you* are looking for is about four inches long and about one and a half inches wide. Soft Arkansas stones will vary somewhat in roughness and porosity. But the one you want has a surface texture that feels

about like the shell of an egg.

About "oil" . . . you don't want oil, *per se*. What you're looking for is a medium that will keep the steel cuttings from the blade in suspension. That keeps the tiny chips from clogging up the pores of the stone. Most petroleum distillates work well, but diesel fuel and charcoal lighter fluid seem to work best. (Use them only in a well-ventilated area, away from flame or sparks.) The main thing is to use something to keep the stone from loading up. If the stone does clog and stop cutting, simply scrub it out with diesel and an old toothbrush or waterless hand cleaner, and you're back in business.

Now, remember what I said. The sharpening process involves only three things: establish the burr, align the burr, and refine the burr. Here's how we go about it.

Lay the blade on the stone which is covered with the lubricant of your choice. Lift the back of the blade so when the stone cuts the steel it leaves a mark *right on the cutting edge* that is about the width of the mark of a ball point pen. Now rub the knife up and down the stone, and at the same time move the blade from point to hilt. This will sharpen the blade for its full length. This is best done with a slight rocking or rotary motion of the wrist as the blade is moved up and down the stone. Apply a moderate to hard pressure against the stone in order to force the stone to cut the steel. After 10 or 15 strokes, pick the blade up, turn it over, and do the same thing to the other side of the blade.

Now comes the crucial part, and the essential element of this sharpening technique. After both sides of the blade have been honed, lay the blade on the stone, and *using pressure* pull the knife down the stone so that you are moving the blade *away from the cutting edge*. *No matter what anybody else ever told you: DO NOT GO INTO THE STONE AS IF YOU WERE TRYING TO SLICE A THIN LAYER FROM THE TOP OF THE STONE. Go away from the cutting edge.*

Now feel the *side* of the edge on the side of the blade that was up, or away from the stone. You should feel a slight burr or roughness on the side of the edge. If there is no burr present, go through the entire sharpening sequence again. When you do get the burr established, turn the knife over, and place the burr against the stone. Using *absolutely no pressure*, pull the knife down the stone **AWAY FROM THE CUTTING EDGE** as before.

What we are trying to accomplish at this point is to turn the burr we have established, from its original right angle to the cutting edge, to a point where it is in line with it. If you apply too much

pressure at this stage you will simply turn the burr from one side of the edge to the other. If you don't use enough pressure, the burr will simply stay where it is. A little practice will give you a feel for this. Remember that this is an acquired skill and don't get frustrated.

When you have the burr where you can't feel it on either side of the blade, then strop the edge. "Stropping" was something nobody had to teach a few decades ago when men shaved with straight razors but it's become another lost art. Take any piece of smooth-finished leather, your boot-top or palm (I use the edge of a leather knife sheath) and rub the knife edge briskly back and forth on alternate sides. Again, with the edge touching the leather, draw the knife backward, away from the edge. If you have done this properly, your knife will now shave hair from your arm, and the whole procedure will take less than sixty seconds with a little practice on your part.

Some cautions are in order. First, it's hard to get a burr with many stainless steels. And in the same vein, many double-edged daggers will hardly take a burr because of the steep included

angles on their cutting edges. That's an inherent design feature of this style of knife. Accordingly, the most difficult knife of all to sharpen is usually a double-edged dagger made of 440C or 154CM. When you come across one of these, you have to struggle for anything you get.

Also, most new knives — both commercially-made and custom — have their initial cutting bevels established at an angle that is too acute . . . akin to a miniature chisel. These require a bit of work at the outset, since you've got to slowly regrind the edge, and the initial burr will be difficult to achieve. However, once the edge is brought into shape, you will find sharpening much easier.

This technique *will* work on any knife, so don't let these few warnings unduly disturb you. It's just that some styles of knives and some materials sharpen easier than others. This little system will make sharpening your knife one of your easiest chores once you understand it.

Just remember to keep it a secret or you may wind up with more knife-owning friends than you can handle. ✕

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**U**NDER most infantry combat conditions, if you can't be seen you can't be shot. Getting shot is not the goal of most military exercises. It's important to remain relatively invisible to a marauding enemy and that's primarily done through the proper use of camouflage. If your training in camouflage extends only to the wear of the tree-suits issued by Uncle Sam, you have some work to do before the next fire fight.

Although the military doesn't always see it this way, camouflage should be considered a basic weapon in every soldier's arsenal. It's just as effective as an M16 and often a whole lot better at keeping you alive. To understand what camouflage is all about, we need to take a look at exactly what camouflage does.

Any soldier or group of soldiers moving toward an objective is going to have to deal with an alert enemy on the lookout for them. The enemy observation takes two primary forms — direct and indirect.

Direct observation usually means an enemy patrol has spotted you. They may have smelled, seen or heard your movement but the detection was by human beings. Indirect observation usually involves the use of sensors, detection enhancement devices, radar, cameras or other remote equipment which picks up some tell-tale indicator. The key to success in avoiding detection is to fool the observer or his equipment.

Shape, color, texture, shadow, shine and movement attract the prying eyes of enemy observers. The only way to disguise them is to change them and that's where the art of camouflage comes into play. If you can keep the enemy from spotting anything that looks out of the ordinary, chances are good that he won't even notice you.

Be careful to do it right. Camouflage that is improperly applied is as useless as no camouflage at all. It might even help the enemy locate you. Observers who know something is out there are going to be looking extra hard for anything out of place. So know the terrain and vegetation patterns of the area in which you will be operating.

Camouflage considerations should come under pre-mission planning. Recon of terrain and analysis of the mission will generally give soldiers most of the information they need for developing the necessary camouflage. Painting exposed skin areas is an obvious requirement if the enemy is supposed to mistake you for just another bush. Be sure to follow a few simple rules.

All exposed skin should be covered. That includes the face, backs of hands, the neck and ears. The object of camouflage paint is to break the form



# COMBAT WEAPONCRAFT



**This South African trooper knows the value of camouflage — even in the barren bush. It is always important to cover all exposed skin with camo paint or mud.**

of human features into unrecognizable shapes. Areas of the face that reflect light — forehead, nose, chin and cheeks — get a coat of dark paint. The rest of the face creates shadows — use lighter paint, preferably green or light brown. Pattern is determined by surrounding vegetation and light. Make sure you know them before you go out.

Everyone has his own idea as to which pattern works the best. Irregular stripes and blotching work the best for most Northern Hemisphere vegetation groups and most armies are sticking to some variation of that pattern. The tiger-stripe pattern of the Vietnam era was never officially adopted by the U.S. Army but it is still one of the best skin-painting patterns around because it works equally well by day or night.

Uniform and equipment camouflage is a bit more difficult to deal with. Uniforms outline the human form and military equipment doesn't look like much else in most terrain. The camo patterns and colors used in standard U.S. issue BDUs do not work well in all situations. It should not be considered sufficient by itself. You may have to dye your cammies to fit the colors in a particular operational area. If that's the case, do it without hesitation. In most wooded and urban environments the best pattern is a light gray/charcoal coloring along with tan blotches.

## Blending with the Bush

by Greg Walker

No matter what color and pattern you use, it should be further enhanced by the addition of garnish to break the outline of the uniform and equipment. Garnish can be either strips of cloth such as burlap or natural attachments like vines, branches or leaves *taken from the area in which you will operate*. Don't use garnish taken from one area and expect it to match what's growing in another. Replace natural garnish when it loses its color. Since many uniform patterns are predominantly dark and become a solid color when wet, you'll need garnish to keep from looking like a large shadow wandering through the woods. Garnish will keep even a wet uniform from giving away your position.

Equipment camouflage is a bit tougher. You have to paint or tape equipment to blend with the terrain. It wouldn't hurt to stick some garnish on your gear as well. Just make sure it doesn't interfere with the operation of your weapon or access to needed gear. Many types of netting are available and make excellent camouflage when attached correctly. Take care not to fit the netting too tightly to your gear because you want to disguise the shape not reveal it. It might also be a good idea to use some type of veil to disguise the telltale form of head and shoulders. The Portuguese military uses one that does the job perfectly. It's big enough to be used for almost anything you can think of and still fold up into a scarf-sized unit that can be worn around the neck.

The goal of camouflage is to hide yourself from an enemy by becoming part of the natural surroundings. But if you're going to get away with it, a serious study of the area must be conducted before deployment so that the appropriate camouflage can be selected. By hiding and blending correctly with the natural environment, anyone stands a good chance at remaining undetected in a combat operation. Remember that camouflage is more than just face paint and a few sticks and leaves stuck in a helmet. It is an art and a military skill that takes continuous practice to master. ✕



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|      |      | 10  | Black Cat Bottle Rockets - 25 gr./ps. - \$90.00 case      |             | 5.00         |       |      |      | 45  | Cherry Smoke Balls (assorted colors)                | 1.50        | 15.00         |       |
|      |      | 11  | Whistling Moon Travelers - 25 gr./cs. - \$120.00 case     |             | 7.95         |       |      |      | 46  | Small Tanks   | 5.50        | 60.00         |       |
|      |      | 12  | Fierce-Tiger Soaring Rocket                               | 6.00        | 60.00        |       |      |      | 47  | Pull Fireworks - Burglar Alarm                      | 2.50        | 25.00         |       |
|      |      | 13  | Clustering Bee Rocket                                     | 6.00        | 60.00        |       |      |      | 48  | Cigarette Loads                                     | 2.50        | 25.00         |       |
|      |      | 14  | Wild Geese Rocket   | 6.00        | 60.00        |       |      |      | 49  | Auto Foolers (whistle, smoke and bang)              | 5.00        | 50.00         |       |
|      |      | 15  | Butterfly Rocket  | 6.00        | 60.00        |       |      |      |     |   | PKG.        | 02 PKG        |       |
|      |      | 16  | Parachute Rocket with Flare                               | 6.00        | 60.00        |       |      |      | 50  | Red Rat Chasers (gross to pkg.)                     | 7.00        | 70.00         |       |
|      |      | 17  | 4 oz. Skyrocket w/Stars or Report                         | 8.00        | 80.00        |       |      |      | 51  | Party Snappers (50 to pkg.)                         | .75         | 7.50          |       |
|      |      | 18  | 6 oz. Skyrocket w/Stars or Report                         | 9.00        | 90.00        |       |      |      | 52  | Aircraft Carriers (2 to pkg.)                       | 2.50        | 25.00         |       |
|      |      | 19  | 8 oz. Skyrocket w/Stars or Report                         | 10.00       | 100.00       |       |      |      | 53  | Champagne Party Poppers (pkg. of 12)                | 1.80        | 18.00         |       |
|      |      |     | <b>Night Display Shells</b>                               | <b>EACH</b> | <b>DOZ.</b>  |       |      |      | 54  | Whistling Jacks (6 to pkg.)                         | 1.00        | 10.00         |       |
|      |      | 20  | Saturn Missile Battery - 12 shot                          | 1.50        | 15.00        |       |      |      | 55  | Rocket Guns (pkg. of 12)                            | 6.00        | 60.00         |       |
|      |      | 21  | Saturn Missile Battery - 25 shot                          | 2.70        | 30.00        |       |      |      | 56  | Ground Bloom Flower (pkg. of 6)                     | .90         | 10.80         |       |
|      |      | 22  | #100 Floral Shell   | 7.95        | 70.00        |       |      |      |     | <b>Sparklers and Fountains</b>                      | <b>BOX</b>  | <b>02 BX.</b> |       |
|      |      | 23  | #200 Floral Shell   | 9.95        | 89.95        |       |      |      | 57  | Sparklers - 10", Case of 1 gross \$35.00 (8 to box) |             | 3.50          |       |
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|      |      | 28  | Kaleidoscope  | 3.50        | 35.00        |       |      |      | 61  | No. 3 Assorted Colors Cone - 7" Fountain            | .90         | 9.00          |       |
|      |      | 29  | Garden-in-Spring  | 5.25        | 52.00        |       |      |      | 62  | Jumbo Carnival Cone                                 | 1.75        | 18.00         |       |
|      |      | 30  | 96 shot Colored Pearl                                     | 8.00        | 80.00        |       |      |      |     | <b>Roman Candles</b>                                | <b>DOZ.</b> | <b>GROSS</b>  |       |
|      |      | 31  | 48 shot Colored Pearl                                     | 3.50        | 35.00        |       |      |      | 63  | Roman Candle - 5 shot                               | 4.50        | 50.00         |       |
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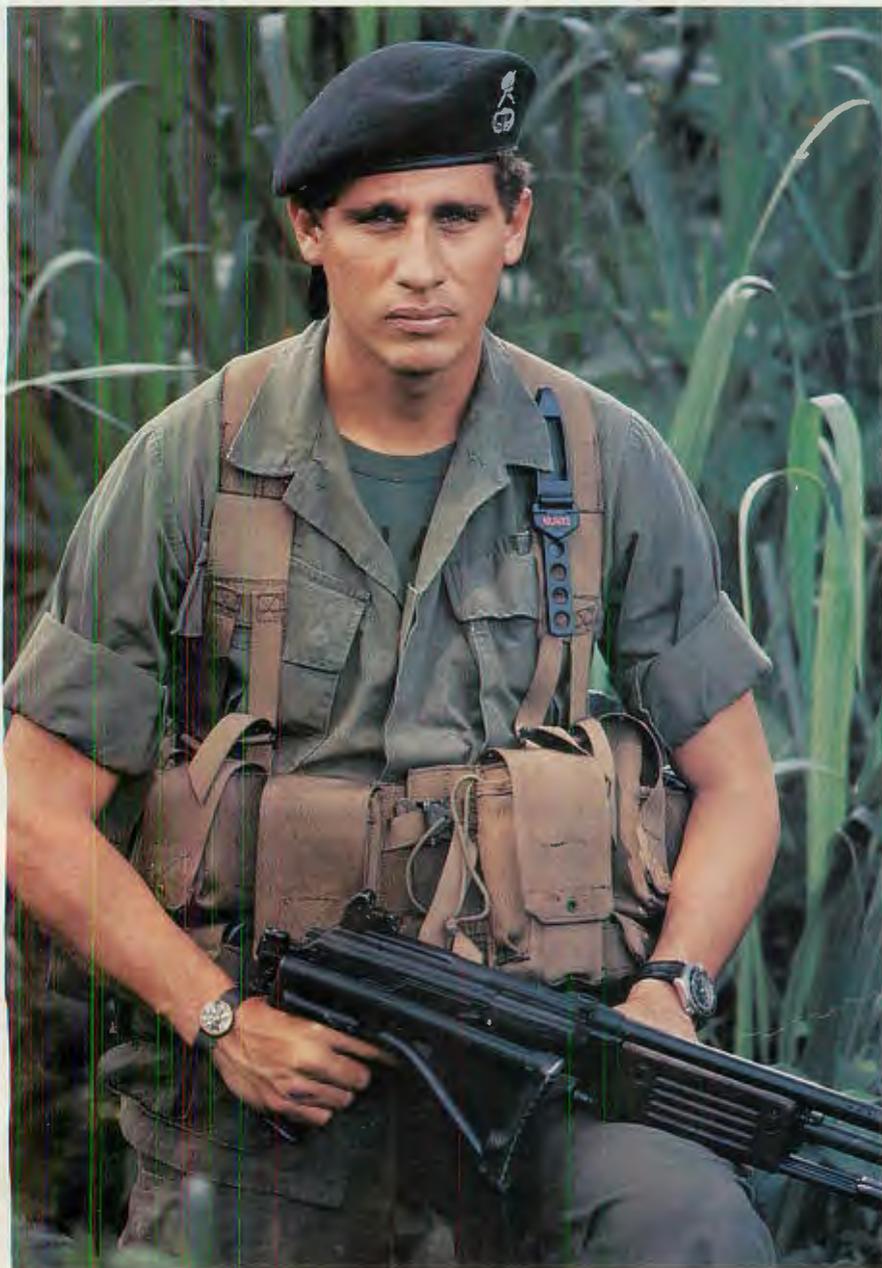


# CONSUMMATE COMBAT HARNES

by Peter G. Kokalis



Rear view of IDF combat harness showing butt pack and method of attaching U.S.-style canteens to spaces between the harness segments. GI flashlight is held by open elastic pocket at rear of the left segment.



Salvadoran 1st Lt. with IDF combat harness and Galil ARM captured from the Gs.

**E**VER since primitive man first slung *atlatl* darts over his shoulder with straps cut from animal skins, the combat harness has been with us in one form or another. As the technology of warfare increased in complexity, so did the infantry soldier's burden. Striding over the battlefield like a walking pantry of gadgets and weaponry, the modern tank-killing grunt is the highest point of this evolutionary line.

By World War II the individual's combat load was approaching the unbearable. Carried in rucksacks on the back, much of the equipment was oriented toward individual creature comforts, such as sleeping gear, spare socks and sometimes even extra boots. Unfortunately, most of this ended up in a muddy ditch next to the gas mask. As the infantry's mobility accelerated, items required for sustained comfort and survival were dropped from the individual's inventory in favor of gear necessary to accomplish the infantry's more immediate goal — to meet with and destroy the enemy.

Anyone who has humped with U.S. combat suspenders hooked to a pistol belt and butt pack, while canteens flop up and down on the pelvic bones with each agonizing step, can remember numerous shooting pains in the lower back. Here is the new Army, armed with the superlative M249 SAW and M16A2 rifle trudging around wrapped in their LC-1/2 strait jackets. Our northern neighbors are in even more dire straits. A Canadian gravel technician (grunt) can accommodate only a gas mask and canteens on his pathetic webbing and must carry rifle magazines in his fatigue pockets.

But no one hauls a heavier load than the Israeli soldier. The IDF MAG58 gunner carries, in addition to his personal equip-

*Continued on page 74*



Troopers from "The Big Red One" double-time across a clearing during a firefight with Charlie. Photo: AP/Wide World

# 19 CANDLES



## 1 KIA

by Darwin Stamper

**O**UR booted feet crept carefully along the muddy trail. Fighting the solid wall of humid heat that pulled at us made every step an effort. It had just rained and the tangled jungle seemed to boil beneath a mask of steam. It wasn't a good place to be. So why were we there? Because the CO said so, that's why.

Alpha Company took one trail and Bravo Company another. I was with Charlie Company and our mission was to secure an LZ. It was hard to tell exactly where we were going to find one in the triple-canopy that soared above us, but those were the orders.

Earlier that day, 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry, 1st Infantry Division, had been airlifted out of Dau-Tieng and plopped onto an

LZ someplace to the north — it's hard to tell where when you're just a grunt. The brass didn't confide in grunts.

I was getting very uneasy; there were too many trails here and most of them were criss-crossed with Ho Chi Minh sandal tracks. It was almost a relief to move into the swamp that blocked our path. At least in there we could hide from Charlie — that's what we thought at first. After only a few steps into the fetid slime hole, Charlie became a remote problem. We had something worse to worry about.

Leeches swarmed us, squirming under uniforms and attaching themselves anywhere they could. Those evil black blobs were everywhere and when you moved your

foot, the bastards would change direction and follow. Such are the miseries of humping through the bush. Finally we emerged from the swampy area and climbed a gradual slope. I didn't see any more leeches but VC foxholes and punji sticks became a common part of the landscape. It didn't take many brains to figure out that we were moving into some shit.

Parting a bush before him, the point man found himself in the middle of a rice cache. Sixty bags of rice, each bag probably weighing 200 pounds, were laid out like sandbag trenches. Our platoon set up security while the Company Commander checked out the area, rooting out another rice cache a little farther up the trail. Charlie



hands drawn up under him. He was crying and shaking like a pathetic dog. I went over to him not knowing how to handle the situation. Something had to be done.

I grabbed his shoulder. "Let's go, Sarge." I was embarrassed by his cowardice but I couldn't leave him there. "Move Sarge. We've got to get out of here. Everybody else is leaving and if we don't move fast, we will be alone and the gooks will be all over our asses." He stared blankly at me.

"I can't move, man. My legs won't move." Patience drained away from me.

"We got to do it now, Sarge. We ain't got much time." I jerked him to his feet, thrust his weapon into his clenched fists and got him started. I couldn't see anything behind us so I let loose a burst of 20 up the trail, spraying left to right. When I turned around, Sarge was flying down the trail, his feet hardly touching the dirt. Later, when I caught the tail end of the column, I heard a familiar bellow. Old Sarge was roaring orders at his platoon, acting like a real hard-ass now that he was inside the protection of the perimeter. But at least two of us knew the real story.

Morning dawned as hot and humid as the one before. Orders came down the line and we moved back up the trail to kick the VC out of their positions. Our company was in the lead. We stayed off the trail — no one wanted to stumble on any boobytraps — until we found where Bravo Company had met its misfortune. It looked as though the VC had vanished into thin air but we wanted to find out why they had fought so hard to keep us out of the area. They usually ran like rabbits when a large U.S. unit pushed them, unless you had them cornered or they wanted something real bad. Then they fought like hell.

Maybe if we stayed for awhile, we would find out what was up. The company perimeter went in with the practiced precision that can only come from months of working as a team. Bravo set up down the trail from us.

Later that day, things heated up. A platoon from Charlie Company ran into a group of gooks and Bravo got probed again. I guess they just weren't lucky this trip out. Those actions wouldn't have meant much except for one thing: both units were miles apart. Charlie was out there in force and we were going to meet him soon. And there was still that perplexing question: Why was this unit of VC willing to take on a battalion of infantry?

We feverishly cleared fields of fire, dug our holes a little deeper and waited for the answer. That night they probed our lines. It didn't work. We weren't about to give away our machine-gun positions just because a few gooks took pot-shots at us. That's fire discipline. Instead we called in arty, a decision we would soon regret.

HE rounds poured down right on cue. Unfortunately, the first round landed right inside our perimeter. A crunching explosion — then silence. Even the insects stopped

*Continued on page 90*

hadn't been going to bed hungry.

Heavy firing erupted on our right. The shit had hit the fan and Bravo Company was in the middle of the storm. The battalion CO's gravelly voice crackled over the radio ordering us to link up with Bravo. Snatching up rucksacks and weapons, we snaked cautiously through the jungle; you never know when you'll trip a boobytrap or an ambush.

Our platoon took the left side of the trail and set up security. We were to provide a screen so that Bravo Company could move its casualties down the trail to the LZ for extraction. I was set up on the trail so I could get a good look at the procession and still watch the jungle. Bravo Company was bringing its wounded down first: about a dozen as far as I could count. Then the dead came down on stretchers made of tree branches and ponchos, the now-useless steel pots, weapons and web gear stacked on top of their bodies.

It's kind of an eerie feeling. You could look at a hundred dead gooks piled in pools of their own blood and get used to it, but when you saw just one dead GI lying there on a stretcher with just his hand showing from under the poncho, you felt it in your soul. I'm glad I didn't have to look underneath those ponchos.

A burst of automatic fire from the direction of the LZ pulled my thoughts back to

**Searching for VC is never easy: A 1st Infantry Division patrol crosses a swamp under the constant threat of sniper fire. Photo: AP/Wide World**

our dilemma. Bravo was trying to disengage and pull back through our perimeter. As they filtered through us, they had that haunted look about them that said they had just stared into a little bit of hell. They took up positions with us and waited for another attack.

The firing sputtered out around us. Through the combat-honed concentration of a grunt waiting for the enemy, I heard a booming voice. "Get that shit off those bodies." Captain Griffin, our old CO, was pissed. Striding up to one of the stretchers, he started kicking steel pots and other equipment to the side of the trail.

"These are soldiers, not bags of garbage and goddamn it, you treat them like soldiers." He was raising hell but I felt better just knowing he was there. This guy had an acid tongue and he could be as obnoxious as a wounded bear but, by God, he could lead. I knew we would be OK.

No one slept that night. Personal images of this strange war marched through our brains. Nobody spoke. I couldn't help remembering a platoon sergeant from Bravo Company. As we were pulling back down the trail, I saw him lying behind a tree, both

# SOUTH AFRICA'S NEW RANGE RIFLES

## Getting the Most From Galil and Kalashnikov

by Brady Ridgway



**C**IVILIANS in South Africa — particularly border farmers and cattlemen — have unusual home-defense requirements. Constantly threatened by bands of heavily armed insurgents and an escalating terrorist movement, most of the people with something to protect relied on second-hand FN FALs, Ruger Mini-14s, AR15s and an odd lot of weapons imported prior to the mandatory United Nations arms embargo on South Africa in 1977.

Until recently, they couldn't afford to do much better. Civilian firearms are expensive, difficult to obtain and practically impossible to maintain given the scarcity of spare parts. That situation has been remedied with the introduction of a home-grown, semiauto assault rifle made by ARMSCOR, South Africa's government-owned military-equipment manufacturer.

Lytleton Engineering Works (ARMSCOR's small-arms factory located in Pretoria) has begun production of the LM4, a civilian version of the R4 assault rifle which is quickly replacing FN FAL and HK G3 rifles as the South African Defence Forces' standard infantry weapon. The R4 is a slightly modified version of the Galil

**With bipod and 35-round magazine, LM4 is fired from cover.**

made under license from IMI (Israeli Military Industries — see SOF, July '83). The civilian version of this popular rifle is practically identical to the military weapon with the exception of a plastic foregrip which replaces the wooden grip on R4. The LM4 does everything an R4 will do, except fire full-auto.

It's a relatively easy weapon to evaluate but I was forced to do it without official corroboration or cooperation. Information of ARMSCOR activities is hard to get and release of technical data is strictly controlled by the South African Defence Forces. They denied my repeated requests to visit the manufacturing plant and remained silent regarding details, so I was forced to simply get my hands on an R4 and an LM4 and head for the bush to give them a workout. These are some of my observations.

Lytleton Engineering Works has modified the basic Galil for the SADF by lengthening the folding stock slightly to accommodate the larger dimensions of the average

South African trooper. The R4 and LM4 both operate with the same basic action that the Israelis borrowed from the Soviets.

As anyone who has fired any of the 5.56 NATO Kalashnikov spin-offs knows, the bolt group slams rearward with considerable force at each shot. And the empty cartridge case is ejected a good distance from the rifle. This violent cycling strains the receiver after long use and the South Africans have remedied the problem by inserting a plastic buffer at the rear of the receiver well.

ARMSCOR has solved the Galil front-sight-base weakness by strengthening the metal walls of the mounting on both the R4 and the LM4. This is a definite improvement in design. Many Israeli soldiers armed with standard Galils discovered in Lebanon that a hard rap *will fracture* the sight. Replacement of the Galil metal stock and wood foregrip (on the LM4) with plastic versions is also a boon to shooters.

The metal and wood add to the Galil's hefty weight but synthetic materials have made the R4 and the LM4 significantly lighter. Nylon is used in place of steel in the stock tubes. I was worried about strength



ABOVE: The R4 is quickly replacing the FN FAL and HK G3 rifles as the SADF's standard infantry weapon. Photo: David Mills. BELOW: Shooting from the hip with the LM4. The 50-round magazine is heavy and cannot be used with the bipod.



and durability when I bought my LM4, but the salesman propped the rifle on its bipod — stock extended — and jumped up and down on the rifle without damaging it at all. I was sold.

From the U.S. Army to the SAS, many expert combat riflemen complain about carrying handles on assault rifles. If the handle's there, some fool is going to carry the rifle by it into a fire fight and die because he isn't ready to instantly return fire. ARMSCOR apparently believes in that scenario. The familiar Galil carrying handle has been eliminated on the R4 and LM4. The troopies who carry the R4 — myself included — have found the carrying handles to be a dangerous nuisance. Operational troops in Southwest Africa used to cut the handles off R1 rifles (FALs) before the R4s were issued.

LM4s come equipped with the same old, inconvenient, noisy Kalashnikov selector but there has been an improvement. On both the R4 and LM4 a supplementary selector has been positioned at the top of the pistol grip on the left side. It helps the situation but the action on my LM4 is stiff enough to break your thumb and left-handed shooters practically have to be double-jointed to operate it. Oddly, the back-up selector operates backward from what experienced shooters would expect. The lever must be

moved *backward* using the tip of the thumb in order to select "S" (semiauto) or "R" (repetition). Moving the lever forward onto safety is not much problem for anyone with average strength and dexterity.

Despite that design freak, it's not hard to understand why ARMSCOR decided to put the extra selector on its version of the Galil. The Kalashnikov design of the original weapon features a long sheet-metal selector lever on the right side of the receiver. It's slow to reach because the firer must remove his hand from the pistol grip and the lever action is usually stiff. There is a dangerously loud click when the lever is moved from one position to another. In South Africa many troopies remedy the situation by prying the lever away from the receiver with a screwdriver. I don't recommend it. In my experience that loose lever is a guarantee that the safety will be flipped off in the bush.

The ARMSCOR LM4 comes equipped with a standard 35-round magazine which is identical to the Galil magazine and subsequently interchangeable. Additional 35- and 50-round magazines are available as optional extras. The 50-round magazine provides an impressive amount of potential firepower but the length of this long box precludes use with the bipod in the prone position. It also negates the weight-saving of the synthetic furniture.

## R4 ASSAULT RIFLE SPECIFICATIONS

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| <b>Cartridge:</b>       | ..... 5.56 NATO   |
| <b>Operation:</b>       | ..... gas, rotating bolt, selective fire  |
| <b>Weight:</b>          | ..... (empty) 9.46 lbs. (with 35-round magazine) steel 11.22 lbs., nylon 10.63 lbs. |
| <b>Capacity:</b>        | .... 35- or 50-rd. magazine   |
| <b>Length:</b>          | butt extended ..... 39.57 in. butt folded ..... 29.13 in.                           |
| <b>Barrel:</b>          | ..... 18.11 in.   |
| <b>Rifling:</b>         | 6 grooves, 1 turn in 11.81 in.  |
| <b>Rate of Fire:</b>    | (cyclic) 650 rds./minute  |
| <b>Muzzle velocity:</b> | ..... 3,215 fps   |
| <b>Manufacturer:</b>    | Lyttleton Engineering Works (Pty), Pretoria   |
| <b>Status:</b>          | ..... Current production  |
| <b>Service:</b>         | South African Defence Force   |

## ARMSCOR UPDATE

South Africa has paid a stiff price for clinging to apartheid. In 1963 the United States government expressed its displeasure by placing a unilateral embargo on arms sales to South Africa. In 1977 the United Nations imposed a mandatory arms embargo on all members including South Africa. Finally, additional regulations were issued in 1978 that prohibited all arms exports from UN member nations to the South African military and police. All that has led to a difficult and potentially dangerous situation.

As terrorism increased and the South African arms stockpile dwindled, it became clear that something had to be done about supplying adequate weapons to the nation's defense and law-enforcement agencies. The Republic of South Africa sought to solve the problem by creating its own defense industry. A state-owned munitions industry, ARMSCOR, and its small-arms manufacturing facility, Lyttleton Engineering Works, were established. They prospered under the pressure of the arms embargo and took up the military-hardware slack by producing the FN FAL under license as the R1 and the IMI Galil variants under license as the R4 and R5.

ARMSCOR did so well that in 1982 they began seeking export markets for small arms, military vehicles and electronic and telecommunications equipment. South Africa was making a concerted effort to export in light of successful arms production and in spite of the embargo. But their problems in this area have not ended.

In December 1984, South Africa once again faced opposition from the UN. A Security Council resolution was passed unanimously, calling for an embargo on the purchase of arms from South Africa.

— Kim McMichael



**South African troops assault a terrorist position using R4 rifles.**

Articles such as tritium night sights, sling and cleaning kit are not provided as standard equipment on the LM4. That's an unfortunate oversight, especially for South Africans who might use the LM4 as a home-defense weapon. Night sights can be purchased as optional extras. They are easily fitted and invaluable in the dark. The luminous bar on the front sight and the two dots at the rear provide a clear reference for aiming. These sights are visible only to the user and extremely unlikely to give his position away with a visible glow. When not in use the optional night-sight equipment folds down and out of the way.

The cleaning kit which can be purchased for the LM4 is comprehensive and well-designed. It comes in a strong canvas roll and contains everything needed for field maintenance of the rifle. It has a phosphor-bronze brush, tapered to fit the chamber, a device for cleaning the gas port, a small oil bottle, a sight-adjustment tool, a case-neck extractor, a cleaning rod, pull-through and all the usual brushes. The inclusion of a case-neck extractor is a particularly good idea. A case neck jammed in the chamber would normally mean an unserviceable rifle until an armorer could extract it. With this tool the rifle need not be out of action for more than a few minutes. That's an important edge for a rancher who doesn't have a battalion-level armorer within 100 miles.

The firing position required to accurately shoot the LM4 from the shoulder takes a bit of practice for anyone unaccustomed to a folding stock. Like most classically trained shooters, I am used to resting my cheekbone on the comb of the stock to get the correct sight picture. That head position with the LM4 simply gives the shooter a close-up

view of the rear of the receiver cover. Once I got the feel of the new position I had no further difficulty acquiring the sights.

Standard ARMSCOR factory tests for both weapons included simulated arctic conditions at minus-10 Celsius (14 Fahrenheit), operation in muddy conditions and resistance to sand and dust. The LM4 passed the first two tests with flying colors, and in the third test it fired twice as many rounds as a test-model AK-47 before a stoppage. That's fine reliability for the rugged conditions of the African bush.

In fact, the LM4 is the most reliable semi-automatic weapon that I have ever used. I have yet to experience a stoppage on my rifle. The only real problem I see with either the R4 or the LM4 is the lack of a hold-open function in the mechanism to mark an empty magazine. In a fight, it's easy to forget how many shots have been fired. It would be more than embarrassing to find the bolt closed on an empty chamber at a crucial moment.

The cocking handle on the R4 and the LM4 is an integral part of the bolt carrier and easily one of the weapons' best features. Anybody who has had a round fail to chamber fully will appreciate this. I have spent precious seconds struggling with an R1 (FN FAL) because a small amount of dirt prevented the round from chambering. A sharp blow on a fixed cocking handle would have solved the problem in half the time.

The accuracy of the LM4 is fine for its intended use. Although the trigger is a bit creepy, first-round hits on small targets at 100 yards are common when the bipod is used. In the standing or off-hand position, the lack of felt recoil makes it possible to get in fast second shots while holding firmly on target.

Apparently ARMSCOR has confidence in the civilian LM4 and its acceptance in the commercial market. They have recently introduced the LM5, a semiauto version of the short-barrelled tankers' R5. It is touted as the South African equivalent of the Galil SAR. It should prove popular since it is lighter and shorter than the LM4. Farmers can appreciate quick handling characteristics from a weapon they'll carry in a truck or on a tractor.

Unfortunately, the LM4 isn't likely to become available in U.S. gun shops anytime soon. It's a fine weapon. The LM4 is sturdy, well-made, reliable and accurate. ARMSCOR seems oblivious to telling the public about those attributes. Security seems more important than sales in South Africa which leads some shooters to wonder why ARMSCOR even bothered to produce a civilian version of their vaunted R4 assault rifle. ☒

### COMPARATIVE TABLE

|                                  | GALIL ARM             | LM4                     |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Caliber . . . . .                | 5.56 NATO             | 5.56 NATO               |
| Weight<br>(with bipod) . . . . . | 9.6 lbs.              | 9.48 lbs.               |
| Length                           |                       |                         |
| Butt folded . . . . .            | 29.2 "                | 29.13 "                 |
| Butt extended . . . . .          | 38.6 "                | 39.57 "                 |
| Barrel lengths . . . . .         | 18.5 "                | 18.11 "                 |
| Rifling . . . . .                | 6 groove<br>1 in 12 " | 6 groove<br>1 in 11.8 " |
|                                  | (right)               | (right)                 |

# SL6/7

by Peter G. Kokalis



**F**ROM the end of its steel buttplate to the tip of its hooded front sight, the HK SL6/7 carbine is more than slightly reminiscent of the famous World War II German semiautomatic G43 rifle.

But the similarity is only superficial. The G43 was gas-operated with a gas cylinder above the barrel in the same manner as the Russian Tokarev M38/40 rifles and locking was by means of hinged flaps set in recesses on each side of the receiver in imitation of the Soviet Degtyarev light machine gun.

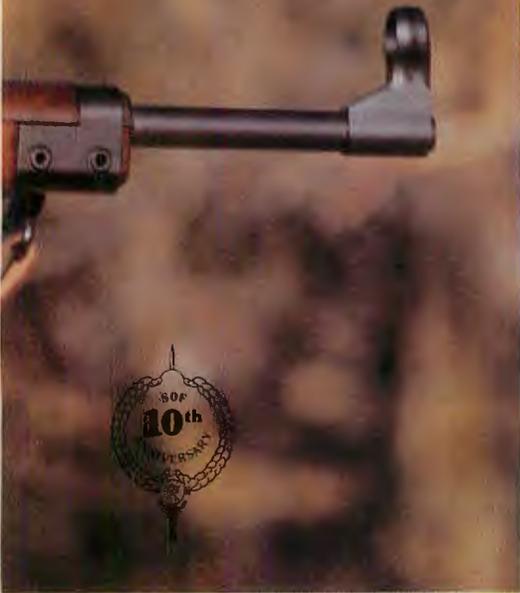
The HK SL6/7 carbines are different.

They use the delayed-blowback, roller-locking system of operation — a hallmark feature of Heckler & Koch's entire line of small arms. HK bolt mechanisms consist of two major components: a bolt head and bolt carrier. Although referred to as "locking-roller," the action is never completely locked. In the battery position, inclined surfaces on the bolt carrier lie between the two rollers on the bolt head and force these rollers into recesses in the barrel extension. After ignition, the rollers are cammed inward against the bolt carrier's inclined

planes by rearward pressure on the bolt head. The bolt carrier's rearward velocity is four times that of the bolt head. After the bolt carrier has moved rearward four millimeters, the rollers on the bolt head (which has moved only one millimeter) are completely depressed, pressure has dropped to the required levels of safety, and the two parts continue their backward movement together.

A long, pivoting ejector bar is mounted to the left side of the SL6/7 receiver and is spring-loaded.

# Expanded Roles for HK's Compact Carbines



ABOVE: Closeup of SL7 being fired showing empty case ejection.  
LEFT: Firing the SL7: Left-handed shooters have no trouble with the SL7.  
BELOW: HK SL7 with Swarovski ZFM 6x42mm scope and HK 05 claw mount.



The HK SL6/7 weapons are actually a carbine-length version of the HK 630/770/940-series sporting rifles. "SL" presumably stands for Self-Loading (*Selbstlade*). The numbers "6" and "7" are rough approximations, in millimeters, of the overall cartridge length the action will accept. The SL6 is chambered for the 5.56mm NATO (.223 Rem.) cartridge. SOF's test rifle is an SL7, which is chambered for my favorite GPMG and sniping-rifle round, the 7.62x51mm NATO (.308 Win.) cartridge. Compact and rugged, these slick little

carbines lend themselves to applications beyond their intended roles as hunting/sporting pieces. Both the SL6 and SL7 weigh in at 8.36 pounds, empty. Their stubby 17.71-inch barrels are somewhat thicker than those of the HK 630/770/940 series. Four-groove barrels feature the hammer-forged polygonal rifling that characterizes Heckler & Koch firearms. The right-hand twist has one turn in 10.6 inches for the 5.56mm chambering and one turn in 11.0 inches on the SL7's 7.62x51mm NATO barrel. The upper and lower receivers are machined from solid bar stock.

The chambers are fluted on all Heckler & Koch and CETME delayed-blowback, roller-locking firearms. The 12 longitudinal flutes extend rearward from the barrel lead to 0.25-inch from the chamber face. These flutes reduce the cartridge case's bearing surface and permit propellant gases to flow around the case acting as a lubricant to ease extraction. As delayed blowback does not offer the available power reserve of gas operation under adverse conditions and there is no primary extraction, chamber fluting is required for reliable functioning. Ejected cases are all marked with distinctive striations but, contrary to popular belief, this does not affect their potential for reloading.

The barrels and other exterior metal parts are finished matte black. The chamber area of my specimen has a plum-colored tone often seen on German WWII small arms manufactured late in the war. Although nostalgic, this finish usually signifies a hasty finishing procedure, because this color results from dipping high-nickel steel into salt-bluing solutions at improper temperatures (too low) for an insufficient period of time.

The nicely figured, unchecked walnut stock also carries a WWII flavor in both its dull, oiled finish and configuration. The upper forearm is walnut as well and ventilated by three longitudinal 1.5-inch grooves cut into either side. The smooth wrap-around steel buttplate is retained by two large wood screws. There is no butt-trap storage compartment. A prototype green-plastic stock and forearm have been developed and will be available by mid-1985.

The front barrel band is held in place by two spring-loaded pins of the type used on the forearms and buttstocks of all HK military small arms. These pins can be inserted from either side and I have been involved in numerous discussions as to which direction is the correct placement. Some maintain that it is more natural for right-handed shooters to insert them from the right side of the weapon. Some insist they should be alternated. In El Salvador, troops armed with the G3 rifle insert the pins from the left side so they cannot be inadvertently pushed out when jarred against the body or combat webbing.

A fixed-ring front sling swivel is attached to the barrel band. The rear swivel is inlet into the left side of the buttstock in the European style and accepts either the web or

leather HK military slings.

Cut into the stock just forward of the trigger housing is the magazine well. The staggered-row, detachable box-type magazines are of all-steel construction from the HK 630/770 series. It often takes more than a little swearing to disassemble them. Issue magazines hold four rounds in the SL6 and three rounds in the SL7, and fit flush into the stock's well. The SL7 magazine is marked ".243" and ".308," although to date the former chambering is not offered in this series. An optional 10-round magazine is available for either (the 10th round enters only with a great deal of pushing). They insert easily — but only when the bolt is retracted — and fall away freely when dropped by the magazine catch release located in the front portion of the plastic trigger guard.

Either we're all becoming more jaded or the plastic wizards are getting better at simulating metal. The polycarbonate trigger guard looks good. Two 5mm hex-head screws hold the trigger housing to the action. A screwdriver for removing them and the upper receiver's retaining screw is provided.

The drag-free, single-stage trigger breaks crisply and consistently at five pounds on my test sample. Amazing, you say? Well, this isn't your everyday G3 trigger mechanism designed to withstand a 25-meter drop test. Although the hammer is still driven by two coil springs, the auto sear has been eliminated and a spring plunger bears on the sear to yield positive engagement.

The safety lever is located on the left side of the stock, forward of the trigger guard. It cannot be reached or manipulated by the firing hand. Its spindle locks the hammer in the cocked position and it cannot be activated if the hammer has been rotated forward. To place on the safe position the lever must be moved downward until a white dot is exposed. When the safety lever is rotated counterclockwise to its upper position, the white dot is covered and a red dot becomes visible to indicate the fire position.

The folding retracting handle moves in a slot cut into the right side of the lower receiver. This is the reverse of the Heckler & Koch military small arms in which the retracting lever moves in a slot cut into the left side of a tubular extension welded to the receiver that also contains the bolt carrier's forward extension. Considerable force is required to draw the SL6/7 cocking lever rearward. A catch lever, located directly behind the cocking lever, holds the bolt group in the open position and must be depressed to release the bolt group and chamber a round. When charging the weapon, the retracting handle must be allowed to move forward without restriction. The bolt does not stay open after the last cartridge in the magazine has been fired.

The front sight is a stamped-sheet-metal disk with a rectangular post that fits into a slot in the protective hood and is held in place by a roll pin. The entire front-sight

assembly has been sweated onto the barrel's muzzle.

The rear sight is the standard rotary drum found on all HK military weapons. Criticized by some, it is nevertheless a sturdy affair. There are four elevation settings and the drum can be turned in either direction. The unmarked, 100-meter position is an open V-notch. The 200-, 300- and 400-meter positions are peep apertures, 0.062-inch in diameter. The sights are factory-zeroed for NATO standard ammunition. Use of lighter or heavier projectiles will require recalibration. Elevation zero is altered by insertion of a special tool with catch bolts into the rear-sight cylinder to mate with the cylinder's two splines. The sight cylinder is then rotated in the desired direction. This tool also contains a Phillips-head screwdriver used to loosen the lock screw and turn the windage-adjusting screw. Anyone wanting to shoot at longer ranges can replace the rear-sight assembly with the 1,200-meter rear sight used on the HK 21A1 machine gun. Why anyone would want to do this I don't know. A more sensible alteration is the knurled windage-adjustment knob offered by A.R.M.S. (Dept. SOF, 230 West Center Street, West Bridgewater, MA 02379). This knob replaces the Phillips-head windage-adjusting screw and can be installed in less than a minute. It permits instant horizontal-sight adjustment without a screwdriver.

Two rectangular recesses have been cut into the upper receiver to accept the HK 05 claw-type scope mount. Either 30mm rings for European scopes or 25mm rings for the standard one-inch U.S. scope tubes are available. A large vertical lever is used to compress the mount's clamps for quickly attaching or removing the mount from the rifle. While it's unorthodox in appearance, the HK 05 mount is stable and rigid. Repeated removal and re-attachment failed to affect the scope's zero. A 3mm hex wrench is provided to secure a scope to the rings.

A Swarovski ZFM 6x42mm military scope was used for SOF's test and evaluation of the SL7. This superb piece of rugged optics is available with either a plain one-inch steel tube or an aluminum tube with a NATO STANAG 2324 mount. The field of view is four degrees, or seven meters at 100 meters. Luminosity and resolution are outstanding — almost Starlight capability on a really bright night.

After initial zero adjustments, changes in elevation, from 100 to 800 meters, are made by external adjustment knobs calibrated for the trajectory of the 7.62x51mm NATO military cartridge. The windage-adjustment unit is located on the right side of the scope. Each calibration mark moves the point of impact one meter at 100 meters range. The reticle pattern consists of standard crosshairs in the center with thick bars at the outer perimeter. A luminescent tritium reticle will soon be available. The reticle is non-centered, i.e., as the range drum is set for longer distances, the crosshairs move toward the bottom of the field of view. While

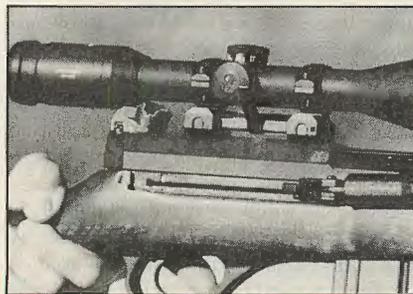
## Heckler & Koch SL6/7 Specifications

|                                 | SL6  | SL7           |
|---------------------------------|--|---------------|
| <b>Caliber:</b> .....           | 5.56mm NATO  | 7.62mm NATO   |
| <b>Operation:</b> .....         | Roller-locked, delayed blowback  |               |
| <b>Magazine capacity:</b> ..... | 4 and 10-rds.  | 3 and 10-rds. |
| <b>Weight, empty:</b> .....     | 8.36 pounds  |               |
| <b>Barrel:</b> .....            | 4-groove, hammer-forged polygonal rifling  |               |
| <b>Twist:</b> .....             | 1:10.6", RH  | 1:11", RH     |
| <b>Length:</b> .....            | 17.71 inches   |               |
| <b>Overall length:</b> .....    | 40 inches  | 39.7 inches   |
| <b>Sights:</b> .....            | Hooded front post; rotary drum rear with open V-notch at 100 meters and 0.062-inch peep apertures at 200, 300 and 400 meter positions. |               |
| <b>Finish:</b> .....            | Matte black  |               |
| <b>Stock:</b> .....             | European walnut  |               |
| <b>Accessories:</b> .....       | 10-rd. magazines; web and leather slings; 1,200 meter HK21A1 rear sight; rear sight tool; and HK 05 scope mount.                       |               |
| <b>Distributor:</b> .....       | Heckler & Koch, Inc., Dept. SOF, 14601 Lee Road, Chantilly, VA 22021.  |               |

### TABLE I — HK SL7 Chronograph Test

**Weapon:** ..... HK SL7 Carbine — 17.71-inch barrel  
**Caliber:** ..... 7.62x51mm NATO  
**Ambient temperature:** ..... 42 degrees F  
**Instrumentation:** ..... Oehler Model 33 Chronotach with Skyscreen III detectors.  
 All velocities measured in feet per second 10 feet from muzzle.

| Ammunition  | Low   | High  | Extreme Spread | Average | Standard Deviation |
|-------------|-------|-------|----------------|---------|--------------------|
| West German |       |       |                |         |                    |
| IWK 19-65   | 2,515 | 2,585 | 70             | 2,554   | 22                 |
| FMJ Match   |       |       |                |         |                    |
| Reloads     | 2,292 | 2,358 | 66             | 2,329   | 23                 |
| PCM M80     | 2,512 | 2,631 | 119            | 2,575   | 32                 |
| WRA M80     | 2,427 | 2,504 | 77             | 2,449   | 23                 |



Swarovski ZFM 6x42mm military scope mated to SL7 with HK 05 claw mount.

somewhat distracting at first, it does instantly alert the shooter to his range setting.

The scope is set for parallax-free viewing at 300 meters but can be changed by turning the ocular. The ocular has thoughtfully been fitted with a rubber rim to protect those who tend to "crawl" the scope. However, no scope caps are provided — an irritating omission on such high-quality optics. Six-power magnification offers the best compromise for most sniping applications. This level of milspec quality is not cheaply ac-

quired. The ZFM 6x42mm scope carries a suggested retail price of \$535. Technical brochures can be obtained from Swarovski America Ltd. (Dept. SOF, One Kennedy Drive, Cranston, RI 02920).

The SL6/7 cannot be disassembled without the aid of a 5mm hex wrench, also included. Remove the scope and magazine. Clear the weapon. Loosen the 5mm allen screw at the rear of the upper receiver — a somewhat tedious process if you take pains not to mar the stock. The recoil spring butts against the upper receiver and tension never slacks off on the screw until the very end of the ordeal. Lift up and back and remove the upper receiver. Remove the retaining screw. Withdraw the double-coil recoil spring and guide rod which run in a hole in the bolt carrier, strangely offset to the left. Lift out the rubber buffer and its sheet-metal retaining clip (not on the SL6), located at the end of the lower receiver. Retract the cocking lever. Insert the long end of the hex wrench through the retaining-screw hole in the lower receiver and compress the firing pin while lifting the bolt assembly up and out.



ABOVE: Field-stripped SL7 and scope.



ABOVE: HK SL7 hooded front sight.

BELOW: SL7 bolt group: bolt carrier, bolt head with locking rollers, locking piece, firing pin and spring.



ABOVE: SL7 safety cannot be easily reached or manipulated unless the hammer is cocked.

BELOW: HK rear-sight tool and 3mm and 5mm hex wrenches used for scope rings and disassembly of the weapon, respectively.



ABOVE: SL7 front barrel band with retaining pins and front sling swivel.

Stripping and reassembling a roller-locked HK bolt assembly can be frustrating the first time around. Rotate the bolt head clockwise one quarter turn and withdraw it from the so-called locking piece. Continue to rotate the locking piece and it will release from the bolt carrier along with the firing pin and spring. That's the easy part.

To reassemble the bolt group, proceed exactly in this manner. Slide the spring onto the firing pin and insert both into the bolt carrier. With its locking lug positioned upper dead-center, press the locking piece against the firing-pin spring as far as it will go and rotate counterclockwise one quarter

turn. Place the beveled surface of the bolt head directly under the spring-loaded bolt-head locking lever on the bolt carrier (to do this you will have to rotate the locking piece again, ever-so-slightly counterclockwise). Slap the bolt head smartly with the palm of your hand to drive it under the locking lever. Make certain you have about 3mm of clearance between the bolt head and carrier. Rotate the bolt head counterclockwise about one half turn, until the locking rollers are at the same level as the bolt carrier's camways. Then pull the bolt head away from the carrier as far as it will go, so the rollers can recess completely into the bolt head.

The forearm can be removed by driving out the barrel-band pins and sliding the barrel band toward the muzzle. The 5mm hex wrench can be used to remove the trigger guard for disassembly of the trigger mechanism. I recommend this only for trained armorers, unless you desire to send the rifle back to HK in a paper bag along with an embarrassed, tear-stained letter.

While there is no gas system to clean, delayed-blowback firearms become quite fouled in the area of the barrel extension immediately to the rear of the chamber face. Although difficult to reach, it should be swabbed thoroughly until clean.

Reassembly is generally in the reverse order. When inserting the bolt assembly back into the lower receiver, first place the bolt-head ejector camway onto the ejector, then push in the locking rollers and firing pin, press the assembly downward from the rear and slide it forward to the battery position. Reinsert the buffer and recoil-spring groups. Thread the retaining screw one full turn into the lower receiver. Slide on the upper receiver until its retaining slot is seated on the screw's collar. Tighten the screw firmly.

After reassembly, the headspace should be checked. This is measured by the gap between the bolt head and bolt carrier when the bolt group is in battery. The permissible tolerance is 0.005 inches to 0.020 inches. The preferred headspace gap is 0.008 inches to 0.017 inches.

One thousand rounds of military-type ammunition was selected for the test and evaluation. Two hundred fifty rounds of each of the following were fired through the SL7 fitted with the Swarovski ZFM 6x42mm scope: G.I. ball — Vietnam era — carrying a WRA '66 headstamp (Winchester Repeating Arms, 1966), PMC (also M80 configuration), FMJ match reloads (with a 175-grain, lead-cored, boat-tail projectile powered by 41.5 grains of Winchester Western 748 flattened-ball propellant) and West German surplus with a headstamp marked IWK 19-65 with the NATO cross in a circle.

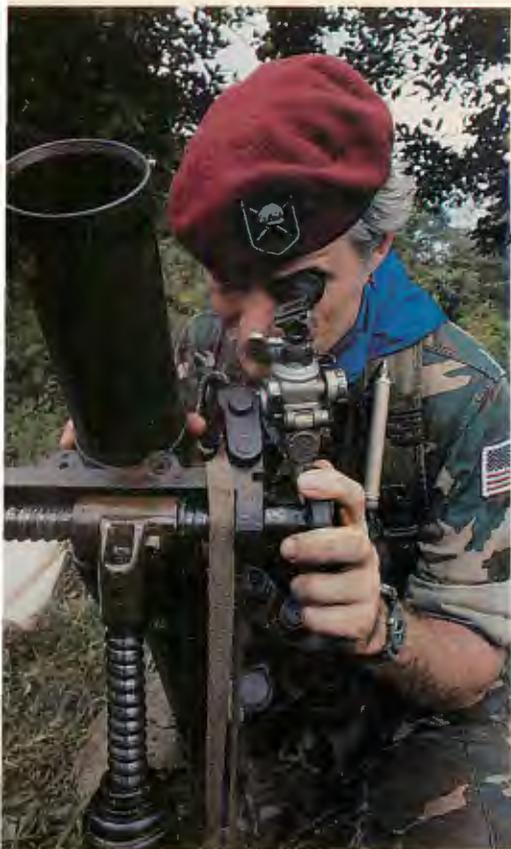
The West German ammunition was manufactured by *Industrie Werke Karlsruhe* (formerly DWM) in 1965. It is packaged in 20-round boxes, which, in turn, are packed in sealed 200-round green plastic "battle

*Continued on page 76*

**RIGHT: Capt. Dye cranks aiming corrections on a Chinese 82mm mortar in southern Nicaragua. LOWER RIGHT: SOF team member Harry Claflin draws a bead with an FN FAL as Capt. Dye and two ARDE troopers watch the target. In foreground are Romanian AK-47s. BELOW: ARDE guerrillas and SOF team members duck and plug their ears as Chinese 82mm mortar fires HE round toward target on Lake Nicaragua.**



## **SOF Trainers Nip Into Nicaragua**



# **ARDE AIMS FOR ACTION SOUTH OF THE LAKE**



**N**O signpost, no sentries; nothing to mark our crossing into communist Nicaragua. It's a kick to know you're actually in the bad guy's backyard but you'd expect a dotted line running through the jungle... or something to indicate you've stepped out of freedom in Costa Rica and into the evil empire of the Sandinistas.

Instead we got a big grin from our guide who pointed to a clearing on the other side of a hedgerow. "*Aquí es la frontera.*" So that's the border. The cows munching on wild rice shoots in the clearing don't look very communist. But the only tyranny they have to worry about is the machete and the meat market. The guys we've come to help have other problems.

**Text by Dale A. Dye  
Photos by James L. Pate**

**Dye helps ARDE's S-2 and five squad leaders to plot coordinates for mortar attacks on two separate Sandinista bases.**

Teammate Jim Pate wanted to know if he should take a picture of this first SOF training team to penetrate Nicaragua. I shrugged it off. If our read-

ers have seen one tropical bush or one jungle tree, they've seen them all. We wiped the sweat from our eyes and pushed on through the ankle-deep

mud toward a rendezvous with our hosts.

They are the struggling remnants of the once-powerful *Alianza Revolucionaria Democrática* or

ARDE, lords of guerrilla turf south of Lake Nicaragua. ARDE, under the benign tactical neglect of Eden Pastora, has splintered into one large fac-

## MANAGUA MELTDOWN:

### Fear and Loathing in Coach Class

Like a petulant pony registering a complaint about the weight on his back, the plane lurched under me. Expecting to see a nearby Pacific vista and the lush jungle savannah surrounding El Salvador's international airport, I awoke at 0730 disoriented. It had been a tough night in San José. Below me was a huge lake pock-marked with volcanic formations. We banked into a final approach for landing.

Sweet Jesus! If that's a Hind helicopter I just glimpsed below me, this must be Nicaragua. A sudden surge of jailhouse jitters spidered up my spine.

Where the hell am I? It came back slowly, painfully. Lines from an old Taj Mahal song kept rebounding between my throbbing temples: *Candy's dandy but likker is quicker. They drinks lots of likker down in Coster Rikker. Ain't nobody's 'bidness' but my own.*

I should have known we were in for some high weirdness on this trip. The score was announced the night before when Dale Dye, SOF's executive editor, and I strolled into a San José bistro to celebrate our return from communist Nicaragua. A sign in Spanish outside the dark, dingy dive said it all about Central America these days: "Patrons check your guns at the door." One look inside and we knew that translated into "Make damn sure your piece works before coming in this place, sucker." We proceeded to get judiciously juiced.

Just before hoisting our load for the road, the social situation came unglued. Some slimeball sidewalk commando sailed our way on a direct flight from the other side of the room, making a belly-up, Longbranch Saloon landing on our table. We grabbed for our beers just as the Tico smashed by and into the next table without bothering to properly introduce himself.

It's definitely time to go. If the ruckus would just move away from the only door to this dimly lit firetrap. Didn't want the bouncers to take undue notice of us. Those guys were packing heat and probably itching to use it. Especially on a couple of bush-battered gringos. Launching into some sort of freaked-out Gringo Gong Show could be unhealthy—possibly fatal—in the Land of Macho Tico. Feets, don't fail me now.

We got back to the Hotel Europa just in time to collect our mud-spattered gear and catch a cab to the airport for our 0600 flight to Honduras. Our scheduled airline had cancelled *all* flights for that day. Gone fishing or something. Whatever. There's another airline next door.



**Soviet-supplied Mi-8 Hip helicopter on tarmac at Managua International Airport.**

**Photo: James L. Pate**

"*Tegucigalpa, por favor.*" Quick payola to pry our way through Costa Rican emigration and we're headed to Teguce by way of San Salvador — a little like going around your elbow to get to your asshole. No clue that there might be an unscheduled stop.

Now we were descending into something highly suspicious. I looked again. There they were, not one, but *two* Soviet Mi-24 D-model Hinds — canvas covers clearly outlining the characteristic bubble-top shape of the nose canopies — parked in revetments off one end of the runway, as our commercial airliner landed and taxied toward the Managua terminal.

Dye and I were on assignment in Central America, having completed a low-profile visit to the southern front in Nicaragua's civil war. We were headed through Honduras into northern Nicaragua for the second leg, the mortarman to lay on one more time Dale Dye's Tube-and-Stake Boogie Sound and Light Show and me to get it all down. Our entré to the camps, which to a large extent had been placed off-limits to journalists, was anti-helo training we hoped would produce the smoking hulk of a Hind on the jungle floor. We had nailed up posters all over southern Nicaragua offering a \$100,000 reward from *Soldier of Fortune* to the first Hind crew to defect with its Mi-24 intact. And we'd been passing out reprints of the CIA's manual on guerrilla warfare — as a public service, of course. If the Sandinistas knew we were on this aircraft and what we'd been up to, we figured they might like to have a little chat with us.

We closed our eyes and tried to melt into the seat cushions. It was hard to ignore the Sandinista soldiers lollygagging around the aircraft, casually fingering their AKs. Here we are on another pointless adventure, out



tion (about 700 men and women) of devout Pastorphiles and one small group (85-100 men and women) of hard-core Sandinista-haters who

badly want their country back.

It's the smaller group — known as "reformed ARDE" which translates "without Pastora" — that

there jamming in the lunatic fringe of God's Great Roller Derby. So what if we were smack dab in the middle of a country where undesirable journalists — instead of getting letters to the editor — get buckshot to the brain as a matter of course? No problem. Just stay calm. Keep your eyes open, your mouth shut and don't be passing out any business cards.

The beautiful stewardesses who never smile said we'd be on the ground for about an hour. They invited everyone to deplane for a short visit in Managua's transit lounge for a drink or souvenir. Screw that. Would the *piricuacos* check the passenger list?

The Sandinistas had just recently caused a near collapse of diplomatic relations when they barged into the Costa Rican Embassy in Managua. A young man seeking political asylum was forcibly removed, but not before the Sandinistas shot him in the leg. If the *piricuacos* realized that two SOF troopers were aboard this bird, they could come up with any excuse to get us off. . . .

No thanks, lady. No trouble. Don't mind the wait a bit. We'll wait here.

Some shifty-eyed, officious-looking fat geek mounted the passenger ramp and waddled down the aisle, passing out copies of *La Prensa*, allegedly the Nicaraguan paper least subject to Marxist censorship. "*Periódico, señor?*" He regarded the rumples *gringos* with dirty jungle boots suspiciously, little flecks of sweat beading in the jowl lines below his eyes. "*Gracias.*" Dye and I both grabbed copies of the tabloid from him and buried our faces in them, looking for any distraction.

The lead photo is a picture of a guy with that unmistakable, forever-vacant look in his eye, pumped full of machine-gun holes, lying in a bloody concrete culvert. A front-page story quoted the secretary general of the Organization of American States as saying that Central America is the prime example of the philosophical confrontations between East and West. Boy, howdy! Just drop a focal on all the Soviet aircraft, vehicles and guns around the international airport.

Flip to the classifieds, take the mind off this heavy shit. A socialist review is soliciting for publication d'well-balanced manuscripts" and "circumspect analyses" of Latin American political affairs. The name of their little rag is "No Middle Ground." Over to the society page. Liz Taylor dumps husband number nine. Business as usual.

I half-expected to see reports of SOF's recent work training ARDE troops in southern Nicaragua. Hell, maybe some

of those 82mm Chinese mortar rounds we'd lobbed toward a Sandinista patrol base from our swampy jungle hideout had hit pay dirt. *Soldier of Fortune* had already been in the local news only a few days before. The CIA manuals and Bob Brown's \$100,000 reward for the Hind had made big headlines in Nicaragua.

And then, if that weren't enough to make us unwelcome in Managua, the *Barricada*, the Sandinista Party's official press organ, reported on the detainment of Nancy Donovan, a U.S. nun of the Maryknoll Order, widely known for its "theology of liberation," which translates into communist sympathies. Sister Donovan reported that the Democratic Force of Nicaragua (FDN) troops which held her on suspicion of espionage were wearing U.S. Army and *Soldier of Fortune* patches.

That's it! If we could just get word to those FDN guys. Don't let the nun go! Trade Sister Nan for two slightly hung-over magazine editors. I was still hatching escape plots when people began boarding the aircraft. Looks like we're gonna slip through unscathed again. Dye and I looked at each other. This sucker was apparently going to depart Managua with us aboard. I began to relax. Then the boss got that look in his eye. I could see it coming. He was going to suggest something that was, beyond the absolute shadow of a doubt, stark-raving mad.

"Why don't you unpack a couple of cameras and we'll get some shots of all this Soviet hardware? We might even get a picture of one of those Hinds."

I hedged a little. In his understanding way, Dye reminded me that it was "a direct order, maggots." I managed to convince him that we should wait until the aircraft began pulling away from the terminal before breaking out the cameras. We split up, each taking a window seat on either side of the aisle at the rear of the cabin. Two Nicaraguan businessmen took the seats next to me.

As the plane began to taxi toward takeoff, two camera motor drives competed with the turbine whine. We saw Mi-8 Hip helicopters and other Soviet aircraft and equipment, but did not get another look at a Hind. I kept taking pictures, both of the businessmen staring in disbelief and yammering away at me in Spanish. My obviously perturbed seatmates were wondering what *el gringo loco* was doing. I leaned back in my seat, smiled at them and sang: "*Candy's dandy but likker is quicker. They drinks lots of likker down in Coster Rikker. Ain't nobody's 'bidness' but my own.*"

— James L. Pate

our SOF training team has come to help in the fight for freedom. They can use the coaching. Since Pastora was dumped from the anti-communist movement in Nicaragua in the wake of the cut-off of U.S. aid for the resistance, ARDE has been left holding the smelly end of the stick. They have neither the funds, resources, contacts or credibility of their big brother FDN in the north along the Honduran-Nicaraguan border.

They have effectively been absorbed into the united anti-Sandinista front known as "UNIR" — the coalition of reformed ARDE, FDN and MISURA (a resistance group of ethnic Indians and Creole blacks) but the move has not netted them any lion's share of the money, equipment or weapons that still trickles in to the guerrilla forces.

In fact, reformed ARDE, smuggled into a series of small cantonments a klick or so across the Costa Rican border inside Nicaragua, is currently about as stagnant as the slimy swamp water we trudged through to reach its base camp.

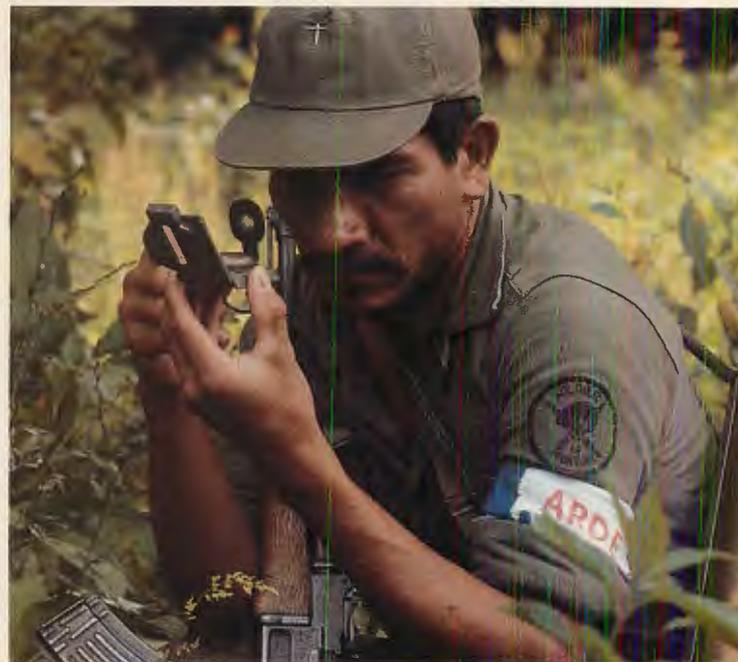
But they are inside Nicaragua.

In my book, that gives them a certain unique credibility which was reinforced when we broke into a second clearing and got a first glimpse of the people who are trying to restore freedom in southern Nicaragua. Our guide and Alex McColl, advance man and fixer in his capacity as Director of

Special Operations at SOF, had walked into a clapboard building to clear our passage. I stood sweating outside with Pate, Harry Claflin, Dr. John Peters and Gary Green, a former Cobra pilot who lost a leg in Vietnam. We must have looked lost. Out of the soggy treelines surrounding the clearing stepped two tanned figures cradling Romanian AKs in the comfortable pose affected by people who know their way around weapons.

"I believe we have found ARDE." Claflin, a former Force Recon Marine who has been on semi-permanent assignment for SOF to help train El Salvador's Airborne Battalion (See "Deep Recon," SOF April '85), ID'd the weapons with a practiced glance. "Or ARDE has found us."

Our escorts policed up the crew and led us through more muck and mire to the farmhouse of what was once a cacao plantation. With much hand-shaking and back-slapping we were introduced to José Salvador Robelo, military commander of the reformed ARDE unit, and his Camp Commandant known as "Papi" Vega. They knew about SOF through the odd copy or two that someone brings to them from San José and were anxious to know what they could do for us.



**These anti-personnel mines were recovered by anti-Sandinista guerrillas from a trail where they had been planted by Marxist troops. Markings on the plastic explosive inside indicate it was made in Russia, while the boxes were made in Cuba. A pressure-activated detonator lies across two of the mines.**



**LEFT:** Alvaro Miranda Diaz, 15, dresses the line of his ARDE squad before heading into the Nicaraguan jungle. **LOWER LEFT:** Training in many basic combat skills, such as reading a compass, is not available to many Nicaraguan freedom fighters. Here an ARDE trooper armed with AK-47 and a LAW shoots an azimuth for a mortar exercise.

"I hope it's a matter of what we can do for you," I told Robelo. "We know that the Soviets have supplied the *Piricuacos* with Mi-24 attack helicopters and we've brought some techniques and equipment to help you knock them down if they give you any trouble."

Robelo, a solidly-built former planter from the outskirts of Managua, knitted his brow. "We have seen the Mi-8s flying around the lake but no other helicopters have

been spotted."

I unfolded an anti-aircraft pamphlet we'd prepared in Spanish to teach the troops about the vulnerabilities of the Mi-24 and smoothed it out on a rough table. "That doesn't mean you won't see them in the future. This is a very effective, very dangerous weapon system."

Pate was busy tacking up a poster on the weather-worn wall of the headquarters. "Not only that, José, but the first guy to

fly one of the helicopters out of Nicaragua intact gets \$100,000 from Bob Brown. It says so right here." The troops gathered around him to stare at the reward poster we'd brought along to stick up on local trees.

We agreed that I would begin the training the next morning while Claf-lin and Green helped organize and inspect ARDE's armory and Doc Peters did some MED-CAP work among the soldiers and civilians. ARDE

## THE IRONY OF U.S. FOREIGN AID

American aid, for groups fighting to oust communist-controlled governments in Afghanistan and Nicaragua, clearly illustrates the illogical double standard of U.S. foreign policy.

Afghanistan is half a world away from our shores and right in the Russian back yard. Despite the distance, Congress manages to approve with virtually no dissent \$250 million in above-board aid to anti-government Afghan freedom fighters. As an additional prop, the mujahideen also enjoy the general support of the U.S. public. The situation seems to reverse as you focus on areas closer to home.

Nicaragua, a Marxist colossus straddling the Central American isthmus, is of obvious strategic and tactical importance to U.S. security interests. But anti-Sandinista groups in Nicaragua are treated by the U.S. like bastard stepchildren. They are stuck with under-the-table, "secret" assistance in piddling amounts, then completely cut off and scorned by many members of Congress. Meanwhile, the Russians, Cubans, Bulgarians and other Marxist allies send military advisers by the thousands and weapons systems by the boatload to prop up a communist regime that seems to have become a *cause celebre* among U.S. liberals.

Much of that fuzzy thinking is supported by arguments that the Soviet Union and other ComBloc allies are not really providing fuel for the political and military fires in Central America. Detractors dismiss the mounting evidence that communist allies are pouring arms, equipment and advisers into Central America through a funnel in Managua. Most of the opponents of U.S. aid to the anti-communist efforts south of our borders have never ventured down there to see for themselves. Those who have visited the area have been escorted by the communists through specially prepared and sanitized zones.



**Dye and Democratic Force of Nicaragua troops examine a Soviet M-38 120mm mortar that was temporarily abandoned because it lacks sights.**



The candid, behind-the-scenes view that *Soldier of Fortune* staffers get of battlefields in El Salvador and Nicaragua reveal the realities. Every assignment in these areas produces more hard evidence that the Russians and their communist proxies provide the weapons and ammo with which Central Americans kill each other. The accompanying photos depict some of the ComBloc weapons commonly encountered during a recent SOF expedition into Nicaragua.

— James L. Pate

was up for a little professional soldier training but their logistics pipeline was not.

Alex McColl had finished a quick equip-

ment check before we rolled into our hammocks for the night. "I applaud your enthusiasm but I believe you'll have to wing a large part of your anti-



## KIDS IN COMBAT

"Peasant army" is one of the more romanticized descriptions of anti-Sandinista freedom fighters in Nicaragua. The term fits many of the guerrillas in the ranks, which are heavily populated with *campesinos*. But the factions struggling to free their country from communist rule also contain many former professional people, such as doctors and lawyers, as well as engineers, businessmen and merchants.

Probably more accurate — but not so romantic or well-accepted north of the border — is the idea that the guerrilla struggle in Nicaragua is largely a children's war. Those few who are allowed to visit the freedom fighter training camps inside the embattled borders of Nicaragua are invariably struck by the tender ages of so many male and female ralliers to the anti-communist cause.

Each young freedom fighter has his or her own story about lost youth, growing up in a war zone and learning at a very early age to live with the ever-present potential for injury or death. They are also anxious to let visitors know they have learned how to cope with it — and how to return the compliment. The story of Leonardo, one of the thousands of children made refugees by Nicaragua's Marxist-backed Sandinista government, has a more definitive ending than most — at least so far.

At least Bruce Jones, an American citizen who farms and runs a citrus nursery in Costa Rica, hopes so. The subject of a *LIFE* magazine article in February about Nicaraguan freedom fighters, Jones now helps care for 12-year-old Leonardo with another U.S. expatriate, John Hull, Jones' business partner.

Odds on a long and successful life for Leonardo were very slim only a few months ago. Unlike other children in the school that Jones and Hull send him to, Leonardo's life has a facet that sets him completely apart from his preadolescent peers in Costa Rica. He is a two-year combat veteran who has looked the proverbial elephant dead in the eye and knows what it feels like to drop the hammer on a sworn enemy.

Jones has talked "to literally hundreds and hundreds of *campesinos* that have come out" of southern Nicaragua into the area around his farms in northern Costa Rica, "some to join the freedom fighters and others to become refugees."

"Like poor, little Leonardo," he said, "all have similar tales of how they've been screwed around by the regime, (especially) in the rural areas."

Leonardo joined Eden Pastora's Revolutionary Democratic Alliance (ARDE) in early 1982, Jones said. Then nine years old, he had escaped three separate times from Sandinista soldiers when he arrived in one of ARDE's jungle camps in southern Nicaragua after walking for more than a week. "He fought there for the next two years," Jones said. In that time he was wounded in the leg by an AK round and his stomach bears scars inflicted by RPG-7 shrapnel. "When Pastora ran out of funds . . . and was going to sell his helicopter" Leonardo decided to become a refugee in Costa Rica. "The last helicopter flight of Pastora's out of Nicaragua, the pilot brought the kid to my partner's farm. We've been supporting him ever since."

Before the revolution that thrust him into manhood long before his time, Leonardo lived alone with his father "in a little house out in the boonies along the San Juan River," Jones said. "He and his dad would paddle into the nearest town downriver about once a month and buy groceries." It was returning from one of these trips that Leonardo and his dad were stopped by a Sandinista patrol looking for ARDE freedom fighters operating in the area. Seeing a month's worth of supplies and staples in the boat, the Sandinista patrol commander accused Leonardo's father of providing aid and comfort to the anti-communists. As the simple farmer and fisherman pleaded for his life before his horrified child's eyes, Sandinista soldiers took Leonardo's father into the nearby brush and shot him.

"Leonardo ran off into the bush, got back to their farm and lived there for about eight or nine days until all the food left ran out," Jones said. "Then he took off again, was soon captured by the Sandinistas and put into a government agricultural camp for kids — practically a concentration camp. They'd work all morning in the fields and then get about four hours of instruction in the afternoon on how to arm, disarm and maintain various types of Soviet weapons. Then they'd get a couple hours of political indoctrination.

"He escaped from there and was working at a ranch as a little cowboy when another Sandinista patrol saw him and started asking a lot of questions," Jones recounts. "He took off running and they opened fire. He said he didn't know whether they were trying to hit him or just shooting up in the air to scare him. He reached the Pastora camp nine days later."

Jones discounts reports by the Sandinista government that it has raised the literacy rate among Nicaragua's

Pausing in the jungle near Lake Nicaragua, SOF staffer Jim Pate is flanked by Emiliano, a team leader wearing beret, and Javier Pastora Perez, an ARDE local guide. Pate and Pastora are armed with Romanian AK-47s. Photo: Dale A. Dye

Hind training.”

I batted away at several mosquitos large enough to stand flat-footed and shit in the back of a six-by and asked what he

meant. “It seems your equipment did not arrive from Miami.”

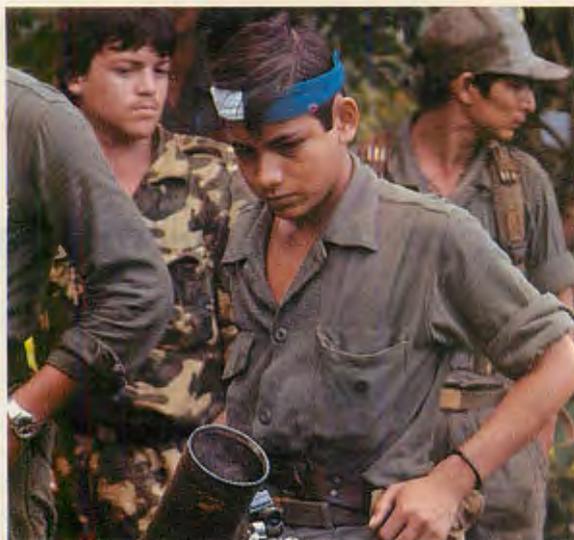
That bit of bad news forced me to concentrate on familiarizing the troops

with the Hind, jury-rigging air sights for their machine guns and teaching them some tried and true Southeast Asian methods for ambushing

helos. We would have to make do and find some other way to be useful.

The next day, after

*Continued on page 80*



**Alvaro Miranda Diaz studies use of Chinese 82mm mortar.**

children. “Basically, the most useful thing Leonardo learned was how to field-strip a Russian AK, unless you call political indoctrination ‘school.’ Then yes, they sent him to school for two hours every day to brainwash him. But he told me something to the effect that ‘the other kids may have believed that bullshit, but I didn’t. I remembered who had killed my father.’”

In another respect, Leonardo is unusual among the many children and adolescents in the ranks of anti-Sandinista freedom fighters on both fronts in Nicaragua. He has gotten away from the battlefield and has good prospects for leading a fairly normal life — at least until he becomes an adult and rejoins the fighting. Most youngsters who joined the freedom fighters are still battling the Sandinistas. Most have been wounded at least once.

Typical of the youngsters still in the ranks is 15-year-old Alvaro Miranda Diaz. The youngest of seven children, he has no idea when — or if — he will ever see his father who remains inside Nicaragua. Alvaro, whose boyish face has yet to sprout whiskers, is a squad leader in a unit of reformed ARDE, a faction led by El Negro Chamorro and José Robelo. In addition to responsibility for the 10 men in his squad, earned after particularly distinguishing himself in battle against the Sandinistas,

Alvaro carries into each fight the burden of knowing he might have to kill one of three brothers forced into military service by the Marxist government before he fled Nicaragua.

Alvaro grew up in the village of Rama on the Escondido River near Nicaragua’s Atlantic coast, where his father was a fisherman and boat-motor mechanic. Widowed more than a decade ago, Mr. Miranda was left to raise seven kids by himself. After the Sandinistas took over the government, Alvaro recalls, “everyone was scared and there was little food. Then Sandinista troops began coming around, harrasing my father, taking what they wanted of our food and property.

“First they forced my brothers to join the army and then they started asking why I didn’t join. I talked it over with my father and he said he would rather see me die fighting against the *piricuacos* than fighting with them.” So a grieving father sent away his youngest child to fight and possibly die for the freedom of his country.

On the other hand, Becky gets to see her parents, who fled Sandinista oppression to live in Costa Rica. But Becky’s visits are necessarily short and far between, usually when she gets to leave her ARDE camp in Nicaragua on a rare R&R. At 16, she has carried a Romanian-made AK-47 in two firefights with Sandinista troops. Becky proudly speculates some of her bullets found their mark.

Before the Sandinista revolution “my parents were just poor farmers who tried to grow enough to take care of their children and make a modest living,” Becky stated. “They cared nothing for politics and just wanted to be left alone. But the Sandinista army patrols began coming and taking their crops and threatening that bad things would happen if we did not support their party. They treated my parents badly because we are devout Catholics. I don’t think the Sandinistas believe there is a God. At least they don’t act like it.”

Leonardo, Alvaro and Becky have all vowed to continue the fight against the Marxist regime that took over their homeland. According to Jones, who has gotten to know many of these valiantly determined young refugees, “there is a hard-and-fast philosophy among most of these young people coming out of Nicaragua. What you realize after talking with these kids is that here are virtual children who will grow up — if they live long enough to grow up — fighting communism. And each and every one will continue to fight until he or she *either* dies or wins.”

— James L. Pate



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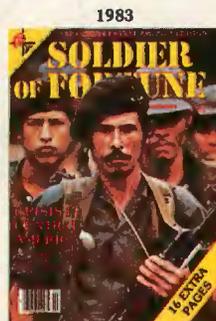
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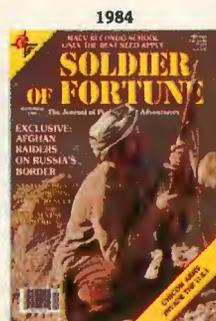
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# BRUCE JONES

## Is He CIA or a Concerned Citizen?

by James L. Pate

**B**RUCE Jones is an unassuming, soft-spoken U.S. expatriate citrus farmer in northern Costa Rica. He reads *Soldier of Fortune* and isn't afraid to pick up a weapon and go into the field to help anti-Sandinista forces operating around his acreage. The latter practices, more than any other evidence, appear to have prompted a *LIFE* magazine article alleging that Jones is a Central Intelligence Agency field operative.

The February story charged that "for the last three years [Jones] has been a key liaison between the CIA and a Costa Rican-based force of 2,500 to 4,000 . . . Nicaraguan rebels whose war against the Sandinista Army has become increasingly bold." *LIFE* also imprudently mentioned that Jones has a wife and children and gave an approximate location of where he and his family live.

Editors at *Soldier of Fortune* suspected immediately that the article did not ring true in a couple of key aspects. When they published "A CIA Man in Nicaragua," *LIFE*'s editors either willfully broke a federal law specifically prohibiting the disclosure of CIA agents' identities (50 United States Code, Section 41), or they knew he wasn't a real agent but decided to hype their own story anyway. Besides placing Jones and his family in danger of possibly fatal recriminations by the many communist sympathizers in Costa Rica, the article also put Jones in a very questionable position with that nation's government, which has struggled to maintain its neutrality over the war in Nicaragua.

When James L. Pate, one of *SOF*'s associate editors, finally tracked him down, Jones was cooling his heels in a low-budget Miami motel room, keeping his head down while the Costa Rican government let the air clear. His family remained behind under protection of armed guards. Pate, a veteran of *SOF* missions to Central America, arrived at two rapid conclusions: the group of freedom fighters about which *LIFE* wrote were not based inside Costa Rica and operated in Nicaragua; and Bruce Jones, a 40-year-old college drop-out, is not a CIA agent.

Jones is one of those increasingly rare Americans with the courage of his own political convictions. He grew up the son of a Chicago-area bookstore owner and majored in political science and philosophy at Wis-

consin's Rippon College. He drifted to the West Coast where he began "flirting" with one of the 1960s most radical left-wing political groups, Students for a Democratic Society. Says Jones of those early days: "I had some friends who were in SDS and I just sort of watched from the sidelines. That's where I got my first real knowledge of communism and its power tactics."

His turn from the SDS began when he attended a meeting at which a demonstration at the old Oakland Draft Center was being planned. "They were trying to line up a bunch of sorority-type girls from middle-class backgrounds to stand in the front lines. They were talking about pushing these girls

into the police billy clubs from the rear for the publicity effect and to radicalize people from essentially conservative backgrounds. . . . The complete SDS leadership that I was familiar with were all Marxist/Leninists and there was a tremendous amount of infighting as to whether they would be Peking-style, Cuban-style or Russian-style. I didn't think that's what America is all about so I cut my ties with people in the SDS."

Disenchantment was not the reason Jones became an expatriate. He first went to Costa Rica on vacation. "I don't like cold weather. But I do love the United States. But because I quit college before I graduated, I found myself somewhat limited in what I could do in the U.S. I was single, with no ties that bind." So he decided to move to Costa Rica, where he ended up in agribusiness and later as a moral supporter of freedom fighters operating near him just over the border in Nicaragua.

In the following excerpts from Pate's interview with Jones, the farmer discusses his views on the situation with anti-Sandinistas and how the *LIFE* article affected his status with them.

**Q** — Are you now, or have you ever been an agent or contract employee with the CIA?

**A** — No. But I can see where [*LIFE*'s editors] could justify in their own minds such a misconception because I had been working an independent but essentially parallel course to what the CIA had been doing in Nicaragua, namely trying to help the anti-Sandinistas.

**Q** — But as a U.S. citizen living in and familiar with an area and its people, being located adjacent to the border zone where so much activity of that nature is going on, you would seem to be an obvious point of contact for the CIA.

**A** — I suppose that could be true. But I would like to categorically state at this point that I don't know any CIA people, period. I have never had any contact with them. I have never been paid by them.

**Q** — What about the flat assertion by Eden Pastora (former commander of ARDE) in the *LIFE* article that Bruce Jones "is The Company. He does what The Company asks him to. I know that."

**A** — I don't know how he can know that. He has a continuing ability to call anybody that



he doesn't like a CIA agent. If you don't go along with his leadership or his ideas, then in his eyes you're either CIA or you work for the Sandinistas.

**Q** — *The LIFE article quotes you as saying you helped unload some aircraft.*

**A** — Well, that's no big thing. The planes and the pilots belonged to Pastora. Typically we offloaded a bunch of crates and boxes.

**Q** — *What about your own military background?*

**A** — Nothing to speak of except for ROTC classes in college. After that it's all been based on what I've read.

**Q** — *How did you come to be the focal point of a LIFE article about the Nicaraguan freedom fighters?*

**A** — Basically what we decided back in September — a friend and I — was that we couldn't see much hope for additional funding, to help these people, getting approved by Congress. So we felt it would be a good idea to tell the story to the American public. Jon Lee Anderson (the reporter) pitched the story idea as a balanced report because I have Central America's largest citrus nursery. I have been involved in several major agricultural projects in northern Costa Rica. So here's a responsible American — not a crazy, you can't call him a redneck, you can't call him a right-wing nut. He's got a business with 50 or 60 people working for him, living in Costa Rica and working for the development of the country. And he's worried enough about what's going on in nearby Nicaragua to give a little symbolic support to the freedom fighters. . . . But the article came out and had only about two or three words in it about citrus. And the photographer that came down took about 40 or 50 rolls of film just of my citrus operations, out in the field, in the nurseries. There's not a single picture of any of that in there.

**Q** — *But with the opinions that you hold why wouldn't it be very easy to call you "a right-wing nut?"*

**A** — This does not mean that I think the people didn't have the right to overthrow Somoza. I don't like a right-wing dictatorship any more than I like communism. The only thing about a right-wing dictatorship is that it's a little easier to overthrow than a left-wing dictatorship, especially once the Russians start pouring in military equipment and trainers.

**Q** — *So what is the other side to the LIFE story, the theme that you would most like for the reading public to understand?*

**A** — That I'm a businessman down there heavily involved in agricultural activity, a responsible person, somebody maybe the general American public can relate to when I say that there is a definite need to help these people who are fighting for liberty down in Central America — the Nicaraguan freedom fighters.

The public at home needs to be convinced — because I perceive that they are not convinced — that communism is a very real threat, that Costa Rica's borders have been violated over a hundred times in the last

couple of years. There have been armed incursions and they have kidnapped people on the streets of San Jose. Then there's Daniel Ortega (the leader of Nicaragua's Marxist-backed military *junta*) talking about his "revolution without frontiers." The communists are a menace and they are in our own backyard.

You must remember that this is a war which — if it escalates and direct U.S. involvement becomes not only necessary but unavoidable — U.S. citizens can drive to in the family car from the United States. You could hop in your car and drive to the war zone. This is the first potential incident of its kind since the Mexican War in the 1840s. People just don't seem to believe that it is a very expansionistic philosophy that the Sandinista and all communist governments have. They are *not* going to be content with Nicaragua. And this bullshit on the negotiations [with the U.S.] in which they promise they are going to give us sugar and not destabilize the region is invalid. They have *already* destabilized the region.

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**... I don't know any CIA people, period. I have never had any contact with them. I have never been paid by them.**

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**Q** — *Haven't your unabashed opinions and the public exposure in LIFE put you and your family in danger of violent reprisals?*

**A** — Of course the thought that there are people out there who would probably like to see me dead and silent bothers me. But the communists [in Costa Rica] threatened me long before this article ever appeared, so I didn't feel like the publicity put me in any more danger than I was already in. I mean, everybody and his brother knows where the *gringo* lives. When I was in Miami several months ago working on a citrus project a pro-Sandinista group drove up to my house and pointed an AK at one of my daughters, who was then 13. They asked for me and she told them I was not there. They called her a liar and threatened to kill her and the rest of my family. She just told them to come in and look around if they didn't believe her. So they then decided that I really must not be there.

So far, the communists [in Costa Rica] have avoided touching families and we haven't hassled any of their families. Up to now, at least, there is some uneasy, unspoken truce that you may be mad at somebody, but it's him you're mad at and not his family. Of course I do keep armed guards posted most of the time.

**Q** — *Well, if not personal safety, what is your biggest worry about Central America?*

**A** — That here we have something in our own backyard and nobody wants to help. And yet we'll send \$250 million in aid to the

Afghans, which is not to say that we shouldn't be helping them, too. Both peoples in Nicaragua and Afghanistan are having their government imposed on them from above by Marxist dictatorial rule with a very thin electoral veneer on it.

**Q** — *For those persons who do not agree with your views, how do you justify your own involvement?*

**A** — I believe the U.S. has great moral justification for getting involved. To me, when a people are struggling for their liberty, people who really believe in liberty and democracy, I have — and our country above all others *should* have — an obligation to help them because of our own past. If the shoe was on the other foot again and the French had acted toward us like so many people in the U.S. would like to see our government act toward Nicaraguan freedom fighters, you and I very likely could be British subjects now.

Here are these people in the most meager of circumstances fighting to regain their homeland from an obviously unjust government. Not to even put a political taint to it just because it's Marxist, it is still an unjust, unpopular, repressive regime and the people of that country know in their hearts now just as they knew before Somoza was overthrown and the revolution betrayed to the communists that they have a right to something better.

**Q** — *How do you know the Sandinista regime is "unpopular" and what is your personal definition of "unjust?"*

**A** — Because of the situation in northern Costa Rica, I talk to literally hundreds and hundreds of *campesinos* that have come out of Nicaragua, some to join with the freedom fighters and others to become refugees. They all have similar tales of how they've been screwed around by the Sandinista government, how it has come and taken their rice and their beans, how it has confiscated their harvest and then given them ration cards to buy back little bits of their harvest, often at twice the price at which it was confiscated. A lot of times, if they grew beans and had a lot of beans, the government would take the entire crop and then give them ration cards for beans. But then they'd find that there would be a scarcity or total lack of beans for cardholders, and the people were unable to obtain the very crops they had grown. They've *really* been jacked around in the rural areas.

**Q** — *What are some of the latest developments in the war of southern Nicaraguan freedom fighters against the Sandinista regime?*

**A** — The FDN (Democratic Force of Nicaragua, which is based along Nicaragua's northern border), reformed ARDE and Pastora have all asked the Cuban community in Miami for money to keep up the fight against the Sandinistas in the absence of support from the U.S. government. They feel like the Cuban exiles in Miami will understand and appreciate their plight from past personal experience of having the

*Continued on page 72*



**SOF MOVIES**

# FIRST BLOOD II RAMBO

## Sly Stands Up For Vietnam Vets

by Dale A. Dye

**I**F Hollywood and America's Vietnam Veterans are ever going to make peace over the war, Sylvester Stallone's new movie may be the opening gambit. After five years of hostile neglect followed by another five years of cheap rip-offs and blatant exploitation of the negative aspects of this country's longest, most painful conflict, there should be a salute coming out of Tinsel Town.

Sly Stallone has locked his heels and raised his right hand at the appropriate angle. He has carefully and intentionally created a screen metaphor for the war in Southeast Asia, fleshed out his hostile Green Beret veteran character from *First Blood*, and made a film that's as far from mealy-mouthed apologies as Cincinnati is from Saigon.

In keeping with Stallone's tendency to capitalize on box office success, his new movie is titled *Rambo: First Blood, Part II*. Jane Fonda — as well as other Hollywood liberals who still stand against the war effort and continue to call Vietnam Veterans baby killers or brainless dupes — may lobby to have Stallone tossed out of their guild. But that's not the 38-year-old actor/producer/director's problem. When this film is released across the country on 22 May, Stallone's major migraine may be finding tax shelters for all the money American veterans plunk down at the ticket counter to sit for a couple of hours and see themselves portrayed in a shining light.

It's about time. And it's about time someone in one of America's most influential industries spent the money and effort to get the technical





details right. Stallone has done that and he's also put his reputation on a precarious line to proclaim that he firmly believes there *are* American prisoners of war still alive in Southeast Asia. In fact, that premise is what brings Medal of Honor winner John Rambo back to life on the screen.

It would be unfair to give away the full plot of *Rambo* as revealed when Stallone invited SOF to view a rough cut of his new movie last March in Hollywood, but the scenario is sufficiently twisted to survive some dissection. Besides, if you're a Vietnam combat veteran and sick to death of seeing yourself portrayed as a pacifist doper or a drooling deviate, you'd plunk down your five bucks to see this flick even if you'd read the screenplay or been there on the set when it was filmed in Mexico.

Those who recall Special Forces Sergeant John Rambo's violent rampage in the culmination of *First Blood* will be happy to hear his former CO — Colonel Trautman, played by veteran actor Richard Crenna — succeeds in getting his prize pupil out of a Federal slammer where Rambo is doing hard time for tearing up the American Northwest and proving conclusively that messing with the bull will only get you gored. Naturally, there's a barbed hook on the end of Trautman's line. Rambo can get a pardon as well as reinstatement in the Army if he'll simply jump into North Vietnam, assemble evidence that POWs are being held there and get out alive. He does one hell of a lot more.

It's in these opening scenes that you begin to get a feel for the technical accuracy Stallone has demanded from his production crew. *First Blood*



Hollywood's Hind-A mockup in *Rambo* is the best yet. It's not perfect, but you wouldn't notice the differences if you were being chased.

## RAMBO TALKS

Despite his tough-guy image on screen and a reputation for being volatile when crossed or criticized, SOF found Sylvester Stallone to be hospitable, gracious and genuinely concerned about America's Vietnam Veterans. He seems articulate well beyond the tortured street-talk of the characters he is most famous for playing, and almost embarrassed about not having served in the military.

Stallone may have avoided combat in Vietnam but he has finally fixed bayonets and prepared to fight Hollywood's deliberate misrepresentation of the men who went to war in his place. SOF Executive Editor Dale Dye spoke with Stallone in his office on the MGM studio grounds in Culver City where the veteran filmmaker explained his hopes for the new movie, *Rambo: First Blood, Part II*.

**Stallone:** I would like to be able to convey some of the inner feelings of the vets and do it in an action genre so it appears to be — on the surface to the public — entertainment. It also carries with it a rather heavy social message without cramming it down their throats. It may be like covering up a bad-tasting medicine with a sweetener, but the medicinal effect is there. I also feel a great sense of guilt for the way these men have been treated. The war really skimmed off the cream of American youth and they came home to find — like Rambo says — a worse war, a quiet war. And I thought if there's anything that can be done, at least if I can do it, this would be my way of kind of like paying off a debt.

Since I didn't serve, I thought maybe this would be some way to kind of shine the light on them. And it did. I just felt I had to do some kind of social commentary on it. I just couldn't sit back and watch it. It's a story that needs to be told. It's something that's really important. For example, the *First Blood* script was on the shelf for seven years. No one wanted to touch it. No one wanted to open up that Pandora's Box. I guess it was just my sense of guilt for not doing as much as I could.

**SOF:** It seems to me that you or some members of your staff must have gone to some extraordinary lengths to research the details for this film.

**Stallone:** The technical adviser . . . Tony Maffatone . . . he is a highly decorated Navy SEAL. He is the person I based the character of Rambo on. What he did was research the best way to get inland . . . to make the mission feasible. We wanted to make [the action] highly entertaining and yet present [the mission] in such a way that it *could be done*. The inade-

quacies that you see in the film are usually because of economics. The producers just didn't have it in their budget to go all the way.

**SOF:** How important do you think that accuracy is? I mean, you are going to be talking to an enormous number of Vietnam veterans who have been poorly portrayed by Hollywood.

**Stallone:** It's very important. When you're dealing with something that is a blood-and-guts subject — where men have actually died performing in that area of the world — you can't play with their emotions. Some of them are so hypersensitive to this issue, that any inadequacy, any discrepancy just makes them so angry because their friends have died there. They have so much invested, they want the truth. For example, we made a mistake on the flash that the Colonel wore in the first one [*First Blood*] and I can't tell you how many vets came up and said, "Well, you should have had the rank instead of the Special Forces insignia. . ." So every day I yell at the wardrobe men for stuff like that. They don't catch it, but I catch it.

**SOF:** Do you think if Hollywood is ever going to get back in the Vietnam Veterans' good graces that this film will do it?

**Stallone:** I tried. I really tried. What's so damn hard is that I'm speaking for so many men and I'm trying to put in a matter of seconds what they really wanted out of the war.

Was it money, was it respect? What was it really? And I think when you reduce it to its lowest common denominator — before we get to the Agent Orange situation and the way the Veteran's Administration is treating people — when you get right down to simple emotion, it's the fact that the love was not returned.

The vets are saying, "What we gave was not given back to us. We asked our country to love us as much as we loved it." And I think that is where the problem started. When it's not a mutual, reciprocal relationship . . . when one keeps taking and not giving . . . that's when you get people going off the deep end. That's when the violence begins to simmer.

I feel it's the same thing with Rambo. He never mentions anything for himself. It's always we, we, we. It's a case where I tried to take 10 types of characters and jam them into one. I doubt that anyone is that expert in everything. So I thought that instead of traveling with a team of 15 men, I'll make some sort of superhuman being who really is a killing machine for his country. He has no sense of self. He really says, "Cut me up, beat me; I don't care."

When he says he died in Vietnam, he means it.

(played with maddening bureaucratic indifference by Charles Napier) and reveals that the politicians never did really give a damn if we won or lost in Vietnam.

There is a lot of weapons work involved in the film but surprisingly little of it is what you would expect for a clandestine mission. Rambo brings another Jimmy Lile saw-toothed survival/combat knife (one inch longer than the *First Blood* knife and blacked with high-temp paint) to the screen and draws a tremendous amount of second and third blood with the ten-inch blade. His combat moves are quick, clean and credible, particularly in a scene in which he completely buries himself in a muddy jungle hillside only to suddenly emerge and dispatch a Russian adviser who is looking for him.

Much of this apparent expertise, displayed by a man who has never been in service, is attributable to U.S. Navy SEAL combat veteran Tony Maffatone who spent 1967-70 running clandestine ops in



Soviet Spetsnaz advisers may have made their way into modern-day Vietnam and *Rambo* is the first movie to let the American public get a glimpse of them.



Searching for his quarry, this Soviet Spetsnaz trooper seems to have missed something. He'll be sorry he did.

There is nothing left of him. All he wants to do is set it right for the people who are still living. He thinks it's a lost cause. That's the way I play him. He is The Avenger. Rambo is the dark side of the American consciousness that has one foot in lawlessness and one foot in the establishment and is trying *so desperately* to stay right down the middle. In the original *First Blood* book, he was a psychopath and I felt that was wrong.

**SOF:** Can we presume from this movie that you believe there are still Americans left alive in Southeast Asia?

**Stallone:** Oh, definitely. I think so. The Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA), I know, doesn't. I made the mistake of saying in the paper that I thought the VVA did. They certainly don't. From our research and from some of the Vietnamese that have come over in the past nine months . . . actual sightings by people who have been in my employ, and they have no reason to lie . . . I believe them. There's just too many sightings. We've just come out with a documentary backed by the League of Families which has extraordinary evidence. There's just too many men missing and too much evidence. And it's obvious that the government's playing it down.

**SOF:** Was the metaphoric CIA official a deliberate symbol of an uncaring, unsympathetic government or did you just need a foil for Rambo?

**Stallone:** Well, he was the foil. In one instance, he

says, "I don't think there's any POWs, I'm just here to clean up the mess." That's it, you know? It's just a gig for him. Rambo is expendable. And what I like about it is that Rambo knows he's going into a meat-grinder. You know why? Because he wants one more shot to fight the war *his own way*. I believe what he says is so true: "To win a war, you have to become war." It's a matter of who is the most savage. That's what was incredible to me in the Vietnam War. They said, "OK, we'll have Monday off and you can't cross this line."

Yet the enemy was doing everything while the Americans were playing some sort of *football rules*. "You can't go into this zone and this is trespassing and drop back and kick." Are they crazy? That's what was so frustrating.

So in this film, I just pull out all the stops. There is nothing he won't do to win and I think that's what you have to do.

**SOF:** If you had a chance to talk directly to all Vietnam Veterans, what would you say?

**Stallone:** I'd say this is as much as I can do for you. I can bring it to the attention of the public. I can turn the light on the subject. In your hearts, this government may never come around to giving you the honor and the merit of your achievements. That's something that you're going to have to make peace with in your own soul. But let it be known that this film could not have been made without your valiant efforts, without your spirit being involved, without the knowledge that I am your voice.

I just want to thank them and give them my gratitude for their gallantry. I just hope that somehow their spirits can be soothed and that they can know they are the warriors. They are the backbone of America. They don't need the government to say, "OK, we forgive you."

The hell with that. They can stand on their own achievements and say, goddam it, we did it and we have nothing to be guilty about. We could have won the war if they'd let us do it our way.

**SOF:** Thanks for giving SOF some of your time.

**Stallone:** This is so important. I'm really glad that you saw it in a favorable light. You guys are the real purists. The rest of them . . . these other magazines . . . they basically go with the trend. *You know*, if you have a hot movie, they put you on the cover. When you're down, they don't give a damn. It's "who's hot; who's not." Every other week it's who's rich, who's poor and it's very gimmicky.

But to be in your magazine, it's a real honor.

Vietnam, Stallone called Maffatone "the guy I patterned Rambo after." Maffatone, who runs a security and consulting agency out of New York City (Ronin Agency, Dept. SOF, 240 E. 46th St., Penthouse A, New York, New York 10017), is somewhat self-effacing about his efforts as a technical adviser on *Rambo*.

"Sly did an enormous amount of research and visited a lot of veterans' hospitals," Maffatone claimed. "I just worked along and brought him down to earth a little. Sly is extremely athletic and easy to train but there were some problems.

"You've got to break down some of the walls these martial arts guys throw up and convince the actors that there's no time for that kind of fencing crap when you're in a real combat situation. You take a guy out as quickly and cleanly as possible."

Stallone and Maffatone, the eternal Italian stereotypes, nurture a mutual admiration that is obvious in speaking to both men. But there were some problems ensuring the technical aspects of Stallone's mission performance were credible. In Maffatone's words it was "a situation in which we had to take some scenarios Sly wanted in the film and break them down to a credible compromise."

Two of Stallone's most-used weapons caused the SEAL veteran technical adviser and former New Jersey policeman to demonstrate that the teacher could be as volatile and vocal as the pupil.

Maffatone wanted Stallone to choose another knife as Rambo's trustiest weapon rather than reappear with a Jimmy Lile creation given the situation and terrain of the mission. "I felt it was strictly for the cameras," commented Maffatone. "I would certainly have carried something different if I expected to be using it on human targets a great deal. But Sly is a genius when it comes to how things look on film."

How Jimmy Lile blades look — as anyone who saw *First Blood* can testify — is huge, intimidating and deadly. Stallone claims the choice was mostly serendipity. "I was going to use the Randall knife which is very similar," he recalled. "Then I ran into Jimmy Lile in a knife store and we decided maybe we could come up with something a little more modern.

You know, with the compass and the screwdrivers in both ends? I was also thinking about using a Randall Bowie but on film the Bowie looks *so huge*."

No matter. It's Stallone's moves and the way Maffatone taught him to attack an adversary that make the one-on-one encounters with both NVA and Russian advisers easy for genuine combat veterans to swallow. It's something that's



Rambo waits until just the right moment to unleash his wrath on an unsuspecting enemy.





been sacrificed in too many Vietnam film rip-offs and Maffatone rates a well-done for his hard-headed efforts. Hollywood should holler for men of such experience and candor when they get ready to delve into the business of portraying professional fighting men on the screen.

Maffatone generally agrees there's just one more flaw for which the film's producers should be called on the carpet. We've fielded a lot of weird weapons in the years since the Vietnam war, but I don't recall anyone offering high-explosive warheads for arrows fired from a modern compound bow. Rambo uses such devices to pulverize a pesky NVA officer who chases him through the jungle after his escape from captivity, and to wreak HE havoc with a Russian reinforcement convoy just before he escapes from North Vietnam with a chopper load of POWs. It's great action but exploding arrows are a little hard for most veterans to find in the quiver of their experience.

"I was almost in tears about the exploding arrows," remembered Maffatone, "but they look great on camera, and Sly does use the bow very credibly with regular broadhead arrows. It was another compromise." Some Special Ops types in Vietnam did use both crossbows and longbows with deadly efficiency on clandestine missions during the war. It's hardly a quantum leap of faith to buy Rambo's choice of the collapsible bow for silent killing, especially when he accurately uses it to split the skull of an NVA prison-camp commander who is about to blow away Rambo's female indigenous contact on the ground in North Vietnam.

She is known as "Co Bao" and well-played by Julia Nickson, a Singapore-born actress and the daughter of a Chinese mother and a British father. Nickson admirably fills out both standard black peasant PJs and a striking *ao-dai* in her part as the agent who helps get Rambo in and out of the POW compound. Almost any veteran who fell in love out of loneliness during his Vietnam tour will understand why Rambo can find a place in his cold heart for her.

She speaks acceptable Vietnamese in several scenes and handles both AK-47s and a stolen UZI well. Maffatone also helped coach her in weapons work and she recalls some frustration on the set.

"There is the real way and the show business way. The technical adviser kept trying to show me how it would really have been done and the directors wanted it another way for the cameras. I was instructed to do it the Hollywood way." Again, no matter. Co Bao's weapons work primarily involves firing cover for Rambo, and the spray-and-pray method is as good as any if you're only trying to keep an enemy's head down for awhile. Nickson, a British citizen, claims she was too young during the war years to form any strong political opinions, but she's proud of Stallone's stand in *Rambo*.

"If these men were willing to lay their lives on the line, how could we do anything other than honor them for that sacrifice? I think this film has a very valid point."

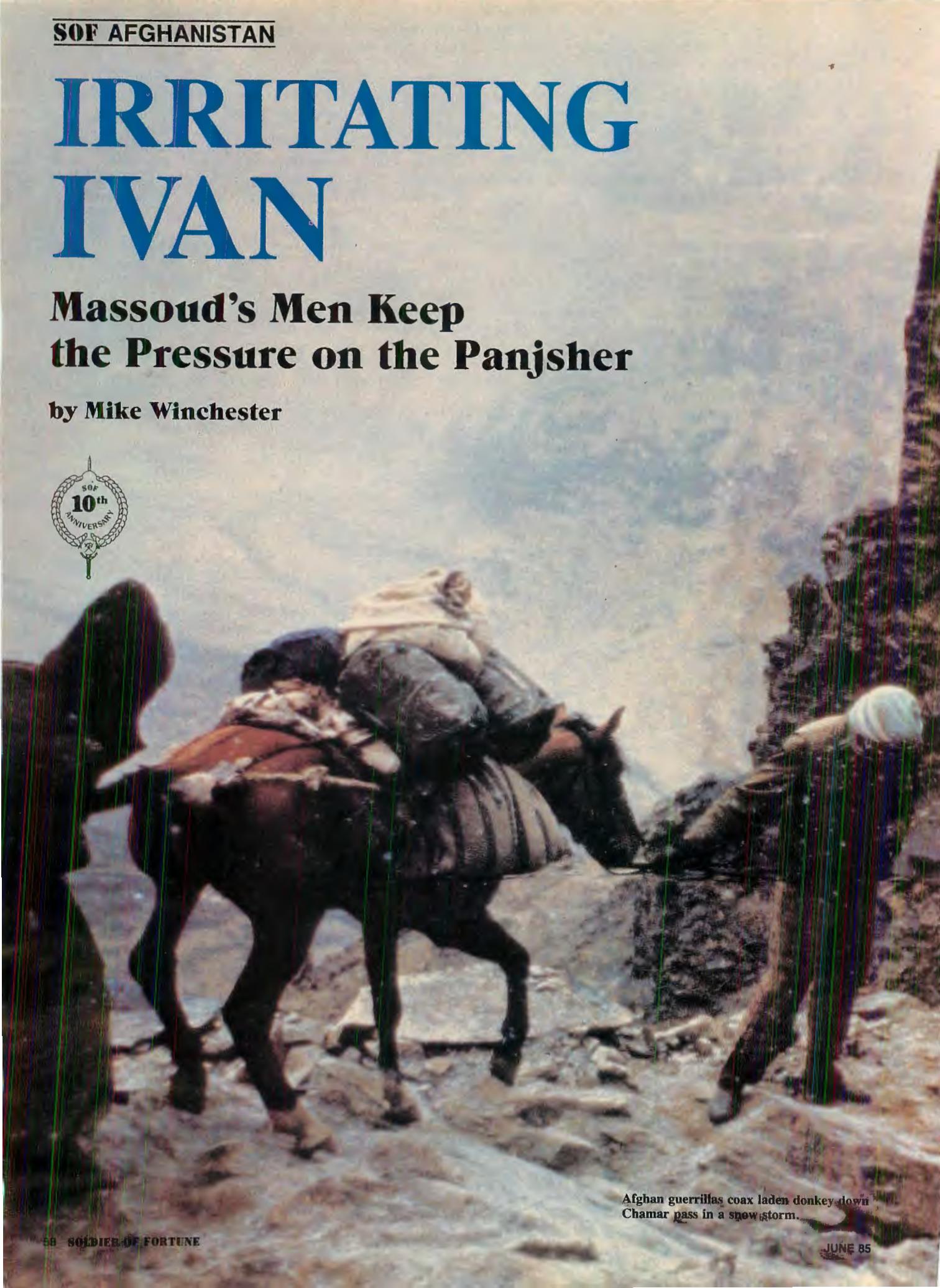
Nickson's and Maffatone's comments regarding compromises are artfully demonstrated in several other scenes that may cause some raised eyebrows among veterans in the audience. Paratroopers — particularly those trained by SF or other special-operations units for HALO and LALO insertions — may be surprised to learn that Colonel Traut-

*Continued on page 94*

# IRRITATING IVAN

**Massoud's Men Keep  
the Pressure on the Panjsher**

by Mike Winchester



Afghan guerrillas coax laden donkey down Chamar pass in a snow storm.

**A**HMAH Shah Massoud was seated in a small, one-room house dimly lit by a hurricane lamp. It was one of the few buildings in this battle-scarred area that hadn't been hit by counter-battery fire. The resistance leader looked grim and weary as he concentrated on the Farsi-language broadcast over the BBC. Others in the room sat silently and eyed their leader apprehensively. The news was not good.

It was a struggle for the "The Lion of the Panjsher" to be hospitable to foreign visitors but he greeted us as and told us what we already knew. His latest attack had failed. Casualties included two mujahideen KIA when they tried to detonate enemy mines in the path of the attack, and another wounded by enemy fire. The dead men had made the mistake of kneeling to gain greater purchase on anti-personnel-mine trip-wires with grappling irons. They should've been prone. Fragments from the mines had hit them in the chest and head. Massoud had heard it all in an after-action report from the leader of his assault in the Panjsher Valley of Afghanistan.

The siege had been months in planning and preparation. There had been weeks of spoiling attacks, ambushes and roadblocks designed to soften the target. It takes time — with so few weapons and so many enemies — to force the Russians and Kabul-regime troops into a corner which allows a significant assault by the Afghan freedom fighters.

All the effort seemed wasted now. The fortress outpost had not fallen. Two men were dead. And I was disappointed. For the past 12 days, I had struggled over difficult terrain to reach this place and watch the Afghans retake the initiative in the Panjsher. Nearly two weeks had been spent dodging Afghan Army-patrolled valleys under Russian-controlled skies, trudging through bitter cold and deep snow over 14,000-foot passes. But my problems seemed insignificant compared to those facing Massoud.

Days before the attack in an area just a few hours walk from the mouth of the Panjsher Valley, we'd seen plenty of evidence that the Soviets were still firmly committed to controlling the countryside. We'd halted for food and rest amid a wild chaos of rubble and broken rock. The peaceful keening of the wind was wiped out by the ominous drone of a twin-engined AN-26-type Soviet recon plane. The pilot was circling, keeping close watch on the tangle of jagged peaks at the head of the Panjsher. He dipped his wings and gracefully swept over the Chamar, heading in our direction. With practiced movements the mujahideen picked spots and dived under cover. The recon pilot wasn't particularly dangerous but his buddies flying the attack aircraft certainly were. We'd seen what was left of a nomad caravan an hour before.

The stench warned us we were approaching another mute testimony to Soviet air superiority. A sickly-sweet stench hung in the still mountain air and



Fatigues and Soviet boots (these are tanker's boots) have become standard uniform for Massoud's army of resistance.

violated our noses. If you've smelled it before — no matter when or where — you recognize it instantly.

The killing ground was where the narrow valley broadened out into a long, open expanse of mountain pasture flanked by sharp scree-covered slopes. There were no trees or boulders that might have provided concealment. It had been a massacre.

Carcasses of camels, horses and donkeys lay strewn across the grass where they had fallen, legs splayed out, empty eye sockets staring into nothingness. Hides, stretched taut across whitening bones, were punctured by machine-gun fire or gashed by shrapnel. Here and there, where the grass had been gouged by rockets, a few pathetic scraps of clothing lay scattered.

It didn't take a powerful imagination to visualize what had happened. On a similarly cloudless morning, the Su-24 ground-attack jets had swept in low between the snow-splashed peaks, spraying the pasture with 30mm cannon fire and rockets. Men, women, children and animals scattered in panic. Most died but survivors who made it to Pakistan told the story. Some 25 Afghan nomads had been gunned down from above in an area where their ancestors had camped for centuries on the approaches to the pass. They lay buried beneath crude piles of stones topped with tattered white pennants, a grim reminder of what everyone who dares to walk this ground knows from bitter experience. In daylight hours the Chamar Pass — the last barrier before the Panjsher Valley — is a free-fire zone. Traffic there, by Soviet definition, is resistance traffic. Anyone else is subject to the same deadly toll for passage.

So we sat it out all morning, hidden among the rocks, the horses camouflaged with blankets. Antonovs came and went. Occasionally the distant roar of an unseen

jet shattered the stillness. The mujahideen slept. I dozed and wondered what we were going to find on the far side of the pass.

By afternoon cloud cover had blown in and aerial activity eased. Rather than risk a broken leg on the pass at night, we decided to move early. Leaving the valley and its pastures behind us, we cut up a brutally steep, winding trail that brought us to the last rocky shelf before the head of the Chamar Pass. We were star players in an icy amphitheater of rock. Above our heads towered the jagged 16,000-foot wall that separated us from the Panjsher. There was no vegetation, no birds, just a grim wilderness of rock and an utter, frozen silence.

Climbing to the crest of the mountain looked to be a trek of less than 1,000 feet. But it took us over an hour of slow, agonized plodding, step by step, gasping in the thinning air. By 1600 we reached our objective marked by a gap in the rampart of rock just wide enough to permit one horse to pass at a time. We would now cross into the turbulent Panjsher Valley. Snow was falling and the 19,000-foot peaks around us were shrouded in clouds. My hands and feet were numb with cold.

We paused long enough to let the stragglers catch up, yelling at them in wild exhilaration. And then, almost unbelievably, we were going down, edging slowly over ice-covered rocks into the Panjsher.

The journey in had been a rough one — even by mujahid standards — covering all of 12 brutal days. The first day's hike should have warned me of what lay ahead in my effort to join Massoud and his band of freedom fighters. We had slipped across the Pakistani border with our mujahid guides under cover of darkness and climbed the first pass to a resting place by 0400. We set out again after three hours' sleep and climbed solidly until we made the top of the pass at around 14,000 feet, stopping at noon for a meal of dried-bread cake. The meal hardly seemed sufficient for men who were carrying 50-pound packs over 15,000-foot

mountains. By the time I staggered into our first rendezvous in Nuristan some time after 1900 hours, I knew damn well it wouldn't be.

Starting out on such a rugged leg has only one major advantage: things can only get better. Our pack horses had crossed ahead of us for security reasons. We caught up with them on the second day when everyone realized we would need more food. Hunger stayed with us most of the way, by-product of a diet of unleavened bread and tea, occasionally supplemented by what we could scavenge along the road.

Compared to the horses we were having a ball. Mujahideen arms caravans heading

into the interior may vary from anything between 20 to 500 and more pack animals. What does not vary is that every one of them does its wretched share of work and plenty more besides. Loads average around 180 pounds of munitions with maybe a rider perched on top for the hell of it. As the bleached skeletons and rotting carcasses that litter the trails suggest, you can only push the sturdy animals so far. Beyond that, you're looking at a heap of RPG ammunition in the middle of nowhere and a long walk.

From the Chamar Pass we moved down toward the main valley at a rapid pace. But an hour after dark we were still stumbling

down a bleak wide valley along a trail that our guides cheerfully informed us had been liberally sewn with butterfly anti-personnel mines a few months before. At 2000 hours, tired, hungry and anxious about mines, we halted. Shelter for the night was a rough stone sheep pen. There was no wood — so no fire. Dinner was a piece of moldy bread and a handful of mutton each, eaten in a frozen huddle around the dying illumination of a torch. Then we crawled into our sleeping bags and tried to sleep. Welcome to the Panjsher.

Next morning I felt better. We pushed on early toward our first village and the promise of breakfast. Before reaching the settle-

**At a critical moment, the DShK jams and the mujahid gunner desperately tries to clear it.**



ment, however, we passed another group plodding up toward the pass: some mujahideen, two French movie-makers and five Soviet prisoners en route to Pakistan. Pale and dispirited, the Soviets' faces seemed preposterously young against those of the tough, bearded mujahideen who grunted a welcome and kept moving. No armed guards surrounded the prisoners. There was nowhere for them to run.

From the French we heard reports that Massoud was in Dasht-i-Rewat, two days' walk down the main valley. And, they said, there was talk of a general counter-offensive to drive the communists back down the Panjsher. That was confirmed a day later

when we reached a village in the Parian district of the main valley.

A party of mujahideen passed through, heading north to make liaison with resistance groups in the northeastern province of Badakhshan. They'd been with Massoud two days before in Dasht-i-Rewat and had come very close to the warrior's ultimate reward when Soviet jets had bombed a house within 50 yards of the Panjsheri commander's temporary CP. They were convinced it was no coincidence.

"Wherever Massoud goes, they bomb," one freedom fighter told me. With extensive burns across his back, he seemed an authoritative source. At the start of what we

planned to be two or three weeks working as closely as possible with Massoud, this was just the sort of morale-boosting news we needed.

That afternoon we rearranged our packs, leaving non-essential items, to be able to move and climb faster. No one left his first-aid pack.

We reached the town a day later. At about 100 klicks from the valley mouth, Dasht-i-Rewat is one of the Panjsher's biggest settlements. Or was. What had been a busy, thriving community of maybe 15,000 was today a ghost town — a charred, blackened shell fought over, bombed and systematically torched until not a single building re-





**Mujahideen rely on cover for protection against air attack, since their only defense is the 12.7mm HMG.**

mained undamaged. This was our first real taste of Moscow's prescription for non-Marxist Afghanistan: scorched earth. Total destruction. The Soviet version of peace and progress had reached the Panjsher.

Civilians were long gone but the mujahideen remained. We could make out figures moving among the ruins on the further bank of the river and our mujahideen guide, Mohammad Sabir, a native of Dasht-i-Rewat, soon found the local *quaragah* in a well-hidden spot not far from the town itself. We were made welcome in a tiny room festooned with RPGs, Kalashnikovs and RPKs. It looked more like an armory than a command post.

Around the room seated on cushions were some of the local *zarbati* boys. Panjsheri mujahideen stand out anywhere in Afghanistan. The Chitrali serge cap is almost standard issue. Most wear uniform "dreshi" or fatigue trousers in preference to the baggier pantaloons worn elsewhere. Bush jackets or Soviet-issue quilt or parade jackets are common, and Soviet Army boots (brought mostly from Kabul) are preferred over sandals for the rocky terrain of the area. The net impression is a band of veteran, professional fighting men. It fits.

The *quaragah* commander, Atiqullah Khan, was absent but his officers fed us a simple meal of tea and thick slabs of unleavened bread. Dasht-i-Rewat, they told us, had taken more than its share of jabs on the sharp end of the Soviet eighth offensive in the Panjsher. A Soviet force estimated at between 1,000 and 1,400 men had been lifted into the area, triggering three days' heavy fighting. The Russians admitted to one chopper lost and a jet downed. The mujahideen indicated they had killed or wounded some 300 Soviet troops. The muj had lost 10 men KIA out of a total of 15 killed in a series of eight commando assaults

on the area since 20 April. Morale appeared high — strikingly so.

We finally caught up with Massoud two days later in a village further downstream from Puzhgur. We were invited to dinner and by Afghan wartime standards the cuisine — goat fried in breadcrumbs, french fries, rice and salad — was unbelievable. The dining room also took some getting used to: the upper room of a partially destroyed house, where the windows had been roughly covered with boards and blankets. At one end of the room hung a large map of the Middle East and Afghanistan.

Company was varied. In addition to Massoud and his staff, there were the three of us and two Soviet prisoners. One, a 21-year-old lieutenant, had been captured on the Salang a few weeks earlier. The other was a 19-year-old from Kursk who looked 15 and had deserted as a result of what he claimed was excessively brutal treatment in his unit.

Massoud was relaxed and in good humor, and conversation ranged freely. The elder Soviet spoke fair Farsi and raised laughs by describing the Soviet attitude toward Babrak Karmal, their puppet in the capitol. He is known among the Russians as "King of Kabul and some of his country's roads."

And we discussed the possibility of a Soviet helicopter assault to establish a garrison at Dasht-i-Rewat. That, it seemed, was about the last thing anyone expected to happen. They way Massoud saw it, the communists already had their hands full trying to maintain the four garrisons they had established in the Panjsher. The initiative now was with the mujahideen and — as the Frenchmen we met earlier had hinted — a

general offensive was soon to be launched, aimed at tightening the pressure around the communist enclaves and putting the big squeeze on Puzhgur. If the Afghan Army could be forced out of Puzhgur, there was a good possibility they would retreat back down the valley, according to Massoud.

There was some basis for his strategy. Puzhgur was not in good shape. Soviet units had pulled out in September leaving about 500 Afghans to mind the shop. Without open supply routes that was easier ordered than accomplished. For two weeks now convoys moving up the valley had been prevented from breaking the siege. On 24 September the first all-Afghan attempt to punch through had been pushed back, with the guerrillas capturing two trucks loaded with rice and potatoes. Then, on 30 September, a Soviet convoy had lost four AFVs and 30 men KIA in another major ambush. Dashikas manned by mujahideen gunners on the surrounding hills had prevented helicopters from landing a rescue force.

In short, as far as Massoud was concerned, the only major operation the Soviets were likely to undertake was a push up the valley to break the siege of Puzhgur and extricate the embattled, dispirited garrison from an Afghan version of Dien Bien Phu. His own strategy involved pressing home attacks around the base on the valley floor. That meant first seizing the surrounding high ground from small, entrenched platoon-sized outposts which dotted the steep slopes on both sides of the valley. That was a significant action and I wanted to observe.

We moved next morning at 0700, congregating first under the trees still standing amid the ruined village. The surrounding wheat fields were bare, scarred by shallow pits where Soviet tanks had dug into defensive positions during the Panjsher VII advance. Around them were individual foxholes littered with spent cartridge cases. Gaping bomb craters pocked the valley. The moonscape of carpet-bombing began farther downstream near Ruka and Bazarak where the Soviets had anticipated the toughest resistance.

Massoud and his staff were in high spirits as they organized for the march. There was a brief prayer for safety on the road and then we set off in small assault groups. We followed the main track down the valley, but before long it branched off across open fields to cross the rushing torrent of the Panjsher River via a rickety wooden bridge that Soviet bombing had failed to destroy.

An hour later and safely across the swollen river we were climbing again, up into the narrow defile of one of the Panjsher's numerous side-valleys. Each leading down into the main valley, these rugged avenues carved by water are both resistance bolt-holes and attack routes. They have also been the site of some of the most murderously effective ambushes of the Afghan war.

The day had dawned cool and clear. But by 1030 the sun was strong and I sweated under a heavy jacket and pack. The extremes of heat and freezing cold that mark

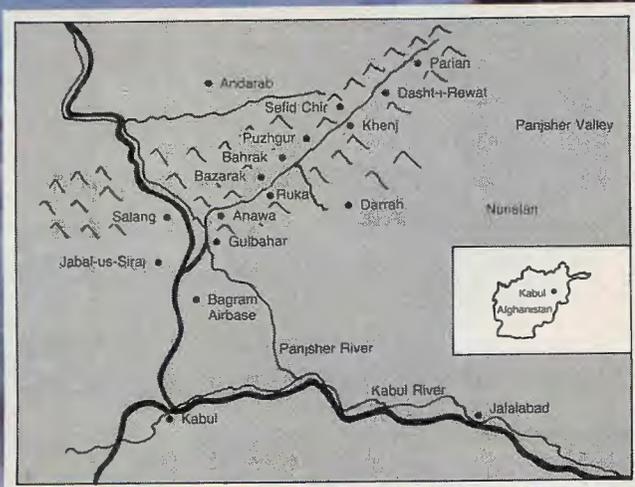
autumn weather in mountainous parts of Afghanistan can be maddening. During a rest a runner from a unit beyond the valley on the plains of Shomali caught up with our party. Massoud read the report from his forward unit, tossing out significant bits of information to the men around him. There had been heavy clashes at night in the city of Kabul as well as an assault on Bagram Airbase that had destroyed several Su-25s on the ground. All good news.

We pushed on uphill, arriving half an hour later at a small mountain village which — in the interests of security — must remain unidentified. There are a number of friendly villages scattered among the side-valleys and on the higher slopes of the Panjshir. The Soviets would love to know which ones they are. Our stopping place was deserted by the civilian population but the mujahideen regularly use it for shelter and as base for crop-harvesting crews.

We rested a day to catch up on washing, writing and sleep. Most of the afternoon was spent talking with Massoud and a senior aide, Massoud Khalili (no relation). Normally Peshawar-based and fluent in English, Khalili was to prove invaluable as a link between my own inadequate Farsi and Massoud's rough grasp of French.

Around us, preparations for action were under way as mujahideen, on liaison missions to resistance groups in the surrounding mountains, came and went. They were regularly followed by Soviet Frontal Aviation units. MiGs and Sukhois roared overhead in pairs or flights of fours and fives. They buzzed like angry insects toward a side-valley or suspected guerrilla position on the valley floor. Their bombs rippled off the wings and roared through the area sending debris and smoke skyward. It was a waste of ordnance but the Soviets could afford such tactics.

Mujahid position high on valley wall overlooks contested Panjshir.



At times it looked like they were coming for us. A cry of "jet-ha" (jets!), was followed by a general rush for weapons and equipment as we piled out of structures and scattered for the anti-aircraft shelters dug into the rock faces near the village. Safe enough unless you took a direct hit — in which case you'd never know anyway. The mujahideen took it all stoically but fear was evident. These are tough and resourceful fighters but, contrary to popular western myths, they are in no more hurry to die than the rest of us.

The next morning we left the village, moving back down the rocky bed of the stream that flowed into the Panjsher River. Two hours later we reached the town of Khenj on the valley floor. The place was more than just a name. At the beginning of the August 1982 offensive I'd stayed there at a friend's house perched on a small hill overlooking the river. Un-

til the Soviet air-assault units arrived on the surrounding mountains, there had been rest from the war and a chance to wander along the shaded main street and narrow back alleys.

Now the place looked like Berlin in 1945: a gutted, empty shell featuring lines of blackened shop-fronts and smashed stone houses. The main street was littered with cartridge cases marking the spot where the Soviets had been ambushed by guerrillas hiding amid the ruins or in the orchards beside the road.

There was nothing left to linger over in Khenj. We trudged on down the valley toward Puzhgur. Well away from the town we began to climb again up the other side of the valley. A two-hour ascent brought us to a village that was to be our base of operations for the attacks on the posts around Puzhgur. We waited for two days, eating large meals of rice, sleeping and watching the local *zarbati*

units bringing in the harvest and winnowing the grain. Overhead, the Su-25s came and went.

From this jump-off position we could finally survey the target: Khoja Kolan. It was situated high above the valley floor at around 13,000 feet. Larger than most installations in the area, it was composed of several interconnected bunkers, defended by some 30 Afghan Army troops and supported by an 82mm mortar. We spotted three RPK machine-gun positions. Beyond it, lower down the slope, was a second post manned by perhaps 20 soldiers who could provide covering fire for the higher position. Another supporting post stood atop a ridge on the far side of a steep side-valley, but well within mortar or HMG range. Our assault could also expect to come under supporting fire from heavier D-30 122mm howitzers and BM-21 122mm multiple-rocket launchers at the main Afghan Army base at Bahrak

The mujahid mortar team joins the battle for Khoja Kolan.



farther down the main valley.

Massoud's plan to attack this outpost was simple but well-conceived. The first move would be to divert supporting fire with diversionary attacks around Bahrak and Bazarak. He hoped that would draw D-30 and BM-21 fire off into the mountains. Then at 1700 — with enough light left to see but not enough for the Soviets to mount airstrikes from Kabul or Bagram — the assault on Khoja Kolan and other posts on the farther side of the main valley would go in at high port.

Mujahideen supporting fire was to be provided by three 12.7mm DShK HMGs, a couple of B-10 recoilless rifles 500 yards from the post, and a mortar position behind them. Closer in would be three two-man RPG teams and two RPK crews. Under their fire, three 10-man assault squads armed with Kalashnikovs, hand grenades and grappling hooks for AP mines would try to get toe-to-toe with the enemy.

Since the Soviets established bases at Ruka and Anawa in the wake of the 1982 offensives, mines had been laid in depth around all positions — in particular Afghan Army ones. The reasoning was sound enough: aside from keeping the mujahideen out, minefields also served to keep reluctant conscripts in place. Some mines were buried. But most were anti-personnel devices atop raised wooden supports detonated by interconnected trip-wires. The mujahideen have only their eyes and their experience as mine-detectors.

They supplement those with grappling hooks. Assault squads hurl them to catch trip-wires. Then they pull the rope to detonate the mines at a distance. Attackers then crawl forward to get within hand-grenade range. That's the theory.

Our advantage — and I searched desperately for at least one — was the high ground above Khoja Kolan. The communists had positions up there but the freedom fighters were ready to climb higher. *How* much higher we got to see the hard way.

We finally left the village one night around 0200 after five hours' sleep. The moon was one night off full. As we climbed out of the village over a high spur that separated us from the next side valley, we lost the moonlight. By 0400 we were stumbling, cursing and sweating up an almost sheer slope in the full blackness of predawn. Only gradually as we inched up toward the outline of the Panjsher's ramparts did the first trace of dawn appear amid the peaks of Nuristan. Then we reached the top of the high rim of the valley at around 14,000 feet. Below us the Panjsher was still lost in night. It was almost 0500.

Massoud and his staff halted for prayers, a simple act of worship performed in a single line facing Mecca. One mujahid acted as leader, singing the Arabic prayer in a steady, sonorous tenor. A sentry stood guard, his Dragunov sniper rifle silhouetted against the growing light in the east, rising from beyond range on a range of jagged, snow-capped peaks. Sitting on a rock, tired,



**High above Khoja Kolan, guerrillas set up a dashika to cover the assault on the fort.**

hungry and cold, I suddenly felt I understood something of what these men were fighting to preserve. I was witness to an ancient way of life that neither the Soviets nor anyone else had the right to alter.

We were now already close to the post at Khoja Kolan, situated 15 minutes' walk away, lower down at the end of the same ridge we had climbed. We pushed on quickly along the farther side of the ridge line and upward, away from our target. Moving back up the spine of the ridge, we followed a dried-up irrigation ditch and came to a group of stone cattle pens where we spent the day. Around us on the mountainside other groups of guerrillas were assembling in well-concealed positions.

To my surprise, from the cattle pens we could actually see Khoja Kolan some 2,000 meters distant, a nipple on the breast of the ridge. Through binoculars I could make out figures moving between the bunkers: a soldier shaking out a blanket ... a water-carrying detail. The fact that we could also be seen didn't concern anyone too much. As one Afghan told me, the communists knew there were guerrillas in the mountains and if they knew what was good for them they'd keep quiet.

That afternoon we got a chance to meet the enemy close up. It was an encounter that went a long way to explain why 18-year-old Russians are having to die in Afghanistan in growing numbers every year.

They appeared over the ridge without warning and trudged single file into the cattle pen. The eight of them ranged in age from late teens to mid-forties, gaunt, unshaven, dressed in uniform parts and civilian clothes. Unmistakably deserters. Not the first we'd seen but the biggest group.

They drove the message home hard. As I scribbled in my diary:

*The word rabble just doesn't begin to describe these men. There is absolutely nothing military about them. But these are the 'soldiers' defending Babrak's regime.*

They got a warm welcome complete with handshakes from the mujahideen. They said they'd deserted from positions near the Soviet base at Bazarak three days before, some with weapons, some without. They now had one thing in mind: getting home. And five minutes after answering questions about the fighting around Bazarak they were on the move. Unescorted free men.

That afternoon the guerrillas were happy to see the skies cloud over. It cut the chances of airstrikes. But then it started snowing and we began to wonder if we weren't getting too much of a good thing. By nightfall heavy, wet snow settled on the rocks.

The evening meal was a piece of bread, thin meat soup and half an apple each. We ate crouched in one of the stone shelters out of the wind and snow. But there was no escaping the cold which seemed to seek every crack in the rough stone wall. We lay huddled in our sleeping bags, wearing every piece of clothing we had and feeling like deep-frozen mummies.

Next morning I woke to the rolling thunder of artillery echoing among the mountains — BM-21s at Bazarak hammering away at suspected mujahid positions. Outside the world was a sheet of blinding whiteness, four inches of snow spread across the mountainside, the first heavy fall of the winter. On the slopes between our position and Khoja Kolan the wind blew surface snow into great clouds. But above, the day was clear and against the startling whiteness

*Continued on page 86*

# Germany's Classic Commando

# Skorzeny

by Blaine Taylor



*Comparing war to dueling, Otto Skorzeny deduced: "You cannot waste time feinting and sidestepping. You must decide on your target and go in." Better than any other statement, that completely sums up Skorzeny's career as Germany's most daring soldier. No complex planning, no elaborate techniques, Skorzeny simply took advantage of events and waded in. SOF looks at the career of this illustrious commando in Part One of a two-part series.*

THE date was 26 July 1943. It was a quiet Sunday in Berlin and an obscure, 35-year-old *Waffen SS (Schutzstaffel) Hauptsturmführer* (Secret Service Captain) named Otto Skorzeny was having a leisurely lunch in the Hotel Eden with an old friend from his native Vienna. Out of uniform and chatting amiably over coffee, Skorzeny hadn't the faintest idea that within hours he was to be catapulted from nowhere onto the stage of world history on a "mission impossible" that was to make him the most famous commando of all time. The previous April 20th — the 54th birthday of his commander-in-chief Adolf Hitler — he'd been promoted from lieutenant to captain and made the first-ever Chief of the German *Jagdverbände* (Special Troops). But nothing could have prepared him for his next assignment.

Hitler had demanded the unit's creation in response to British commando raids in North Africa and on the coastline of Nazi Germany's *Festung Europa* (Fortress Europe). The order bringing the new unit to life was vaguely worded: "Existing or to be created in the future." In sum, the new Capt. Skorzeny commanded a unit yet to be tested in actual combat as a fighting force.

Still, he had an odd feeling that something was wrong that Sunday in Berlin, and decided to call his headquarters just outside the capital at Friedenthal — the oddly-named "Valley of Peace" — to see if anything was going on.

Pandemonium erupted on the other end of the telephone line and Skorzeny could scarcely believe what he was hearing. Aides had been searching the city for him for over two hours. A message had come from *Führerhauptquartier* (Leader headquarters) "somewhere on the Eastern Front" ordering him, Otto Skorzeny, to fly "there" at once. A military aircraft was awaiting Skorzeny's arrival at Berlin's Tempelhof Airport for a 1700 take-off.

No one from the Special Troops had ever been summoned to FHQ but Otto Skorzeny kept his wits about him as he calmly told his secretary, "Tell Radl to go into my room and pack my uniform and toilet gear. Don't let him forget anything. . . . Haven't you an indication what this is all about?"

"No," she answered, "we don't know anything here."

Captain Karl Radl — a friend from Skorzeny's Vienna student days and his immediate choice as aide after his own April appointment — met Skorzeny at the airfield in front of the waiting Focke-Wulf Kondor.

Radl, just as puzzled as his chief by all the hubbub, mumbled something about a "change of government in Italy" as Skorzeny entered the plane as its sole passenger.

## NAZI WAR HISTORIAN

Blaine Taylor is a freelance writer living in the Baltimore area. During the Vietnam War, he served with the U.S. Army's 199th Light Infantry Division. Over the last two decades, Taylor has published numerous articles and reviews on the history of Nazi Germany and has done primary research into captured German photographic files on deposit with the U.S. Archives in Washington D.C. Currently an advertising public-relations executive, he has extensive experience as an editor, reporter and radio/television talk-show host.

Now in his *feldgrau* (field gray) *Waffen SS* uniform with twin silver runic SS lightning flashes at the throat, Skorzeny settled back for takeoff with a glass of French cognac to steady his nerves.

"What on earth is going on?" he wondered silently. Why was he being summoned to the most secret location in all of occupied Europe this lazy summer day? The plane's engines droned monotonously during the three-hour flight. Thoughtfully, Radl had put a map in Skorzeny's briefcase, so he traced his route from the air to East Prussia, on the far Eastern frontier of the German Reich.

In the dusk, the plane touched down at Rangsdorf airstrip. Hustled into a waiting Mercedes-Benz Army staff car, Capt. Skorzeny was driven nine miles to Hitler's famed principal wartime military headquarters at Rastenburg — the *Wolfschanze*, or "Wolf's Lair." Like most soldiers, Skorzeny expected Rastenburg (the site today is located in Poland) to be a series of dugout trenches and underground bunkers. After all, he reasoned, wasn't this the spot from which Hitler had launched and was even then conducting his greatest gamble, the campaign against the Soviet Union?

It was, indeed, but Skorzeny was in for a surprise. The Wolf's Lair was a sizable, log-hut village located in a damp, murky pine forest, obscured from the air by camouflage netting and tall trees, surrounded by anti-aircraft guns, concrete bunkers, barbed wire and masses of SS troops.

Hitler waged his war there under the forbidding trees in an aura of secrecy and seclusion. There were three concentric rings of security in the area; all entrances were guarded by submachine-gun-toting troops.

Besides quarters for top Nazi Party and Wehrmacht officials, there was a kitchen, a theater, an air-raid shelter and — strangely — a tea house. Army Colonel General Alfred Jodl (after the war hung as a war criminal at Nuremberg) described the Ras-



**The hero of Nazi Germany: With his Iron Cross and Hitler-style moustache, SS Major Otto Skorzeny cut an impressive figure. Photo courtesy of the U.S. National Archives**

tenburg compound as "A cross between a monastery and a concentration camp."

It was to the tea house that Skorzeny was taken, ushered into the presence of five Army and *Luftwaffe* (Air Force) special-unit officers — all senior to the unknown, lowly captain. The tension mounted as the uniformed mutual strangers tried to make small talk. One of them mispronounced his name, and Skorzeny found himself snapping, "It's not so very difficult! All you have to do is break it up: Skor-zay-ny. It's quite simple!"

Suddenly, one of Hitler's own SS aides, Otto Günsche, appeared to announce, "Gentlemen, you will now enter the Führer's presence." The assembled officers were thunderstruck, not the least of them Skorzeny, who had never seen Hitler in person before this moment about to occur.

They trooped into Hitler's study in another building and lined up at attention. The door opened, and in strode Adolf Hitler. He wore a double-breasted *feldgrau* tunic adorned with an Iron Cross, First World War service medal and Golden Nazi Party Membership Badge, crisp white shirt, black tie, creased trousers and shiny laced shoes. His dark hair and famous toothbrush moustache were flecked with gray. As he trooped the line, Hitler paused before each

man and heard a brief recitation of the individual's career, then stepped back to inquire of the group, "Which of you knows Italy — and what do you think of the Italians?"

The others, saying what they thought Hitler wanted to hear, offered soothing phrases about Italy being Germany's loyal Axis Pact partner, and so forth. Skorzeny, although he had an earned reputation for being reckless and impulsive at times, thought hard about his answer. He knew that the others thought little of the Italians' poor military prowess in two world wars, but feared to say so. He decided to speak his mind.

An Austrian like Hitler, Skorzeny resented the fact that Italy held Austria's beautiful Alpine region, the Alto Adige. He blurted out his answer to Hitler's question: "What a question, I am an Austrian."

Hitler stared straight at him. He had been known to make sudden, seemingly inexplicable choices in men in the past to command important ventures. In the 1920s he had appointed former World War I air ace Captain Hermann Goering to lead his fledgling

Brownshirted Stormtroopers. He had also sent a junior general named Erwin Rommel to command the newly-formed Afrika Korps. Now he was about to make another of those decisions.

Standing five-foot-nine and weighing 155 pounds, Hitler surveyed his gigantic fellow countryman standing rigidly at attention before him. At six-foot-four and 206 hefty pounds, Otto Skorzeny towered over the former World War I Army corporal who now decided the destiny of the Third Reich.

Hitler coolly appraised Skorzeny's rugged frame, blue eyes and fencing-scarred left cheek from student duels, all of which presented a powerful psychological portrait. Scars ran from his left temple down his cheek and across his massive chin, later earning him the nickname "Scarface" in the enemy press.

Hitler broke the silence: "Capt. Skorzeny, you will stay behind. The rest may go."

Straightaway, Hitler shared his innermost concerns with the SS Captain. Skorzeny, pleased that Hitler could at least pronounce his name correctly, listened in bewildered silence.

"I have a mission of the highest importance for you. Mussolini, my friend and our loyal comrade-in-arms, was betrayed yesterday by his King and arrested by his own countrymen. I cannot and will not leave Italy's greatest son in the lurch. To me, *Il Duce* is the incarnation of the ancient grandeur of Rome. Italy under the new government will desert us. I will keep faith with my old ally and dear friend: he must be rescued promptly, or he will be handed over to the Allies. He has got to be rescued before these traitors can surrender him to the enemy."

Flattered by the Führer's confidence in a man he'd never met, Skorzeny wondered what all this had to do with him. In answer to his unspoken question, Hitler dropped his bombshell.

"You, Skorzeny, are going to save my friend Mussolini and prevent the terrible fate which our enemies have conceived for him. I herewith order you to carry out the task, which is vital for the war. You must do everything in your power to carry it out and, if you do, then you will be successful."

"Now, the main points. You and your men are placed under the command of General Student. Only one thing worries me and that is the attitude of the German authorities in Rome. The German Embassy listens completely to the monarchy, and I know that the Italian monarchy will betray Germany. That must be prevented by all means. Rome must not be lost or the Southern Front will collapse. Your mission to free the Duce must be kept particularly secret. I have ordered — and I give the order to you, expressly — that only a total of five persons may know of this plan.

"Gen. Student and you are part of the five. In no case may the German Embassy know of your order. Field Marshal Kesselring and his staff may not know of it under

any circumstances. The three men who help you and will learn about the plan you must find yourself. It's up to you to find out where the Duce is. You will avoid no risk. You will succeed, and your success will have a tremendous effect on the course of the war. This is a mission for which you will be answerable to me, personally.

"I hope to hear from you soon, and would like to wish you all the best. Bring me my friend Mussolini!"

With that — and a double handshake — the two Austrians parted. Thus it was that Operation Eicke was launched and with it Otto Skorzeny's road to glory and fame.

After a meal and one of his ever-present cigarettes, Skorzeny saw Luftwaffe Gen. Kurt Student, his new commander and head of Germany's paratroopers, for his second high-level briefing. They were joined by Skorzeny's SS supreme commander — *Reichsführer* (National Leader) Heinrich Himmler, a cold-blooded murderer who carried out the Nazi slaughter of the Jews and others during the war.

Earlier that day, Himmler and *Luftwaffe Reich Marshal* Goering had conferred with Hitler over the Italian situation. Later — from a secret conference transcript published after the war — it was learned that Hitler had decided to rescue the Duce at the very moment Skorzeny was having his Berlin lunch.

"I have always feared this development," Hitler had said. "That is the sole reason for my constant fear to strike prematurely in the East [Russia], because I always thought that the lid might blow off in the South." At that time Nazi Germany was losing its last great Eastern offensive — the Battle of Kursk — and with it, the war.

"I don't know where the Duce himself is. As soon as I find out, I'll have him brought out by parachutists." This was almost two full months before the event.

The grim, schoolmasterish Himmler — who had much to do with the formation of Skorzeny's unit in April — briefed Skorzeny on the names of those Italians in high places still loyal to the ousted regime of Fascist Benito Mussolini. As Skorzeny started taking notes, Himmler abruptly shouted at him, "Put that pen away at once. Can't you use your memory? All this is absolutely secret." Chastened, Skorzeny complied.

Later, Skorzeny retreated to a telephone to both call Radl and light a cigarette. Suddenly, he found Himmler glaring at him again: "So, you can't live without smoking. A fine choice for an important job, I must say." Mercifully, Radl came on the line and Skorzeny took him into his confidence, telling him also to ready 50 Italian-speaking men for takeoff to Southern France the next day. They would need to be fully equipped. "Bring everything," he commanded.

Skorzeny spent the hours between midnight and 0300 telegraphing to Radl the lists of needed gear: black hair dye, phony papers, grenades, pistols, radios, tracer ammo, medical supplies, machine guns,



**Liberator and liberated: Skorzeny (left) and Mussolini leave the Gran Imperatore Hotel flanked by German soldiers and former Italian guards. Otto Schwerdt (far right) was appointed by Skorzeny as Mussolini's bodyguard. Photo: U.S. National Archives**

Italian *lire* (currency), tropical uniforms — the works.

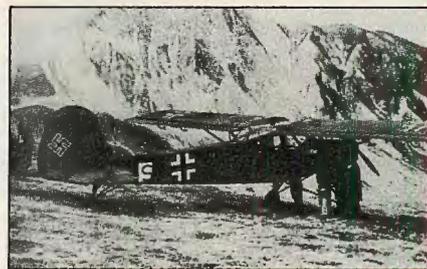
After breakfast the next morning, Skorzeny and Gen. Student were airborne for Italy in a craft flown by the General's own ace pilot, Captain Heinrich Gerlach, another man who would play a key role in Skorzeny's survival.

That night, the Rastenburg party dined with Field Marshal Albert Kesselring, Hitler's military commander for the Mediterranean theater of war, at his headquarters at Frascati. Heeding Hitler's orders, Skorzeny revealed nothing to the man the Allies called "Smiling Albert," but he did initiate two more SS men into the privileged five: *Standartenführer* (Colonel) Eugen Dollmann, Himmler's personal representative in Italy, and *Obersturmbannführer* (Lieutenant Colonel) Herbert Kappler, the German Embassy's police attaché.

Even while they talked, Hitler was sending three more German divisions to Italy to join the eight already there as part of Operation Alaric — the planned mass disarmament of the Italian Army should Italy defect from the Axis alliance as Hitler feared. In addition, within two days 10,000 of Student's paratroopers would land at Rome's airfield, Pratica di Mare.

In Germany, by using Hitler's special *Führerbefehl*, or personal order, Radl had managed to get all the equipment Skorzeny had requested — in a mere nine hours. At 0700 on the 27th, Radl and his men boarded Ju-52 transport planes at Berlin's Staaken Airport and the mission was truly underway.

At Frascati, the central question was "Where was Benito Mussolini?" That was bandied about by Student and the three SS officers. All sorts of rumors were aired: he had been arrested, he was dead, he'd gone into voluntary retirement, he'd committed



**The lightweight Fieseler Storch was used by Skorzeny and Luftwaffe pilot Capt. Gerlach to fly Mussolini off the Gran Sasso on the afternoon of 12 September 1943. Photo courtesy of the Bundesarchiv**

suicide, he'd gone into exile in neighboring Switzerland. The truth was that only a few Italians knew, and they politely refused all inquiries from their German allies.

What was known was that the Duce had been overthrown by King Vittorio Emanuele II of the Italian Royal House of Savoy, and replaced by Army Marshal Pietro Badoglio in a bloodless palace coup that brought joy and acclaim from the Italian populace. The Fascist Party that had ruled Italy under Mussolini for 22 years offered no resistance.

As the King had correctly told the Duce at their last meeting, "You are the most hated man in Italy," and there were fears he might be lynched by a mob because of his disastrous alliance with Hitler. Even Mussolini's own Fascist Grand Council had voted against him 19-7 the night before his overthrow by the King.

In February, 1943, Kappler — disobeying Hitler's standing orders forbidding internal intelligence operations against "their loyal Italian ally" — had set up a secret apparatus in Rome and had actually predicted Mussolini's fall as early as May. Now, he promised to aid Skorzeny in tracking down the fallen dictator, but secretly, he didn't want the Duce found or restored to power. Kappler believed that Mussolini was an ineffectual war leader.

But where was Benito Mussolini?

As the Duce had left the King's palace,



Adolf Hitler appointed fellow Austrian Otto Skorzeny to the task of rescuing Italian Fascist leader Benito Mussolini. Photo courtesy of the U.S. National Archives

the Quirinale, after his dismissal, he noticed that his customary Asturia limousine and chauffeur were missing. Instead, a captain of Carabinieri, Paolo Vigneri, motioned him to a waiting ambulance, "To protect you from possible mob violence." Mussolini, weary and clad in civilian clothes, meekly complied and was driven to Rome's Podgora Carabinieri Barracks. Only gradually did it dawn on him that he was actually under arrest.

Hitler had been correct in his assessment of the Italian situation. The House of Savoy had switched sides from the Hohenzollern Imperial Germany of the Kaisers to the Allies in 1915 in the middle of the First World War, and now the same King was planning to ditch the Nazis. While the two "allies" watched each other warily and made their secret moves, Marshal Badoglio negotiated clandestinely with the Allies.

In these negotiations for Italian surrender, the fallen Duce was the prize, and the Allies demanded that he be turned over to them. Mussolini himself feared capture by the British, while his captors feared a German rescue mission above all else. His guards had orders to kill him rather than let him fall into Hitler's hands alive.

After two days at the Carabinieri Barracks, the ex-Duce was taken to Gaeta, and from there to the Island of Ponza, opposite the Gulf of Gaeta and the largest of the Pontine Islands in the Tyrrhenian Sea where he spent 10 days. On 7 August 1943, Mussolini was moved again, to another island, La Maddalena. La Maddalena was an Italian naval base near the northern tip of Sardinia, near two other famous islands: Corsica, birthplace of Napoleon I, and Elba, his place of exile from 1814-15.

On the 18th, he and his guards spotted a German aircraft overhead which, unbe-

knownst to them, contained Skorzeny and the trusty Radl. The Duce's nervous guards moved him back to the Italian mainland, to a villa on the slopes of the Gran Sasso d'Italia, the highest mountain in the Abruzzi Apennines, 100 miles from Rome. Still uneasy, his guards decided to move him yet again, this time to a five-story winter ski-resort hotel on the highest inhabited place on the Gran Sasso. At the Campo Imperatore, Mussolini would be guarded day and night by 250 picked troops.

And getting up there wouldn't be easy. The only available transportation up was a cable car and his guards felt, understandably, that the spot was both unreachable and impregnable. But they had reckoned without Otto Skorzeny who was even then hot on the Duce's trail.

When he first saw the grim, austere, fortress-like Hotel del Gran Sasso, perched 6,500 feet on a rocky crag, Mussolini exclaimed, "Ah! The highest prison in the world" — and he was right.

But what of Otto Skorzeny? While Himmler was consulting astrologers and clairvoyants concerning the Duce's whereabouts, Skorzeny did a little digging of his own. Skorzeny had been visiting Rome's nightclubs, restaurants and bars, listening for unguarded comments. He once was attacked by a knife-wielding braggart in a bar when Skorzeny disputed his claim to know Mussolini's location. Then came the Spezia clue.

Skorzeny had discovered a love letter, from an Italian policeman on Ponza to his girlfriend, boasting of Mussolini's presence there, followed by gossip from a naval lieutenant that the Duce was aboard a cruiser at the Spezia naval base. The information was radioed immediately to the Wolf's Lair where Hitler was personally monitoring the operation's progress and thus breathing down Skorzeny's neck. Back came a prompt order from FHQ: "Board the warship and remove its captive."

While Skorzeny was puzzling over how to do this without costing the life of the Duce, Mussolini was moved, ultimately to the Villa Weber on La Maddalena. Disguised as German sailors, Skorzeny and SS *Obersturmführer* (Lieutenant) Robert Warger prowled about the harbor in search of clues. Warger, a non-drinker, was convinced by his chief to get drunk at the local bars and bet the noisy patrons that Mussolini *wasn't* on the island. The ruse worked, and soon an Italian market gardener who supplied the Villa Weber took Warger to a point where he could actually see the captive Duce sitting on a narrow terrace staring at the sea.

Overjoyed at this first lead, Skorzeny took pictures of the Villa from under the awning of a German minesweeper in the harbor several hundred yards away. He and Warger next faked an argument during an aimless stroll outside the Villa's gates, and learned that it had two telephone lines, a machine-gun post, a high wall and plenty of armed Carabinieri patrolling about.

On 18 August they took pictures of the villa from the air in an He-111, and were surprised by an attacking squadron of British Royal Air Force (RAF) Spitfire fighter planes, which forced their craft into the sea. Skorzeny almost lost his life when he blacked out on impact. He was lucky though — all he got were three broken ribs. Skorzeny was hauled aboard a rubber life raft and came to just in time to dive back into the sea, swim to the sinking aircraft and recover the camera with its precious film.

Skorzeny's plane was the same one that the Duce and his guards had seen. Radl learned of the crash and thought Skorzeny lost. But an Italian anti-aircraft ship in the harbor picked up the survivors without suspecting their identities or mission.

Back at Frascati, Skorzeny learned that orders had come from Hitler to rescue Mussolini from a tiny island off Elba — he had been fed erroneous information by German Naval Admiral and *Abwehr* Intelligence Chief Wilhelm Canaris. Skorzeny and Student flew to FHQ once again, this time to challenge Canaris' theory and uphold their own concerning Mussolini's actual location.

Once again, the politically inexperienced Skorzeny needed to keep his composure as he defended his views before not only Hitler and Himmler, but the entire German High Command as well: Goering, Nazi Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop, Army Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, Jodl and Nazi Grand Admiral Karl Doenitz. They sat brooding in leather armchairs around a monumental fireplace as Capt. Skorzeny stuck to his guns. Goering roared with laughter over the story of "teetotaler" Lt. Warger, and Hitler rose to endorse Skorzeny's views and plans.

These called for a German speedboat flotilla to enter the harbor under the guise of a protocol visit to the local Italian naval commander. The next day, another flotilla, this time of minesweepers with Skorzeny's commandos and some Waffen SS anti-aircraft troops from Sardinia, would enter the harbor. The troops would quietly disembark and literally march politely to the very gates of the Villa Weber, as if on a peaceful parade. Skorzeny gambled that the Italians wouldn't suspect such a bold move. His rationale was that he wouldn't get in trouble if his men looked like they didn't expect any.

Before he took his leave of Hitler, the Führer spoke to him bluntly: "You must understand, Capt. Skorzeny, that if you fail, I may have to disown you since Italy is still nominally our ally. I should have to say, for reasons of state, that you acted without orders — you misled the units supporting you by turning the commanders' heads. Your foolhardy action was prompted by excessive zeal, by ambition, even. And, if you fail, you must not defend yourself against public repudiation."

A sobering speech, indeed, and the fabled story of Rudolf Hess' aborted 1941 mission

*Continued on page 96*

# HOLDING THE LINE IN HOLLYWOOD



## Someone's Got to Show Them How to Wear a Beret

by James Monaghan

**T**HE *Wild Geese* are flying again. And an SOF Unconventional Operations Editor is on set to keep them straight . . . I'm James Monaghan, technical adviser for *Wild Geese II*.

This time the legendary mercs are hired by a television network determined to maintain ratings. The objective: Spring Nazi war criminal Rudolf Hess from Spandau and — by *creating news* — scoop a story that will "make Watergate look like kidstuff."

Once again, master movie maker Euan Lloyd enables the audience to soar on suspense, romance and action with his latest thriller, *Wild Geese II*. Lloyd, producer of such action-packed hits as *The Final Option*, (see "SOF at the Movies," SOF, October 1983) *The Wild Geese*, *The Sea Wolves*, and *Shalako*, has combined talents with the American screenwriter Reginald Rose (*The Final Option*, *Wild Geese*, *Twelve Angry Men*) and director Peter Hunt (*Never Say Never Again*) to film Daniel Carney's adventurous novel of a classic mercenary operation, *The Square Circle*.

Euan Lloyd's trademark is realism. And he spares no expense in bringing that passion for realism to the screen. For instance, every scene was filmed on location in London, Berlin and Vienna. That gives a texture of reality that sets — no matter how good — can't match.

*Being there* helps create the illusion of reality but no amount of film stock filled with historical landmarks will make up for a West German Border Policeman carrying a WWII-vintage M3. Since you obviously read SOF, it won't surprise you how many directors and tech advisers make such mistakes. As Euan Lloyd's technical adviser, it's my job to make sure his film doesn't make those errors. When he hired me to advise on *Wild Geese II* Lloyd stressed that

every detail would be *right*. And for 12 weeks of filming he wouldn't let me forget it. I was the first SOF staffer to be involved in the production of a major motion picture as both an adviser and an actor and I could afford no slip-ups.

Picking equipment was my first responsibility. The script told me which character performed what action where, but I had to find the right tools for the occasion. Firearms, binoculars, knives, uniforms . . . and I had to make

sure everything was authentic.

A good technical director assures that every detail is genuine by breaking down action sequences of the script. Then he analyzes the sequence to determine what equipment would have been used. In my case, for *Wild Geese II*, I had to figure what guns and gear would be seen in a *real* merc operation. Most of these questions are covered by the normal issue equipment of armies involved, or — in the case of the mercs — who they're trying to *look* like.

But GI wouldn't be right for the character of Colonel Allan Faulkner (played by Edward Fox of *Day of the Jackal* fame). The aging mercenary needed a special weapon for his special assignment: sniper.

I was determined to find a *real* weapon — not a Hollywood gadget — that would meet the mission requirements for concealment, accuracy and stopping power that would be appropriate for the deadly colonel. I had admired the Jackal's sniper rifle disguised as a crutch, in principle. But such custom work isn't appropriate to most military ops. You've got to use what's available.

An SOF advertiser came to the rescue. Safari Arms (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 23370, Phoenix, AZ 85063) provided two of their special .45 ACP Survivor pistols. Pistols for a sniper role? Yup, these are the real thing. They're Safari Arms .45 autoloaders that take a specially designed slide, barrel and butt-stock, and mount scopes.

Deadly within its range, the Survivor gives the precision shooter accuracy and reliability with seven-round, semiauto, back-up capability . . . and it all folds up to 16.5 inches. With dummy silencers they were a fine example of real, available, spe-



### MONAGHAN'S DEBUT

What qualifies Jim Monaghan to be technical adviser for *Wild Geese II*? SOF's Unconventional Warfare Editor is a retired Army officer with over 22 years of active duty, nearly 20 years with Special Forces. He served five years in Vietnam and one year in Laos and is familiar with all aspects of unconventional warfare.

Monaghan was a two-term president of the Special Operations Association of which he is a life member. He has been

Jim Monaghan makes his film debut in *Wild Geese II*.

active in the POW/MIA movement and is currently co-director of operations for the Center for POW/MIA Accountability, a fact-finding group of former military officers headquartered in Washington, D.C. and chaired by retired Major General John K. Singlaub (also an SOF contributing editor). As well as being a technical adviser, Jim makes his acting debut in *Wild Geese II*.

cial-purpose weaponry, applied to the right combat situation. Fox had practice in this role from previous film work, and he handled himself like the pro he is.

Training actor Scott Glenn in the use of weapons and explosives was a walk in the sun. A former Force Recon Marine, he was comfortable with anything that went "bang" or "boom." Glenn plays John Haddad, an American-Lebanese mercenary raised in Beirut. He was a natural.

Scott knew his guns, and was a great help in choosing his character's equipment. European environment, availability of weapon and ammo, concealment, killing power, compactness and reliability were all deemed important in our discussions about his pistol. Also, Scott is a southpaw so the sidearm had to be an automatic that could be used by a left- or right-handed shooter. We both agreed that only one automatic pistol on the market today met and exceeded our requirements: the P7 9mm pistol (another SOF advertiser, Heckler & Koch, Dept. SOF, 14601 Lee Road, Chantilly, VA 22021).

It proved an excellent choice for a number of reasons. It's the right pistol in the right place for equipment buffs, it looked good on film and it worked. Most viewers wouldn't know from watching movies, but equipment malfunctions are one reason scenes get shot dozens of times. Scenes with the P7 went off without a mechanical hitch. Too bad our dealings with German authorities weren't as smooth.

When it came to getting firearms into West Germany ... let's just say I wished many times that I had been equipping a real mercenary unit. I could've slipped in weapons by small boats, false bottoms in luggage or compartments welded under automobiles ... anything to avoid paperwork!

But the in the wake of communist terrorism, the West Germans were as leery of fake guns as real ones. And mere *mention* of full-auto arms must have sent tidal waves of paperwork through shoals of desks in bays of offices all over West Germany.

Our handguns weren't really a problem. Most of them were blank-firing pistols chambering an 8mm round. But what were we going to do about SMGs? The German version of a Class III license is as easy to get as a building permit for a backyard MX-site in Berkeley. And when you finally get your permits for owning, handling, storing and shipping automatic weapons for theatrical use, then you've got to learn *how* you can get the weapons, *when* you can use them and *who* has to be there. All this is *still* the technical adviser's job.

German law requires that the licensed owner or his representative — also possessing a valid license — be present on the set while these weapons are being used. When not in use, these weapons are to be stored in the local police station. Only the designated licensee may retrieve them.

We would've had to schedule buses for all the permit-holders and paper-pushers if we used real guns for every scene. Blank-

firing pistols helped, but I needed more flexibility in keeping weapons on-site.



Former Recon Marine Scott Glenn portrays a mercenary in *Wild Geese II*. Here he practices firing the Walther 9mm MP-K submachine gun.

## WILD GEESE I

*Wild Geese* could have been just another adventure story. But technical adviser Mike Hoare was not just another Hollywood straphanger. "Mad" Mike is the mercenary on whom most modern soldier-of-fortune tales are based.

"Mad" Mike had already commanded 5 Commando to victory as the *real* Wild Geese battled Simba rebels in the Congo. After his movie contract was completed and *Wild Geese* was released, Hoare returned to his chosen profession, and tried to invade Seychelles. The plot collapsed and Hoare hijacked an airliner to escape. The South Africans imprisoned him from 1981 till 1985.

"Mad" Mike certainly made his mark on the *Wild Geese* just as he did on the Congo and the Seychelles. And producer Euan Lloyd made a canny decision in selecting Hoare as technical adviser. He knew this veteran merc would bring professional insight to the already compelling saga.

In fact, Hoare and his experiences were a model for *Wild Geese*. The story involves a tough professional soldier who undertakes a dangerous mission into Central Africa, reminiscent of Hoare's excursions into the Congo. Hoare's exclusive "social club," which served as a vehicle to recruit mercenaries, was called the "Wild Goose Club."

*The Wild Geese* portrays the mercenaries' life: recruitment, training, loyalty and devotion, fears and triumphs. And it was "Mad" Mike's memories that made *Wild Geese* more than just another war story.

— Kim McMichael

I solved the problem by finding and procuring both firing and non-firing movie weapons: real blasters for firefights and mock-ups for carrying. That fixed most of our difficulties. It cut down paperwork and running around to check guns in and out of the police lock-up. Also, we could schedule filming into shooting and non-shooting scenes. Then we could shoot scenes without bullets at any time and any place with fake firearms, and bring in authentic artillery for combat.

When we did need rock & roll on location, our automatic weapons were provided by a pair of real weapons experts, Gunter Schaidt and his assistant Werner Moobz. Both were first-rate technicians. Incidentally, they're also loyal SOF readers.

All these armorers, advisers and technicians may seem expensive, but their costs are nothing compared to the bill when things start going wrong. If a gun jams while a merc's surrounded in a burning building, he dies. That's bad.

But if a *star's* gun jams while the building burns, that footage is worthless, the structure has to be rebuilt, and everybody works overtime. That's expensive. And it can cost a technical adviser his job.

All this trouble can be prevented. Weapons must be meticulously cleaned, lubricated and inspected on a daily basis. Since magazines are at fault more often than not, they are inspected after each use and replaced frequently. But the weapon can check out perfectly and still malfunction if it's handled improperly. That means small-arms training.

Fort Benning is a better DI assignment than a Hollywood TDY to Germany. For one thing, most film stars aren't used to being called "puke." And hardly a one of them would know what you want when you tell him to "drop and give me ten." Training actors takes tact.

Nevertheless, I worked with each actor who handled weapons in the film. Before each combat sequence, I walked the actor through the scene and helped him shoot the course of fire before the cameras rolled.

Instruction included the destructive potential of blanks. There are many in the film industry who think a blank can't hurt anyone. That's not true. Actors have been injured and even killed by blank-firing firearms at body-contact range. And nobody can afford that.

Realism of weapons handling in a Lloyd production is enhanced by real combat drills. Actors learn to safely load and unload weapons, proper shooting stance, and they practice immediate-action procedures, in the event of a misfire or jam. After my on-set small-arms school even actors who have never shot before move and employ their weapons with the confidence Lloyd expects. They're ready for action.

The rushes (daily reviews of the previous day's filming) from the first three weeks of shooting were excellent. *Wild Geese II* will stand as one more Euan Lloyd masterpiece of action, suspense and technical accuracy. ✕

## BRUCE JONES

Continued from page 51

Cuban revolution betrayed to the communists. This is the first time that such a thing has happened. The Cubans are being asked for money to support a very small group of Cubans who are fighting the Sandinistas on the southern front. There are about seven or eight of them and they have about 50 Nicaraguans with them. [They] have been fighting on the southern front since early 1984.

**Q**—How would you have avoided this situation if you had been given the opportunity?

**A**—Oh, I don't know. Maybe many, many years ago the U.S. should have established a school in this country. Young people who grew up under the right-wing dictatorships in these countries could have been given scholarships so they could come to this country to learn the real principles, pitfalls and benefits of democracy and real self-rule. Then they could return to their countries to become future leaders at home.

It's very unfortunate that we don't do that because the Russians do. Look at how many scholarships the Russians hand out in Costa Rica versus how many the United States gives there. It's something like two or three hundred to our five. They take young kids over there and brain-wash them into the communist way of thinking, filling them full of that soupy-headed philosophical mumbo-jumbo while they're at Patrice Lumumba University or somewhere in Hungary or Romania.

Then they come back to Costa Rica as firmly dedicated communists. That's one of the ways Russians get in-place agents in Central America.

This guy, Angel Solano, who was the Minister of Public Security, got his training at Patrice Lumumba University. Here he was in charge of public security for all of Costa Rica, which covers intelligence, the civil guard. So the entire security apparatus of Central America's only progressively stable democracy — but the region's only country without an army — was for two years in the hands of a man trained in Russia.

**Q**—Many reports coming out of southern Nicaragua allege that, since the cutoff of U.S. funds and the deterioration of Pastora's command, the resistance movement on the southern front is on its last legs. Is that true?

**A**—No. But they badly need a reconstruction and transfusion soon, with a unified and centralized chain of command, with efficient and accountable resources for logistics, and tactically competent commanders. Because the Nicaraguan peasants are definitely willing to fight. El Negro Chamorro (whose reformed ARDE forces split with Pastora) is a much better commander militarily than Pastora. But Chamorro's forces are few right now because he gets very little notice or support while Pastora goes out and hams it up in the limelight, drawing away badly needed aid and sometimes casting the cause in a not-very-serious light.

The FDN probably has about 16,000 troops in northern Nicaragua. The reformed ARDE faction probably has at most only 60 to 70 men (SOF's own estimate based on a recent trip inside Nicaragua puts the figure slightly higher at 85-100). Their most professional people, but that is because they only have resources to provide field support for this small number. With help they could easily muster 1,000 people or more. Pastora probably could again muster 10,000 or so troops if he could

get the logistics and use them efficiently. But that is the question, because unfortunately Pastora would want complete command. He is politically shrewd and a very charismatic individual, but unfortunately he lacks any military leadership ability.

The MISURA (a group of Nicaraguan Indian freedom fighters from the Miskito, Suma and Rama tribes which operates in northern Nicaragua) probably has about 1,000 troops. The MISURATA (another group of anti-Sandinista Nicaraguan Indians operating on the southern front) probably has about 800 or a thousand people.

But it would be hard now for the freedom fighters on either front to achieve a clear-cut military victory in the conventional-warfare sense because of the numerical and firepower superiority of the Sandinistas. There you're talking about an army of over 100,000 people. Given enough time and support, the freedom fighters could field enough men to fight an effective and very winnable guerrilla war, but you just can't give these poor people guns and send them into the jungles to fight. You have to give them some training and that takes time, resources and, of course, competent trainers who know and understand what kind of war they're up against. You need to have at least a month of intensive basic training.

**Q**—What thoughts would you offer SOF readers in closing?

**A**—It seems from my viewpoint in Costa Rica that a lot of people in the United States are quite lulled, very content with their superior lifestyles, their jacuzzi baths and shake-not-stirred type of music, so that they do not realize what's happening in the Third World, right in Central America at their own back door. And it seems to me that



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they apparently would prefer not to be confronted with reality. And anytime anyone tries to confront a lot of Middle America, they're trying to worm their way around their own refusal to face that reality.

If you keep on doing that, sooner or later others will think of you as a worm and step on you. You become like an ostrich with its head in the sand who cannot see imminent danger. Because despite what all the soothsayers in the U.S. claim about the legitimacy of the Sandinista regime, most people in Nicaragua do not want Marxism as their form of government. That was evident in the high absenteeism of their elections. There was a lot of intimidation in those elections. They were in no way fair or impartial in the way they were held.

People are fooled into thinking communism is a classless society. It's not. But the sympathizers are right about one thing. It *does* make most people equal. Everyone becomes very poor except for a very small, but very powerful, bureaucratic elite who actually believe in this Mickey Mouse philosophy and are power freaks if you get down to the real mental nitty-gritty.

Communism is an unreal philosophy based on Hegel's "Dialectic," the synthesis that "Hey! This is great. Bam, bam, bam. We're gonna go from capitalism to socialism and then we'll get to communism and the whole process stops, period. The state withers away and everyone will live happily ever after." Right. And the cow jumped over the moon. If you can believe that, you can believe anything:

Well, if it's such a great deal, then why do they have a Berlin Wall, why do they have the so-called Iron Curtain? Why, every time Fidel Castro lets

the door open, do so many hundreds and thousands flee their homeland in Cuba? Under their system of government, they have to devise ways to keep people in, while with ours we can't guard our borders close enough to keep unauthorized people out. So who's got the more desirable form of government? The U.S. may have plenty of things wrong with its system of government, but it's still the best thing going. We can still offer our citizens the basic rights due a human being. ✕

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Pre-registration will close May 15. The cost of the convention is \$60.00 and includes: (1) Banquet; (2) Transportation to all events; (3) Convention T-Shirt; (4) Admission to all Events, Exhibitions, Demos, and Seminars.

Seminars will include: Rhodesia: A narrative account of Pre-emptive Anti-terrorist Strikes by Capt. John Early; Update on Central America by Robert K. Brown; The Civilian Military Assistance Organization; Survival Medicine.

A very limited number of display tables for exhibition will be available. Interested parties should contact W. D. Naylor (901) 323-5382 A.S.A.P. for info and space reservations.

The PMRS/PHANTOM JUMP SCHOOL cost will be \$160.00 and will include: Ground Training, One Jump, Jump Certificate, PMRS Wings, Convention Banquet, Transportation to all Jump Activities, and Special PMRS Seminars.

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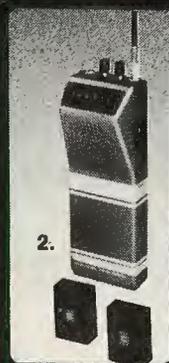
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## COMBAT HARNESS

Continued from page 30

ment, the gun, 250 linked rounds in a backpack and another 200 rounds in his combat harness. His No. 2 carries a Galil ARM, nine 30-round magazines, two grenades and 500 rounds of linked 7.62mm ammo. An "RPGist" carries a Galil ARM, the same number of 32-rd. magazines and grenades, the RPG-7 and three rockets. His No. 2 carries a Galil, magazines, grenades and six rockets. Not exactly a load conducive to quick, comfortable movement.

Probably because of their basic load, the Israelis have been provided with what I believe to be the world's finest combat harness. The current version uses wide nylon suspenders while the load-bearing portion of the unit wraps snugly around the waist. Made up of three components, each segment has an integral .75-inch foam pad encased in heavy O.D. cotton flannel sewn to the inside. The rear segment is a small butt pack, 3.5x7x8 inches. This pouch accommodates personal gear. In El Salvador I use mine to carry a rain poncho, writing pad, pens and *semita* (sweet bread). It will also hold the compact Steiner 6x30 military binoculars in service with the IDF.

Three velcro straps on top of the rear pouch hold one M127A1 palm-slap parachute flare in the horizontal position. All pouch flaps on the harness have velcro stays. Straps and grommets sprout everywhere. A flap sewn to the suspenders between the shoulder blades contains the harness size (in Hebrew) and two grommets to attach either an entrenching tool and carrier or a special back pouch for rifle grenades, rockets or linked 7.62mm ammunition.

There are two sets of snap straps along the bottom of each harness segment. They retain a short length of rope which lays all the way around the bottom of the harness for use in either rappelling or climbing. In the desert it also serves to tie members of the squad together during a sandstorm.

All the pouches on the harness are O.D. nylon, and the right segment of the harness has five pouches. The larger two (one on each end of the segment) will hold two Galil or M16 magazines apiece. A small AA-cell battery flashlight (such as the USAF pilot's issue) or pen-sized flare launcher slips into a vertical open pocket sewn to the rearmost magazine pouch.

Two smaller pouches hold fragmentation grenades of the M26 type. A horizontal pouch below will take two 4x7-inch field dressings. Flaps with double grommets below each magazine pouch can be used to attach extra canteens, bayonet or other equipment.

The left segment has another two magazine pouches (thus total capacity of the harness is eight magazines) and a horizontal first-aid pouch and one larger grenade pouch to retain either one white phosphorus or an M18-type smoke grenade. A small open pocket sewn to the front magazine

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pouch contains the ubiquitous Swiss Army knife (the "MAGist's" cleaning tool). A large vertical holder, open at both ends, with elastic fabric on the top opening carries the U.S. GI angle flashlight.

The segments are attached together and fitted to the soldier by three adjustable straps on each side of the rear component. A canteen can be mounted to the space between the segments on each side of the rear pack. A fourth strap is provided for this purpose. This strap fits through two slits cut into the Israeli one-liter canteen cover. I have fitted U.S.-type canteens to my harness by simply running the strap around the outside of the canteen and cover and cinching it down tightly.

A Tekna or Gerber-type knife can be fastened to either the left or right front suspenders. The quick-release buckles on the front of the harness should be connected by a short length of parachute cord — one tug and the harness is opened.

Many Israeli officers modify the harness by the addition of extra pouches to carry a compass and more grenades and/or magazines. First Lieutenant David Koch of El Salvador quickly learned that a Sony Walkman fits into one of the magazine pouches as well as suntan lotion, rappel gear and other sundries. An earlier version of the harness employed laces instead of straps to connect the three segments and suspenders. I noted several of these in the San Miguel province of El Salvador where they had been abandoned by Israeli-equipped Somozistas fleeing Nicaragua.

Still another version was designed for tankers. The pouches are located across the front except for the butt pack. In this configuration, there are no side pouches to restrict movement within an armored vehicle.

There is no provision for that greatest of American placebos — the pistol. The Israelis learned early on that the pistol performs no useful function in modern warfare. It merely serves to identify its bearer as a more desirable target of higher rank. I learned long ago to hide binoculars in the pack, steer clear of the RTO (radio-telephone operator) — whenever possible — and shed the pistol when humping into an operational area. Extra magazines for the assault rifle or another canteen of Kool-Aid are far more sensible choices.

I think the IDF combat harness is the most useful and comfortable rigging in general issue available today. I have used it on operations in El Salvador and can find nothing whatever to criticize. You could literally turn somersaults while in this LBE and not muss a hair on your head or a cartridge in your magazine. The U.S. Armed Services desperately need a Mission Essential Need Statement directed to similar equipment.

The IDF combat harness is now available from Brigade Quartermasters (Dept. SOF, 266 Roswell St., Marietta, GA 30060) at an introductory price of only \$89.95. ✕

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SL6/7

Continued from page 39

paks." It is Berdan primed, but not corrosive. The lead-cored, boattail projectile weighs 145 grains. The propellant is a round-ball type with a nominal charge weight of 44 grains. This ammunition has been readily available to U.S. shooters for several years.

When chronographed, it exhibited the lowest standard deviation (22 fps) of all the ammunition used in the test. Not surprising, then, that it also produced the greatest accuracy. Under conditions of 15mph gusting winds, the IWK 19-65 shot a startling 1.0 MOA. Even though the SL7's barrel is floated in the stock, such performance through a semiautomatic carbine with a less than 18-inch barrel is an outstanding testimony to the rifle/scope/ammunition combination — a German rifle and ammo with an Austrian scope.

This was followed by the FMJ match reloads which shot 1.7 MOA. Both the PMC and WRA ammunition fell far short of this level. A mean figure of 2,700 fps is the standard NATO muzzle velocity for M80 ball ammunition. The SL7's short barrel lost only 125 to 250 fps in velocity.

There were no malfunctions except for two "bolt-over-base" stoppages induced when the weapon was purposely held away from the shoulder to permit the weapon to recoil rearward along with the bolt group. Roller-locked, delayed-blowback rifles must be held securely against the shoulder so the bolt can move sharply rearward in relation to the relatively fixed mass of the receiver body or the bolt group may not complete its backward travel and the recoil spring will not compress fully.

As it is a bit heavy for a so-called carbine, felt recoil is no more than a gentle shove rearward (also a function of the delayed-blowback method of operation). However, the handling characteristics and balance are excellent and hit probability remains high. The ejection pattern is quite forceful — about 10 to 15 feet out to the right.

Marketed as a hunting system, the SL6/7 series has a much broader potential. When properly scoped, they offer a reasonably-priced, medium-range sniping alternative to law-enforcement agencies. They would constitute a valuable addition to any survivalist battery. Their military applications remain limited by the magazine capacity and awkward location of the safety.

I can find little to criticize in SL6/7. Its outstanding accuracy potential in such a compact envelope are attributes which merit a close examination of this modern-day G43 look-alike. The suggested retail price of the SL6/7 carbine is \$532. Further information can be obtained from Heckler & Koch, Inc. (Dept. SOF, 14601 Lee Road, Chantilly, VA 22021). ❌

Continued from page 12

thousands of Brownings. These ugly brutes weigh 46 pounds — more than the M3 .50-caliber M2 HB tripod. Once you set them down they're not about to walk away. At only \$150 each in excellent condition (F.O.B. Pennsauken, NJ), that's just \$3 a pound. Hell, scrap steel in a junkyard will bring close to that these days. And it's several hundred dollars less than the M1917A1 tripods others are selling.

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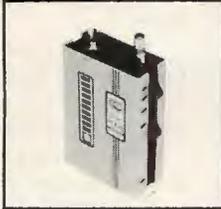
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## SOF TRAINS IN NICARAGUA

Continued from page 47

shaving what stubble I could find between mosquito bites, we began training. I cut up a supply of wire coat hangers to make air sights and asked an ARDE platoon commander to bring me one of his machine guns. He appeared wearing a huge grin and toting a Soviet RPD marked as having been manufactured in Suez. Obviously, we were dealing with some CIA legacies here.

"No, no. I need one of your heavy machine guns like a 12.7 or a fifty-caliber." The platoon commander shrugged and offered me the RPD.

In my hands was the entire flimsy fire-power support of the unit. Clafin later confirmed that the ARDE in Nicaragua had a total of 12 RPDs and no heavy machine guns at all. They are in for big trouble if the sky over their camps is ever darkened by the shadow of a flight of Hinds.

We rigged the air sights on both sides of the guns anyway. At least the sights, which automatically added the necessary lead for a crossing aircraft and kept the fire concentrated, would allow them to piss off the Cubans who would likely take the Mi-24s out of Managua and over the lake. It wasn't much to offer and neither was my elaborate plan for using explosives to trap helos which swooped down below treetop level to investigate ambush bait.

ARDE had absolutely no explosives beyond a few hand grenades captured from the Sandinistas. Papi Vega, who had done a hitch in the U.S. Army, seemed almost apologetic. "I'm afraid we have the shoestrings but no shoes." He told me their leader was going to some secret location inside Costa Rica soon to negotiate for 10 cases of industrial dynamite. With a sinking feeling I diagramed a way to set the explosives as cutting charges. Maybe some lucky patrol would manage to blast a big tree into the rotor fan of a Hind and force the bastard to disassemble in mid-air.

Following a dinner of beans and rice, Robelo took me into the CP and waved his hands around the map pinned to the wall. We left Clafin and Green patiently explaining the need to clean weapons to the ARDE S-2, who had just returned from a patrol near the lake. They had found a relatively good supply of Romanian AK's, LAWs, RPDs, a few old FN-FALs as well as stocks of ammo and magazines, but they all needed attention and maintenance.

Robelo was delighted that his men had been set to work on a project that would generate some progress. He seemed to think things were definitely looking up in his TAOR and carefully pointed out tactical positions on the wall map. His tiny camps were an island of blue marks in a sea of red designating Sandinista garrisons or patrol sightings. I noted two loca-

tions that supposedly housed sections of Mi-8s. A plan was beginning to germinate.

Robelo turned out to be a very enthusiastic realist. "We are a very small group here and I do not want our effort to be ruined by politics. I want to stay small and form a sort of commando unit to raid the *piricuacos* along the lake shore. This is the sort of tactic that will make us of use to the resistance.

"Please understand this. We do not wish to be the leaders of the movement. We don't want to make the mistakes Pastora did. We simply want to be effective and useful under the UNIR banner. We will fight as part of anyone's unit. Anyone who is competent and dedicated to throwing the *piricuacos* out can give my unit orders. There is only one provision. He must be Nicaraguan. This is a Nicaraguan struggle and we will not take orders from foreigners... Americans or any others."

Title that one "Not Another Nam" and have it recorded by Tip O'Neill and the Congressional Troubadors. Robelo went on to tell me of his concern over the suspension of covert aid to the anti-Sandinista movement. He seemed convinced that he would not be able to strike effectively against the communists in his area without a major influx of money and supplies. A vicious circle was beginning to form in my mind as we talked.

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ers in the United States if you simply sit here and wait for aid. You must try with what you have to harrass or hurt the Sandinistas."

Robelo frowned. "But without the equipment and the money for supplies. . ." Stalemate.

When the mosquitos would let me concentrate that night, I sketched out a plan for a mortar attack on a Sandinista base. Blowing large, untidy holes in a couple of Hips would convince supporters in the U.S. and elsewhere that this new, diminutive ARDE formation was willing and able to strike a blow for its freedom. It would also give the Sandinista regime and its Soviet advisers the impression that they had a force to contend with in southern Nicaragua.

That led to an early-morning class in mortar gunnery and one of the most Rube Goldberg fire-adjustment routines I have ever seen.

Picking a steamy jungle clearing for my classroom, I led a group of 10 ARDE NCOs in pack-train formation for their first day of concentrated mortar instruction. It would be an all-day affair involving map, compass, call for fire, fire corrections and adjustments during both daylight and dark conditions. At dawn we had checked the unit's two 82mm mortars and selected the best tube along with sufficient ammo for the drill: nine rounds of Chinese HE packed in three-round wooden boxes with point-detonating fuses and doughnut-style propellant increments included in factory-sealed plastic boxes. After dark, we'd be winging it once again since none of the batteries for the Chinese night-sighting equipment had survived the trip from wherever the Agency got them to Nicaragua.

Checking for overhead masking that would impede high-angle fire — a real problem and potentially dangerous situation for careless mortarmen in jungle areas — I had the NCOs hack out a seat for the baseplate and checked out tenuous contact with a Forward Observer about a click and a half away between us and our target on the south shore of Lake Nicaragua. It hadn't taken me more than an hour or so of quick drill the previous day to realize I would be using the terms "FO" and "comm" advisedly.

Scouring the maps, I had searched diligently for either a Sandinista target or a free-fire zone within range of the weapon and within sight of an observer who had a radio. Those parameters made it a frustrating experience.

"How about this area over here. Doesn't look like there's anything there but swamps. . ."

"...and rice fields. We have people over there on leave helping to put the rice in the ground." Papi Vega was trying to be helpful.

"OK. This area looks clear. How about if we dump a few rounds. . ."

"No, Captain. That area is full of frijoles

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fields. We have people over there helping to harvest the crop."

"Well, hell. How about if we shoot up here at this place where the river runs into the lake?"

"Si. That's a good place. The *pircuacos* run their patrol boats in there all the time..."

"Now we're getting somewhere. Maybe the FO can spot some boats and we'll have a crack at dumping some of the bastards in the water..."

"... If he can see the target. It is very dense jungle along that area."

"Papi, just how do you want to do this thing?"

"Perhaps if we have him climb a very tall tree. That would also help with the radio transmission."

Somewhere out in front of our gun, a pissed-off FO was fighting the howler monkeys for position in a tall tree and trying to reach us via his civilian-style CB radio. On my end, an NCO carried a similar set into another tree and prepared to shout down fire corrections if they could be passed along through the babble of admin traffic that snarled transmissions on our chosen frequency. I settled in for a long day.

At least two of the NCOs, both wearing atypical berets, seemed to know their way around the 82mm mortar. They efficiently dug a pit for the baseplate and got the bipod set up properly and solidly. I chose them to accompany me as I moved away from the metal mass of the gun to shoot an azimuth for our aiming stake. In a laborious earlier class, I had shown the NCOs how to plot the grid azimuth for a gun-target line and then convert it to a magnetic azimuth for emplacement of the aiming stake. These two men had picked up everything very quickly. As we used the lensatic compass to lay the gun, I found out why.

Contact and cooperation between ARDE and their big-brother formation in the north is a reality. Both Emiliano and Ricardo were FDN guerrillas who had come south to help staff and organize the new ARDE. They showed me FDN dog-tags and indicated they had volunteered to serve with the second-largest anti-Sandinista formation. I later discovered that at least four others in the ARDE camps — including two women — were former FDN fighters. Despite the comparatively small scale of the transfer and Robelo's complaints about the FDN's unwillingness to share supplies and weapons, here was evidence that the UNIR coalition was having some tangible effect on the anti-communist movement in Central America. There's another tune that ought to be played for Tip and the Troubadors on Capitol Hill.

After we had the aiming stake emplaced and several rounds ready for firing, our FO reported he could hear the sound of small boat engines through the morning fog. If they were Sandinistas and if they

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followed their pattern, they would be turning into the mouth of a small river that meandered toward ARDE positions. It was time to pump a round out there and see how well we'd emplaced the gun.

Using max charge and a safe elevation to clear the FO, I dumped an HE round down the tube and ducked away from the muzzle. The mortar tried to bang into battery with the recoil *but the baseplate skipped out of its hole and nearly upset the entire weapon*. Yelling for the radioman to tell the FO to watch for an erratic round, I sunk my hands into the muck and found out why. We had not noticed a web of large fruit-tree roots and vines hidden under the floor of the jungle when we dug a pit for the baseplate. There was no stable platform to absorb the recoil of the mortar. Ten minutes' work with machetes and E-tools solved the problem and we got the sight back on the aiming stake for a second round.

Speaking in excited Spanish, our FO reported he had heard the first round sail overhead and impact somewhere in the marsh between his position and the river, but had not seen the flash. I judged it lost for plotting purposes and prepared to fire number two on the same basic data.

We could not manage to determine through the communication snarl whether the FO could see the patrol boats or simply hear their engines but he seemed certain *piricuacos* were nosing around the mouth of the river. Our second round was judged 100 meters long and 250 meters left of target area.

Struggling with the unfamiliar Chinese sight and a rudimentary range-charge-elevation table that came with the ammo, I dialed on the necessary corrections and had one of the NCOs fire a third round at charge two. After nervously waiting for what seem like a week, our FO reported this one as range-correct but *left of target 300 meters*. Unless I had pulled a boot-camp maneuver and fired "180 out" by adjusting the sight in the wrong direction, the correction did not seem logical.

We quickly checked the dope and the sight. No problems there. The corrections had been proper. Checking my notes, I decided to go back to base deflection and elevation and fire another round. This time I let the NCOs manipulate the sight and merely checked to see that they made the proper adjustment. Round four drew a static-filled squawk from the FO. I shouted up to our radioman in the trees and asked for clarification.

The communicator stuck his head through a tangle of branches and showed me a set of pearly teeth through a huge grin. "He say please to be careful. You almost hit him with that one." Gales of laughter from the assembled guerrillas. I was not so amused. Blowing our FO out of his perch with one of our own rounds would put a decided damper on the effectiveness of this training.

Cease fire. I had to find out what the



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problem with our FO was. After much shouting and laughing over the airwaves it turned out our man was having trouble with fog that was hanging in the area and obscuring detailed observation. He had — understandably — been ducking back into his roost when he heard a round coming and was trying to adjust fire from the smoke that rolled into the air following impact. Lake winds were making that decidedly inaccurate. Former FDN guerrilla Emiliano did some admirable ass-chewing on the radio and we were ready to fire for effect.

Moving slowly and cautiously to insure each NCO understood the relationship between sight changes and point of impact, we proceeded to pepper the area with high explosive. After we had changed crew positions a number of times to let each man manipulate the Chinese sights and firing tables, our FO reported we were on range and hitting within 50 meters of either side of target area. He also reported the engine sounds were fading rapidly back toward the open lake.

Following chow, administered by "Becky," a 16-year-old guerrilla who was touted to be as good with a LAW as she was with a skillet, we sweated over maps and firing tables with a spare sight from the second 82mm mortar. Our difficulty seemed to be the concept of mills as opposed to degrees in indirect fire gunnery. The guerrillas all wanted to turn their newly-acquired rudimentary knowledge into operation of a full-blown Fire Direction Center. It just wasn't possible given the lack of plotting boards, updated maps, and reliable comm. But the main point in my mind was their motivation. They wanted more knowledge and insight than they could handle. Motivation goes a long way toward making up for material deficits.

After an early nightfall we returned to the mortar position and I jury-rigged a red-lens flashlight on our aiming stake to demonstrate that mortars could — and should — be used at night. Each NCO got a chance to convince himself that sights and aiming stakes were useful at night and we pumped a few more rounds into the dark as H&I fire for any patrols that may have been moving in the area. It was a successful drill despite the fact that displacing and re-laying the gun in the mosquito-infested swamp was not one of my most pleasant experiences. The rapid-fire questions posed by the NCOs nearly kept me awake all night. They were ready to hump those guns to within range of the Sandinistas and get on with the war.

That project occupied my last day inside Nicaragua with the reformed ARDE. Working by lantern light in the darkened CP with the mortarmen at my side, I plotted a firing position and the necessary sight settings for the guerrillas to take one of the Mi-8 bases under accurate fire. They would need to do some solid recon work before launching the mission, but everyone assured me it would be no problem.

Hoping I had contributed enough to make the reformed ARDE a genuine threat to the marauding troops of the Sandinista regime, I left Nicaragua and headed for part two of my mission with the FDN along the Honduras-Nicaragua border area. One conclusion seemed obvious as I recrossed the border and headed for a rendezvous in San José. Despite accusations to the contrary, the anti-communist movement in southern Nicaragua is alive and well enough to make a difference in the fight for freedom.

They may be sold down some jungle river by so-called friends in high places, but they will never stop fighting to regain control of their country. They remain — underfed and ill-equipped — somewhere out there in the swampy, mosquito-infested jungles of their homeland, poised behind the rifle and mortar sights, waiting for the chance to strike a blow for freedom. ✖

## PANJSHER VIII

Continued from page 65

the figures of moving men stood out clearly. Overnight the mountains had been converted into an Mi-24 nose-gunner's dream-world.

By mid-morning we knew the worst: the attack was postponed. Use of the grappling

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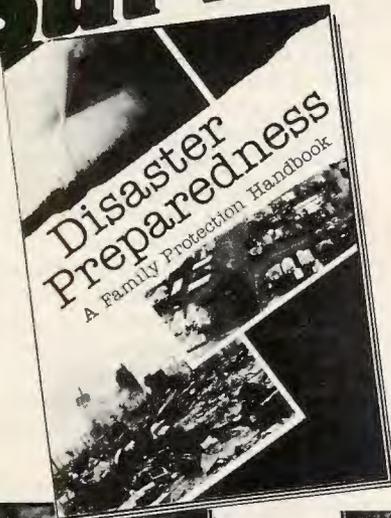
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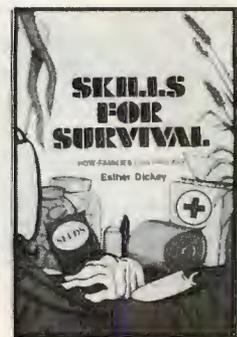
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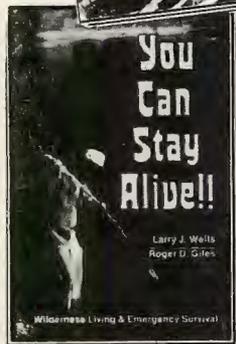
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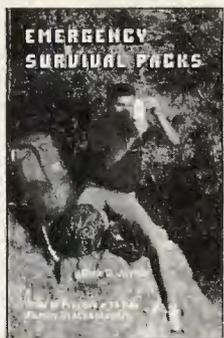
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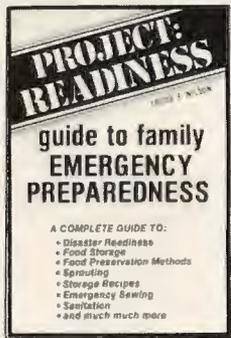


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irons was difficult enough at the best of times without a layer of snow to complicate matters by obscuring the trip-wires. The assault, said Massoud, would wait until most of the snow had melted. But on the farther side of the valley, the fall had been less heavy and the mujahideen under one of the Panjsher's best-known commanders, Haji Amin — in touch with Massoud by walkie-talkie — were anxious to go ahead as planned.

They attacked at 1640 hours, the reverberations of the initial recoilless-rifle barrage booming around the mountains followed by long stutters of machine-gun fire. The fight gained in intensity for 15 minutes, ebbed and then rose again. And at that point the guerrillas, led by Amin, rushed the post as its defenders threw down their arms. Only the officers attempted continued resistance but changed their minds quickly enough when they saw what the outcome would be. The position was captured without the mujahideen taking any casualties.

Fighting continued next day with an Afghan Army counter-attack aimed at recapturing the post. It backfired badly. Attacking troops advanced uphill, but they were driven back down in a wild rush that saw another post overrun. Meanwhile, around Puzhgur, other units of Amin's men were pressing home mortar and rocket attacks against the main base. Airstrikes came — Sukhois and MiGs swooping low into the valley drew long bursts of fire from mountain-top dashika positions, dumping their loads and pulling out again in steep climbs. But the mujahideen had long since scattered.

And guerrillas attacked Khoja Kolan the following afternoon . . . two days late. The snow had mostly melted, but the delay cost Massoud the element of surprise and the success of the assault. It also cost two mujahideen their lives.

The morning before the operation, Khoja Kolan's small garrison was busy laying more rings of mines around the position for the attack it knew must come. Mujahid assault groups and recoilless-rifle crews had taken their positions the night before, advancing under cover of darkness into folds of dead ground. In the early afternoon, the mortar and dashika teams moved up toward the rim of the slope directly overlooking Khoja Kolan.

I stuck with one dashika crew as they sat killing time through the afternoon and then began assembling the machine gun in a prepared *sangar* with a clear view down across the battlefield to Khoja Kolan. Short of a direct hit from a mortar round, it was decent cover. One hundred meters down to our right a mortar crew set up their 82mm behind a rough heap of rocks. We sat, waited, and watched the sun sinking, keeping movement to a minimum to avoid being spotted by observation posts on the farther side of the valley.

Finally at 1700, with the mountains slipping fast into shadow, the attack opened up. From across the side-valley behind the post, the farthest dashika let rip, signal for sus-

tained recoilless-rifle fire from positions on the slope below us. Then the mortars joined in. Before long the post was hidden behind a curtain of dirty-white smoke. Through gaps we could see mortar impacts around the post's earthworks and amid the minefield as geysers of earth and snow were torn upward.

Then we started to take fire, at first scattered Kalashnikov rounds singing overhead and spattering among the rocks behind us. Later more accurate bursts of PK machine-gun fire forced us down into the *sangar* and behind rocks. The opposition was not about to come out with their hands up.

On the slope around the post the assault squads and RPG teams were moving forward, crawling toward the minefield as defending fire was directed up at the heavier weapons on the heights. As the leaders began wrestling with the almost suicidal task of detonating mines, it was crucial that supporting fire keep defenders' heads down.

Then the dashika jammed.

The gunner, a thick-set, bearded guerrilla in a quilted jacket, began cursing like a madman. After several conventional attempts to get the weapon firing again, he began hammering at the jam with a rock and yelling obscenities as he stood, fully exposed, bullets whistling around him and ricocheting off the rocks.

By the time the weapon was operating again (after barrel change) the din of battle had eased and light was fading fast. Recoilless rifles and mortars were still lobbing shells into the post, but the accuracy of the recoilless crew was poor . . . one shell would overshoot, the next explode in a cloud of smoke perilously close to the assault teams floundering among the mines. Gathering dark was disturbed by cries from the commander of the mortar crew to correct the range and by sudden red spurts of flame as a mine exploded like a flaring match in the failing light. We couldn't see whether any detonation was the work of a grappling iron or if a mujahid had died.

By 1830 darkness had fallen and the din of battle ebbed, the momentum of the assault spent among the mines. Our mortars were out of ammunition. But from communist positions on the far side of the Panjsher, tracer arced up toward us out of the darkness in lazy parabolas. Now and then, our dashika returned the fire with ear-splitting bursts.

By 1900, as the action tapered off around the bunkers of Khoja Kolan, it was obvious the attack had failed. Orders reached us to pull out before BM-21s joined the battle. We moved back up the ridge in tired lines, dashika barrels, tripods, mortars and base plates divided up among the Afghans. Overhead, stray AK rounds whistled, but no one gave a damn. As far as I could see there were no wounded.

We halted on the far side of the ridge out of the line of small-arms fire. By now BM-21 explosions rippled up the mountainside, to our left and high. Even so we were in no spot to hang around. Moving fast down the mountain, we reached the rendezvous: a



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group of bombed-out homesteads on a wide shelf of terraced wheat fields 2,000 feet below the battlefield, but still high above the valley floor. Some groups merely touched base and kept moving, marching off into the night. A few, including Massoud's group, stayed.

The next morning we left the Puzhgur front for other areas in the valley. But for the remainder of 1984 Puzhgur continued to be the focal point of hostilities in the Panjsher. At the end of October and early November, large-scale Soviet assaults into side-valleys near the Panjsher's mouth shifted the focus briefly from the middle reaches of the valley around Puzhgur and on 8 November the siege of the garrison was finally lifted when a resupply convoy managed to get through. But the last half of November marked the second phase of the guerrilla offensive with further attacks on posts beginning 14 November. Between 14 November and the 30th, nine more posts fell to the mujahideen.

Those successes triggered an inevitable reaction and by Christmas reports of renewed heavy clashes filtered out of the valley as the Soviets moved air-assault troops and armor up-valley to reinforce Puzhgur. For his part, Massoud claimed to have killed some 100 Soviet and Afghan troops in fighting around the town and on ambushes on relief convoys trying to break through.

And all of that points to one fairly safe conclusion: The Panjsher will likely remain Afghanistan's best-known and most bitterly fought-over killing ground. ☒

**19 CANDLES, 1 KIA**

*Continued from page 32*

their chatter. Medics milled around trying to figure out who was wounded in the all the smoke and confusion. The round had landed on the CP, blowing an RTO and a couple of riflemen to hell. That wasn't the last time it happened, either.

During the days we spent in the area, arty was called in a couple of times. Everytime it came in, it seemed to hit our guys. Christ! I realized they'd stuck us on an LZ they hadn't pinpointed on the map. With gooks all over the place and our own artillery raining down on us, we could look forward to another sleepless night.

I could be back home with my friends and my girl in Lorain, Ohio, but instead I had looked for a change, something out of the ordinary. The Army seemed to be the perfect ticket. So there I was, face down in the dirt waiting to get shot up by an enemy I usually couldn't see, or worse, waiting for a friendly artillery round to cozy up in my foxhole with me.

Another morning. It was the same as a hundred before it. And it meant another patrol. The idea, according to the CO, was to move down the hill, recon a river running through the area and try to come in on the flank of our elusive enemy — if he was still

there. I drew point position and off we went. The platoon moved about 500 meters down the vine-choked slope to the river. A dimly lit trail crept up the opposite bank to disappear in darkness. It was an omen of things to come.

The lieutenant signaled us to move out. He sent most of the platoon across in one batch. The stupid bastard didn't even have enough sense to send a small element over first to see if there was a welcome waiting for us. With a single forward motion of his hand, the lieutenant could have had us all wiped out.

I crawled up on the bank of the river, my eyes piercing the gloom for signs of the enemy. We were lucky this time. Creeping through the towering trees like an army of tiny insects, we continued our pointless adventure. But something didn't fit.

I stopped and tried to figure it. Out of the darkness, a shape materialized in front of me. In the bushes was a gigantic, misshapen dish. A Chinese claymore. It could wipe out an entire platoon. My hand shot up: danger. Everyone hit the dirt, hoping the monster wasn't command-detonated. Everyone, that is, except our lieutenant.

Irritated by the holdup, he kept yelling at me to move out. If my buddies hadn't been in danger, I'd have loved to see the Claymore blow this clown to shreds.

That claymore just stared back at us as if to say, "This is far as you go." I rolled down to the slick mud below the bank and passed the word down the line that we were facing a claymore. Everybody froze. Flanking the gigantic frag, I low-crawled around it to see if there were any gooks attached to the end of the wire leading away from it. Thank God there weren't or this patrol would have been cut short.

Some of my buddies had followed me. We spread out, bracing our nerves against the gunfire everyone hoped would never come. But the squad leader settled the affair before we could find our answer.

Dashing up to the claymore with a flair that would have made John Wayne proud, he yanked the wire and bowled it over. Time seemed to pause in mid-stride as we waited to see our sarge vaporized into tiny pieces of mangled flesh. It seemed like hours, but only a heartbeat later we realized nothing was going to happen. The danger had passed and everyone breathed easier. But our illustrious platoon leader quickly changed the good luck that seemed to be heading our way.

He roared up the trail yelling for us to form up and move down the trail parallel to the river. We had moved only about 100 yards when mortar rounds started dropping in front of us, driving us back across the river.

Back on our side of the river, we took off toward the direction B Company was supposed to be. We had moved only a few hundred meters when heavy firing started up. Bravo had found Charlie again.

The fighting sounded heavier than yesterday. The CO had been talking on the radio



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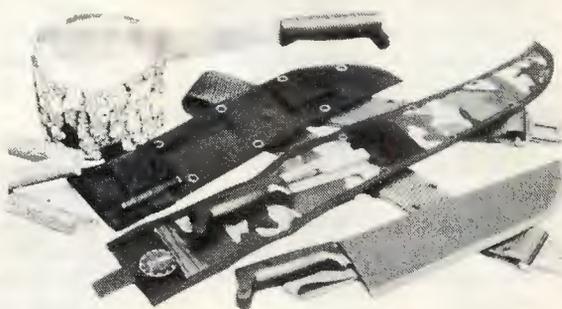
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and told us to move off. Bravo was getting hit hard. I took the point again, remembering all those stretchers carrying dead and wounded down that trail. It sounded as though it would be worse this time.

The sound of M16s mixed with the distinctive pop of AK-47s. Somewhere just out of sight were gooks and I stared at the jungle wishing I had another set of eyes. I could even smell the gooks now. They were out there — close.

I passed the word back to the CO who crept up and asked why we had stopped. "You can smell the gooks," was my whispered reply.

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"Maybe so, but we have to move on."

A call on the PRC-25 held us up. The CO took the message, looked at his map, and talked to the lieutenant again. Tenseness and impatience mingled with the smell and the sounds of death filled the air again. Charlie had knocked our asses around enough — we wanted to do a little ass-kicking ourselves.

Except for an occasional glance over my shoulder to see if the CO had given the word to move out, I kept my eyes pointed straight ahead. A movement caught my attention. The bushes parted and out stepped a genuine, 14-carat VC.

He was walking across our front. He knew something was up but he hadn't seen us yet. Clad in green fatigues, a red beret and a yellow neck scarf, he stalked along the trail with an AK at his hip. It's funny how you can pick out little details in a matter of seconds.

Some sixth sense stopped him. He turned and looked right at me. No more than 12 feet separated us and we both had our rifles at the hip. No time to aim — we just opened up, Charlie on auto and me on semi. I staggered back a step and caught my right foot on a tree root. I dropped to my knees and kept firing.

Our private firefight was a slow-motion kaleidoscope of color. Charlie's green tracers cut the leaves and branches directly above my head while my red tracers smacked and sizzled into his body, impacting on his chest and stomach. He fell back, dropping to his knees, AK-47 pointing in the air. But my rounds were still ripping into him. I could see chunks of his face and head fly off in different directions. He finally dropped onto his back, his legs tucked up under him. Cramming a new magazine into my rifle, I moved up to check him out, scanning the underbrush to see if there were any more in the area.

The rest of the platoon moved up on line and began spraying the area like maniacs. Bravo Company screamed over the radio that our rounds had them pinned down. After a few minutes, the CO got everyone to cease fire. Our fire may have caused Bravo Company a few tense moments but it also

caused the gooks to unass the area.

I popped a few more into the dead VC for luck, took his wallet and personal letters for S-2 and picked up his AK. We moved out with caution. A couple of minutes down the trail and we found ourselves in the middle of a VC supply depot. Tons of rice stacked in 200-pound bags, outboard motors, soy sauce, sardines, other canned goods and cigarettes — notably a brand called "Ruby Queens" that are made in New Orleans. All the outboard motors and most of the rice bags had the USAID label on them. It's great knowing that while Uncle Sam was supplying us with food and equipment to kill gooks, he was also impartial enough to supply the enemy with similar sustenance. There were enough supplies here for a regiment.

We found eight bodies in the area and a lot of blood trails and bandages. They may have shot the shit out of Bravo company but it was apparent that Bravo had hurt them too. The bodies were all formerly NVA regulars.

That afternoon we had moved back into our perimeter. Dog-tired from lack of sleep and the strain of combat, I thought about the VC I had killed and wondered if he had a family or a girl back home. I thought about my home too.

I wanted to write a letter to my family so I ate a quick meal and started writing before darkness made it impossible.

"What day is it?" I directed my question at one of the GIs sitting against a tree cramming food into their mouths.

"June 25th," came the mumbled reply. I stopped and stared at him a minute.

"What's wrong?"

"Today's my nineteenth birthday," I stammered, a little bewildered.

"Yeah? Happy fucking birthday, GI," came the chorus from under the tree.

It was an auspicious occasion, but for all the wrong reasons. "Christ, I killed a man on my birthday and I came close to dying myself."

The next day we were pulled out of the AO and the ARVN 5th Division moved up to secure the area. We slung all the captured supplies under Chinooks and headed back to Dau-Tieng.

As our chopper skimmed the treetops, I wondered how many had died during this latest encounter. Later, I read that several mass graves with about 30 to 40 bodies in them were all that remained of the enemy we had closed with that day. That's the thing about 'Nam. We fought the battles but had to get the score from the Stars and Stripes.

We were on our way home. A few days' rest and it would be back out into the bush. I thought about this war and its warriors. They say you are not a warrior until you bloody your spear. That day in the bush I bloodied mine for the first time — on my birthday.

It wasn't the last time. And it never got any easier. ☘

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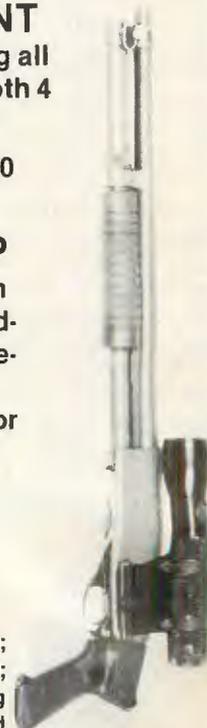
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Continued from page 57

man's plan involves rigging Rambo with gear-bag and parachute at a CIA base in Thailand, loading him aboard a Lear-type jet and then asking him to bail out at "250 feet" to begin his mission.

That glaring error is easily glossed over in the ensuing action. Rambo's short static line snags on exit and he spends some precarious moments slamming into the aircraft fuselage before he unsheathes the Lile blade and cuts his equipment away. There goes his MP5 SMG and the camera he's supposed to use to obtain pictures of American POWs. With the heavy gear bag gone, Rambo's in somewhat better shape and manages to cut himself away from the aircraft. We see a quick canopy deployment and hope to hell the CIA pilots have had enough sense to gain some altitude.

Given the unforeseen accident and his obviously off-target insertion, Rambo and Co Bao team up and hitch a ride with some Vietnamese river pirates to reach the target area. It gives Rambo an opportunity to use a nicely constructed RPG-7 replica to blow away a marauding NVA patrol boat. He handles the weapon nicely, keeping his head down and holding through the launch. The RPG and several other weapons in the film are a genuine credit to the special-effects crew whose feet Stallone kept to the fire throughout the production.

"The special-effects people were absolutely phenomenal," commented Maffatone, who did much of the background weapons and equipment research for *Rambo*. "These guys can take a picture of something and reproduce it down to the last nut and bolt."

That's most obvious in the scenes which involve a Soviet Mi-24 Hind attack helicopter which is launched to shoot down Rambo during his efforts to escape in a stolen American Huey. Earlier dialogue indicates Rambo is also a

qualified pilot which covers the enlisted aviator glitch. Special effects crews modified a French *Aerospatiale* Puma into one of the most frightening Hind mock-ups to loom like a deadly dragonfly in modern movies.

Except for the conspicuous absence of the standard, forward-firing HMG or cannon in the nose of the predator, you'd have to visit Kabul, Moscow or Managua to see a more convincing Hind. Fortunately for movie-goers who understand the aircraft's virtual invulnerability to most ground fire, Stallone doesn't require Rambo to blow this behemoth out of the sky with small arms. What he chooses to ice the helo with, and the way he suckers the greedy pilot into a vulnerable position are lessons for U.S. helicopter crews who may find themselves sharing air space with the deadly Soviet Hind.

**The RPG and several other weapons in the film are a genuine credit to the special-effects crew whose feet Stallone kept to the fire throughout the production.**

One of the most interesting aspects of *Rambo* — aside from the strong moral and political statement about the war and veterans — is the presence of Russian advisers in Vietnam. Everyone knows they have been crawling all over that country since Saigon fell, but few filmmakers have dared to demonstrate the validity of this aspect of the Domino Theory.

When Rambo is betrayed by the CIA (and metaphorically, the U.S. government which would really rather the question of American POWs and MIAs simply disappear) and captured, we are confronted by another Hollywood compromise. He is forced to drop the AK-47 he's been carrying and surrender to the NVA.

When the weapon hits the mud in a dramatic cut-shot, the selector lever is in the full up or safety position. That's a little disturbing since Rambo has just used it to empty a full magazine of ball ammo at his pursuers. But not to fret.

Before you can scratch your head over the safetied AK, the Russians appear on the scene and restore your faith in Stallone's attempts at technical accuracy. I would presume they are meant to be a field-expedient mixture of Spetsnaz, Soviet Airborne and Naval Infantry troops. Since no one in the West has any real idea of how Soviet Special Forces might dress for field operations or advisory duty in a foreign country, they come off acceptably. All that's necessary is the presumption that unorthodox Russian special troops might wear what they damn well please outside duty in the Soviet Union. Certainly our own elite units made similar uniform modifications during service in Vietnam.

The Russians' berets are right for Naval Infantry but the badges are airborne. They are wearing an interesting if not totally accurate version of an airborne smock and the patches and shoulder boards are nearly correct — at least according to what we know about this obscure outfit. That's not much at all. Maffatone explained their appearance.

"Basically, I gave them all the info I could find on Spetsnaz. I got it from *Soldier of Fortune* Magazine, as a matter of fact. We mixed Soviet Naval Infantry and airborne-uniform parts to make them look more realistic. Sly wanted to portray them as the most elite troops the Russians might have on duty in Vietnam. There was something about the Naval Infantry uniform that he didn't think was quite right and there was something about the airborne uniform that didn't quite work. So, we just melded the two."

Since Spetsnaz troops can be drafted from either unit, I'd be willing to bet the Russian Special Forces guys currently coddling their North Vietnamese cronies in and around Ho Chi Minh City look a lot like the Soviet super-soldiers in Stallone's film. As so many of us used to say in The Nam: "It don't mean nothin'."

They are certainly no match for Rambo. And Hollywood — despite a plethora of recent POW rescue flicks — has yet to match *Rambo: First Blood, Part II* for a fitting tribute to the service and sacrifice of America's Vietnam Veterans. It's all summed up early in the movie when Colonel Trautman gets the Green Beret veteran's cooperation for the mission that will return him to Vietnam, where Rambo says he died many years ago. Trautman asks if there are any questions as he turns to leave.

"Just one, sir," says Rambo with genuine pain in his gravelly voice. "Do we get to win this time?"

We do. ☒

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# OTTO SKORZENY

Continued from page 69

to England in search of peace flashed through Skorzeny's mind. Hitler interrupted those thoughts with a hand on his fellow Austrian's shoulder: "You will succeed."

Final preparations coming down to the deadline. The day before the attack was scheduled, the team moved in for a closer look at the Villa Weber. The Germans needed a good look at the ground floor so Skorzeny and Warger bundled some dirty laundry to a laundress' cottage on a hillside high above the Villa. Once there, Skorzeny asked to go to the toilet only to be told there was no inside plumbing. Right on cue, Warger suggested a rockslide 50 yards further up the hill, to which Skorzeny immediately repaired, dropping his trousers for realism and crouching down among the rocks. From this vantage point, he could see 20 guards around the terrace — but no Duce.

Back closer to the Villa, Warger got into an argument with a guard, insisting that he'd heard from a doctor who'd seen Mussolini die.

"Dead? Of course, Mussolini is not dead. Why, I saw him myself this morning. I was one of his escort down to that white ambulance seaplane which took him off the island."

Skorzeny was stunned. The Red Cross plane that had been anchored in the harbor off the coast for the past eight days was gone — and so was Benito Mussolini.

The trail was cold once again, but luck was on the side of the Germans. Kappler's intelligence unit intercepted a secret message to Rome's Ministry of the Interior from Italian Police General Giuseppe Cueli which stated, "Security measures around Gran Sasso completed." Once again, Skorzeny was elated since he already knew that Gen. Cueli was the officer responsible for the Duce's safety.

The trail was hot again but information about the Gran Sasso region itself was scanty. Kappler sent his men looking for tourist maps and brochures at Roman travel agencies but, strangely enough, all such literature had just recently disappeared.

Skorzeny located a German who'd visited the Gran Sasso in 1938 and from him he first learned of the Hotel Campo Imperatore and its cable tramway. Skorzeny reasoned that this *must* be Mussolini's new prison. His men discovered that all the roads leading through the pine forests up the 10,000-foot-high mountain range were blocked by troops and that a full regiment was on the Gran Sasso itself.

As at La Maddalena harbor, Skorzeny decided on an aerial reconnaissance mission, his three broken ribs notwithstanding. On 8 September 1943 — the very day that the Badoglio government announced Italy's surrender to the Allies — Skorzeny and Radl flew over the Hotel in another He-111 outfitted with an automatic camera. It jammed.

As Radl laughed uproariously, he held Skorzeny's feet as the latter hung out the rear gunner's turret, head first, in the freezing air with a hand-held *Leica camera*. Skorzeny got even, though. On the second run over the Gran Sasso, he insisted on a role reversal.

Comedy aside, they got their photographs which revealed the massive, square, blockhouse-like Hotel on a spur of the mountain next to a triangle of ground, the upper cable-car station. On the return trip they had to dodge American bombers attacking Frascati, and by skimming the treetops, landed to find their own quarters in flames.

Skorzeny had learned the hard way of Italy's surrender and that night the Allies landed at Salerno. Now, although the mask could finally be dropped with their Italian "ally," the element of time in locating and rescuing Mussolini was even more crucial than ever before.

Earlier, in Rome, Kappler and Radl had confronted *Carabinieri* General Ferdinando Soleti and point-blank challenged him about the Duce's imprisonment on the Gran Sasso. (Was Kappler trying to blow the operation? We don't know.) Sheepishly, Soleti admitted that it was true. Now, as Skorzeny made plans for the assault, Radl was scheming to bring the uniformed Gen. Soleti to the Gran Sasso with them on their mission.

The developed smudgy photographs taken from 4,000 feet over the Hotel revealed a rugged, near-lunar landscape with an oblong patch — a stretch of tarmac? — that was the only available landing spot near the Campo Imperatore.

Due to the rugged terrain, the numbers of Italian troops facing them and the lost element of surprise engendered by the very nature of such an attack, a ground assault was out of the question. Hitler's original concept of parachutists taking the Duce out was also ruled impractical because of the rarefied air which would necessitate specialized equipment they didn't have and couldn't get in time.

This left only one means of immediate access for a surprise attack left to Skorzeny: a gliderborne assault. As he looked at the recon pictures under a magnifying glass, he turned to Radl. "Look at this meadow behind the hotel. Perhaps we could land gliders in it." Both Radl and Student pointed out the numerous rocks and ditches that would hamper such a perilous — maybe even suicidal — landing scheme. Student's technical experts forecast 80-percent casualties, but Skorzeny plunged ahead.

## Student's technical experts forecast 80-percent casualties, but Skorzeny plunged ahead.

*Luftwaffe* Lieutenant Otto Berlepsch commanded the operation's 75 paratroopers from the 1st German Parachute Division. Gen. Student's intelligence officer — *Hauptmann* (Captain) Gerhard Langguth — would fly in the navigator's cockpit of the first towing plane since, apart from Radl and Skorzeny, he was the only man on the mission who had actually seen the hotel from the air. Skorzeny's *Waffen SS* troops — in *Luftwaffe* officers' uniforms — would be in gliders three and four. The task of the men in the first four gliders would be to capture the hotel, disarm the garrison and free the Duce — hopefully alive and unharmed.

At the same time, *Luftwaffe* paratroopers under the command of Major Otto-Harald Mors would capture the lower valley cable-car station. No shots would be fired by anyone unless a red signal flare was given and it was hoped that the intervention of Gen. Soleti — traveling in Skorzeny's glider — would forestall major military action.

The plan aimed for a minimum of force to be used and with everything finalized, Skorzeny called his men together on the night before the mission for a briefing.

"Honestly, the experts don't give much for our

chances. They expect us to lose most of our strength even *before* the fighting starts. I hope it won't be as bad as all that, but our losses are bound to be high. No one is ordered to take part. Anybody who wants to think twice about coming with us or has a family to worry about can drop out now. He will have nothing to fear. His refusal will not be known outside our ranks nor put into any record, and we shall respect him no less."

He paused. "I shall lead the operation myself, and I can promise you I'll do my best. If we all stick together, then it must and will succeed," he said, echoing Adolf Hitler. "Volunteers, one step forward."

As Skorzeny noted proudly in his memoirs later, "It was a real joy to see that not one of the men stayed behind." Later that night, he told his officers, "There are some things you can't work out with a slide rule. That's just where our experts may be wrong — and the Italians, too. The safer the enemy feels, the better our chances of catching them unawares. Well, we'll soon know."

That night, the Italians broadcast that Mussolini had been handed over to the Allies, but Skorzeny reasoned that this announcement was nothing more than a diversion. The mission proceeded as planned.

The total of 108 assault troops were scheduled to land on the Gran Sasso at 0700 hours, Sunday, 12 September 1943. That famous day in commando annals dawned with large banks of white clouds in the windless sky. But things weren't as smooth as the weather. The DFS 230 gliders didn't arrive from southern France until 1230 and the cover of darkness was lost at the outset.

Ever flexible, Skorzeny reasoned that the delay might actually *help* them, since the Italians might expect a dawn attack, but never one after their heavy lunches. On the other hand, the warm air of the afternoon currents might throw the gliders off course like so many paper darts, and send them crashing into the mountainsides surrounding the Hotel.

The 12 planes and their towed gliders were ready for take-off. Ten men in the first two gliders would cover the number-three glider (with Skorzeny, Soleti and Warger aboard) and number four (carrying Radl). Just as they were preparing to go, the air-raid sirens wailed and they all ran to the shelters as Allied bombers attacked the Pratica di Mare airfield. Miraculously, none of the 24 aircraft were hit. The mission resumed.

The DFS 230, Germany's standard wartime glider, carried a crew of two plus eight passengers. Its towing speed was 130 miles per hour, it had a 72-foot wingspan, was 37 feet long and could carry a total of 4,600 pounds when fully loaded. A special model — DFS 230C-1 — had been built for the Gran Sasso mission, with an extra door before the wing struts, and three nose-contained braking rockets.

Just before takeoff, Gen. Soleti, finally told of the mission, balked, and in despair, threatened suicide before being disarmed. Skorzeny entered his glider and pulled the unwilling general in after him into the front seat between his own knees, a pistol held to Soleti's back.

The force was airborne and on its way to either death or glory — or maybe both — at 1330, as still another flight of Allied bombers attacked the runway.

During all this, the Duce rested in his low-ceilinged, one-room apartment — Room 201 — on the second floor of the Gran Sasso. On 8 September he'd met a shepherd named Alfonso Nisi who read the Duce's fortune in a pack of cards: "You are due to be rescued in rather romantic circumstances." To this, Mussolini raged, "You and your damned false prophecies. You're trying to make a fool of me." Dejected,

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he'd already tried to commit suicide once with a razor, which led to a special visit on the very day of the rescue by the hotel's commandant, Gen. Cueli.

As Skorzeny's force approached, the warm air currents buffeted the aircraft and the heavy clouds made visibility difficult for the glider pilots, the only men who could see out of the aircraft. The gliders were flimsy: thin fabric stretched over steel tubes, with small windows running along the fuselage sides. As the tow planes jerked them down the runway, the men felt little confidence in their craft. In Skorzeny's glider, many turned green with airsickness — especially Gen. Soleti.

Halfway to the Gran Sasso, Skorzeny's glider entered a huge cloud and, upon emerging, discovered that the leading two tow planes were missing. He later learned that they'd failed to dodge the airfield's new bomb craters. Now Skorzeny would have no covering force for his own landing and planned dash into the hotel to free the Duce. Worse still, he'd lost the mission's navigator.

Skorzeny took out his knife and slit a window to see where they were heading; the cold air felt good, and Gen. Soleti's coloring improved. After a few minutes, he located the valley of the Aquila, and returned the glider to its course for the Hotel. Looking down, he could also see Major Mors' paratroopers moving in on the cable tramway station in the valley, right on time.

Five minutes later, Skorzeny got his first clear look at the meadow "landing strip." Shocked, he discovered that, just as Radl and Student had feared, it was extremely rocky and uneven — and not remotely suitable for glider landings. The glider pilot, Lieutenant Meyer, signalled that it wasn't safe, but Skorzeny ordered "Release the tow line!" The pilot's face went white and Skorzeny bellowed the order a second time. "Dive! Crash-land as near to the hotel as you can."

Actually, Skorzeny was disobeying Mussolini's own order to glide to safety in the valley unless a smooth landing could be made. The tow plane returned to Pratica di Mare as the glider itself lost altitude, rocking violently from the lofty air currents and headed in among large rocks and hazardous terrain. Skorzeny saw a large boulder just ahead and screamed, "Release the parachute."

Located at the rear of the glider, the parachute acted as a brake once the craft was on the ground, but Skorzeny's was still airborne. His prompt order lifted the tail, lowered the nose and brought the glider to a halt just a few feet before a boulder that might've killed them all. The wood had broken, the steel tubes snapped and the canvas ripped but they were on the Gran Sasso and alive — and only 15 yards away from the Hotel.

After his restoration to power, Mussolini would publish a book entitled *Storia di un Anno* (The Story of a Year), in which he stated "My escape from the Gran Sasso appears even today as the boldest, the most romantic of all, and at the same time the most modern in method and style." At 1400, however, the Duce was sitting by an open window on the second floor of the Hotel, arms folded across his chest, enjoying the bright afternoon sunshine, when suddenly to his stunned dismay, he saw Skorzeny's glider drop literally out of the sky and plummet to earth just below him. Men in khaki uniforms piled out and began setting up a machine gun as other gliders began landing.

The alarm sounded and the Duce watched as excited *Carabinieri* and Italian Army soldiers rushed from their barracks to meet this totally unexpected threat from the heavens. With a presence of mind that served the enterprise well, Mussolini yelled out, "What are you doing? Don't you see? There's an Italian general. Don't

shoot! Everything is all right. Don't shed blood." Radl had been right to include Gen. Soleti in the mission complement.

Skorzeny's glider had, in fact, landed on the mountain's main ski run. One of his men, armed with a submachine gun, jumped out ahead of him as Skorzeny fell out on the ground. Jumping up, Skorzeny and Gen. Soleti raced toward the Campo Imperatore, as the giant SS commando yelled, "Don't fire until I fire."

Like Mussolini, the frightened Soleti — who was known to the Italian troops they now approached — also screamed not to shoot. Inside the hotel, Inspector Gen. Cueli was lying naked in bed taking his afternoon siesta as a stunned *Carabinieri* captain, Albert Faiola, rushed in to report the German assault. He'd seen Gen. Soleti and had ordered his men not to fire, but their previous orders from HQ in Rome had been to execute Mussolini.

What *should* they do? he asked, bewildered. Just as Skorzeny had gambled, chaos reigned on the Italian side at this critical moment on the Gran Sasso. Cueli answered, "Give up without hesitation," and the two officers hung from third-story windows shouting "Don't shoot! Don't shoot!" They had no idea how few Germans actually opposed them.

Rushing toward the hotel's entrance Otto Skorzeny was oblivious to all of this. An Italian sentry stood open-mouthed and rooted to the spot as Skorzeny rushed past him into the hotel. Inside the doorway he saw a soldier tapping a transmitter and quickly kicked out the chair from under the man and smashed the radio with his heavy submachine gun. With his men pounding behind him, Skorzeny rounded a corner to a 10-foot-high terrace. Commando Corporal Himmel bent over, Skorzeny stepped up onto his back and scaled the terrace.

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Looking up, Skorzeny at last saw the famous bald head of the man he'd last seen nine years before atop his balcony on the Palazzo Venezia in Rome; the man he'd sworn to either rescue or die trying in the attempt — Benito Mussolini. Amid the pandemonium of troops rushing about on both sides, Skorzeny yelled to Mussolini in German (which he knew the Duce also spoke), "Get back — away from the window!" Mussolini obeyed the German who had appeared out of nowhere.

Skorzeny and his men rushed through the main entrance of the building, booting emplaced machine guns out of the way as they passed by the amazed Italian soldiers. In the lobby, Skorzeny barged through another gang of soldiers and ran up a short flight of steps. He rounded a corner and flung open the first door that he came to — Room 201. Inside were three Italians in the center of the room: Mussolini flanked by the terrified Gen. Cueli and Capt. Faiola.

Lieutenant Otto Schwerdt came in behind Skorzeny, and two of their men appeared at the window, having scaled the lightning rod on the face of the building. Cueli and Faiola were removed quickly, and Lt. Schwerdt was assigned

by Skorzeny to be Mussolini's immediate German bodyguard.

Looking out the window, Skorzeny spotted Radl and yelled, "We've got him here. All well so far. You look after the ground floor for me."

By this time, four more gliders had crash-landed, but no one emerged from the wreckage of the fourth. This meant that Skorzeny now had 50 men to hold the Hotel against an expected counterattack. He decided, as so often, on boldness once again, and yelled out the door in faulty Italian, "I want the commander. He must come at once." When a Colonel arrived, Skorzeny said, in French, "I ask for your immediate surrender. Mussolini is already in our hands. We hold the building. If you want to avert senseless bloodshed, you have 60 seconds to go and reflect."

The Colonel returned with a goblet of red wine and presented it to Skorzeny with the noble words, "To a gallant victor," and bowed from the waist. Skorzeny, relieved, thanked him, and downed the wine. A white sheet was flung out the window to announce the surrender, and both the victorious Germans and the just-defeated Italians began chanting in unison the cry, "Du-ce! Du-ce! Du-ce!"

Hitler's audacious gamble had succeeded beyond Skorzeny's wildest imagination. And it had all happened in just under four minutes from the time of the first landing. Not a single shot had been fired on either side, no one had been wounded and only 10 men lightly injured in the glider crash.

With everything under control, Skorzeny turned to the man he'd come so far to liberate. "Duce, I have been sent by the Führer to set you free." Not to be outdone for posterity, Mussolini responded, "I knew my friend Adolf Hitler would not abandon me. I embrace my liberator." Skorzeny received a bear hug and a kiss on the cheek.

He was hardly the vigorous dictator of thousands of pre-war newsreels. Wearing a blue suit much too large for him, he looked older than his 60 years: tired, unshaven, with gray hairs sprouting from his bald head. Emaciated and ravaged by stomach illness, his one hope, he told his German liberators, was to retire quietly to his home in the country. "My political career is finished. I am already dead and buried."

Now, Skorzeny turned to the urgent task of getting the Duce off the Gran Sasso to safety. Von Verlepsch called Maj. Mors at the valley cable-car station at 1417 hours to announce "Mission fulfilled. The Duce is alive." By 1500, the Germans were evacuating their troops by the cable car — four men at a time, with one Italian hostage as insurance. While this worked for the soldiers, Skorzeny had no intention of taking the Duce down in this manner and then moving him by road through over 100 miles of hostile territory.

Here began the most hair-raising part of the mission. In his initial planning, Skorzeny had designed three separate options for the removal of Mussolini from the Gran Sasso. The first involved a land trip to the Aquila of Abruzzi airport and a flight out from there. The second was for a small aircraft to land near the lower cable-car station in the valley, and the third — the most dangerous option — was for a small plane to land on the Gran Sasso and fly out from the Hotel Campo Imperatore.

Up until the rescue, Skorzeny had ruled out the final idea because of the danger inherent in both landing and take-off from the mountain peak, but now he reconsidered it. His radio communications to Rome were gone — he couldn't ask Gen. Student to send the three planned Ju-52 transport planes to Aquila. The second plan was abandoned when the pilot of the Fieseler 156 Storch spotting

plane damaged one of its wheels while landing in the valley down below.

As the evacuation moved into full swing, Skorzeny received reports that Italian reinforcements were being rushed to the area so he reluctantly adopted plan number three. He motioned for Capt. Gerlach — his pilot from the Wolf's Lair to Italy — to land his tiny Storch. It had been circling overhead since the mission began. An excellent pilot, Gerlach landed among the boulders, rocks and crashed German gliders without a hitch.

German combat photographers — thoughtfully included on the mission — recorded the aftermath for the world's newspapers and history books as Skorzeny, Mussolini, Soletti and Radl (carrying the Duce's luggage) approached the flimsy Storch aircraft. Its flying range was 240 miles, and the craft could carry 2,900 pounds when fully loaded. Takeoff would be far from certain.

The Germans, the Italians and even Mussolini pitched in to remove the boulders from Gerlach's proposed takeoff runway, but the Duce — a pilot himself with over 17,000 flying hours — wasn't at all enthused at his prospects for escape. He later told a Swiss journalist that the takeoff was "a moment of real terror for me," but as Skorzeny urged him aboard with Gerlach, he merely shrugged. Even more dangerous, however, was Skorzeny's insistence on flying with them.

Gerlach balked. At this height with their combined weight and the risky takeoff on a 200-yard, downhill runway, they might all be killed in a crash, he argued. Skorzeny countered, "You're going alone by air. How much flying time have you got? Suppose something happens on the way and you're killed. If so, he's alone in a desert, and if he's lost and I fail in my duty to the Führer, I have to put a pistol to my head!"

At last, Gerlach relented, and grainy newsreel footage captured the moment forever. The helmeted Gerlach at the controls in front, a nervous Duce in the passenger seat behind him, and the hulking Skorzeny crouched double at the waist behind Mussolini. For the second time within two hours Skorzeny was embarking on a hazardous flight with a nervous Italian between his knees — first a general, now a dictator.

As the assembled troops cheered and the photographer snapped away, the plane jerked forward and roared down the meadow at 100 mph. Standing by Mussolini's suitcase, Radl watched them go — then fainted dead away on top of the luggage. The Storch bounced down the hillside, hit a rock with its right wheel and lurched out of sight over the edge of the sheer cliff face into a yawning abyss — a 3,000-foot drop straight down.

Skorzeny screamed in terror and the white-faced Duce sat silent as they watched the ground come closer and closer as they dived toward death. Gerlach pushed the control stick forward, picked up speed and pulled the plane out of its deadly dive — a mere 100 feet above the valley floor.

The tension eased as Mussolini began a running, non-stop, tourist-style commentary from the air. "That's L'Aquila. I addressed a huge crowd there 20 years ago! . . ."

At 1730 they touched down at Pratica di Mare with the oil-feed leaking and a starboard strut destroyed. Mussolini gave Gerlach a heartfelt handshake, "Thank you for my life!"

A tri-motor Heinkel waited to take them to Vienna where they arrived late that night at Aspern airfield. On the way, Mussolini, the Man of Destiny, regaled an exhausted Skorzeny with tales of his overthrow and imprisonment. Skorzeny politely listened.

In Vienna, toward midnight, they were driven

to the sumptuous Imperial Hotel — unshaven, unkempt, with no luggage — where the hotel staff watched them with amused contempt.

A weary Mussolini went straight to bed, but not before Skorzeny offered him a pair of pajamas, which the Duce rejected. "I never wear anything at night and I would advise you to do the same, Captain Skorzeny," he said, grinning, "especially if you sleep with a woman."

Himmler called Skorzeny's room to congratulate him. Germany's newest hero contemptuously lit up a cigarette on the other end of the line. When Himmler hung up, Skorzeny called his wife. The call was interrupted by the entrance of an SS Colonel who took off his own glittering Ritterkreuz (Knight's Cross) and hung it around Skorzeny's neck — the first time that high decoration had ever been awarded the day it was earned.

"Orders of the Führer," the Colonel emphasized, clicking his heels and bowing.

Skorzeny's wife arrived but they were again interrupted by the excited hotel switchboard. Adolf Hitler himself was calling from the Wolf's Lair, with news of an instant promotion to Major.

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Sturmabführer Skorzeny, you are a man after my own heart. You have gained the day and crowned our mission with success. You have performed a feat which will become part of history. Your Führer thanks you. You have given me back my old friend, Mussolini. You have been away from your wife too long, Skorzeny. It is not good for a man to be away from his wife's bed that length of time. Go home and enjoy yourself and make your wife happy."

Goering and Keitel took the phone next to congratulate him while Radio Vienna spread the news all over Europe. In a diary published after the war, Nazi Propaganda Minister Josef Goebbels summed Germany's elation. "The liberation

of the Duce has caused a great sensation at home and abroad. . . . Even upon the enemy, the effect of this melodramatic deliverance is enormous. Friend and foe alike are full of admiration. . . . There has hardly been a military event during the entire war that has so deeply stirred the emotions. . . . We are able to celebrate a first-class moral victory."

The two dictators were reunited at Rastenburg on the 14th, two days after the now-celebrated rescue. Hitler welcomed his old friend warmly in front of the cameras, and privately rebuffed Mussolini's stated desire to retire. Instead of letting him retire, Hitler sent Mussolini back to Italy on the 23rd to head a Fascist Republican regime in the northern part of Italy under Nazi protection. Germans occupied the rest of the country, disarmed the Italians and tenaciously fought the Allies yard by yard from behind both the Gustav and Gothic Lines until the very end of the war almost two years later.

Even though the Badoglio government declared war on Germany on 13 October, for all practical purposes Italy stayed under German domination and Hitler's own regime in the Reich stayed in power secure from its own internal critics already plotting against him. Skorzeny had done his job well on the Gran Sasso.

Viewed against Germany's darkening fortunes in the East, Skorzeny's feat gave hope to Germany and her remaining allies when they dearly needed it. It also restored Hitler's sagging prestige with those same allies. Overnight, Skorzeny became the most famous German war hero since Erwin Rommel.

British Prime Minister Churchill said of the Duce mission, "The stroke was one of great daring. . . . It certainly shows there are many possibilities of this kind in modern war." The British took their cue and pulled a similar raid on Crete in 1944 to kidnap German general Heinrich Kreipe.

Skorzeny himself became a social lion, dining with Hitler, Ribbentrop, Goebbels and the mysterious Nazi Party Secretary to the Führer, Martin Bormann. As he'd done earlier with Rommel, Goebbels staged a special Nazi Party rally in Berlin's Sports Palace on 3 October 1943 to honor the new Maj. Skorzeny. The new hero pinned medals on the others who took part in the operation while he himself received from Mussolini a gold watch with the capital letter "M" and the date 12/9/43 inscribed on the back. Skorzeny also received the coveted Order of the Hundred Musketeers and Goering presented him with the *Luftwaffe* Medal in Gold.

Otto Skorzeny was the toast of the Reich, Nazi-occupied Europe and the world at large — but who was this instant celebrity, a man virtually unknown before 12 September, 1943? ✖

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## DE-BRIEF

Continued from page 2

calf did not cop out or seek a lower-ranking scapegoat. He admitted responsibility for bringing the weapons into the country. There had clearly been no attempt to smuggle anything or deceive anyone. Obviously irked by the waves his war-trophy situation was causing, the Admiral claimed he was ignorant of the pertinent regulations governing combat souvenirs brought back into the U.S.

That strains credibility right off the fantail and over the side. Like virtually all our senior military commanders these days, Admiral Metcalf served in Vietnam where the war-trophy regulations were modified to cover standard Com-Bloc weaponry and drilled — loudly and at length — into everyone who managed to rotate out of Asia in a vertical position. Further, a three-star combat commander has a massive staff dedicated to supporting the boss and keeping him informed and out of trouble. Surely the Admiral's Staff Judge Advocate — or at least the Chief Master-Arms aboard his command ship — would be loyal enough to mention that the CO might be heading for dangerous waters by attempting to bring AKs into the country. I've lived aboard enough 'gator ships and served on enough amphibious command staffs to realize the situation was unlikely to be any great secret.

Despite all that and the precedent of the men who got hammered for violating war-trophy regulations, Admiral Metcalf's seniors up to the Secretary of the Navy decided to limit their reaction to a paltry "letter of caution." That's not likely to hurt the Admiral's chances of becoming Chief of Naval Operations some day. What it *does* damage is faith in our system and sense of military justice. Disregarding the obvious culprits who stole or smuggled illegal weapons for resale or worse purposes, is it just to lower the boom on men who obviously laid their lives on the line in Grenada while the operational commander who sat out the heaviest fighting aboard ship goes away relatively unscathed?

Guilt or innocence in terms of intent is not the issue in this case. No one I know of ever escaped a court-martial because he didn't *mean* to violate the regulations. Ignorance is simply no excuse, which is why our hosts at various Receiving Barracks spent so much time drumming the provisions of

the UCMJ into our heads. The Pentagon has announced the independent Department of Defense Inspector General will look into the handling of the affair but the Navy adamantly maintains the case is closed. Their view is not shared by a large number of veterans if the mail that has been crossing my desk is any indicator.

In fairness I should note that most writers have complained as loudly about the existing war-trophy regulations as they have about the apparent inequities in the Admiral Metcalf case. They want to know why Americans who volunteer, fight and bleed for their country aren't allowed the privilege of capturing and keeping the enemy's arms as souvenirs and symbols of their sacrifice. They want to know why standard battlefield trophies such as AKs and communist grenades — appropriately altered to make them worthless to terrorists — can't be brought home and passed along to sons and daughters as tangible testimony to our American tradition of service in times of peril to the nation and its ideals.

Those are good questions that should be answered. Our fighting men get little enough reward for keeping the country free. ✕

## BULLETIN BOARD

Continued from page 6

The rebel propaganda organ, *Radio Venceremos*, quickly acknowledged that the assassination was carried out by the Popular Liberation Forces (FPL), one of five Marxist guerrilla groups in El Salvador that comprise the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front. Claiming to have killed six other government-affiliated people in the previous five days, the Marxist broadcast boldly claimed that "we are everywhere striking blows for freedom."

The truth, however, is that El Salvador's Marxist terrorists are escalating war in the cities and becoming less obtrusive in the rural areas that were their havens until El Salvador's military gained the upper hand. Lacking the strength to face the army on a battlefield, the communists have retreated into the level-two guerrilla war of urban terrorism that characterized their efforts to topple the government when they began in 1979-80.

Only days before Cienfuegos was assassinated, General Paul F. Gorman — in testimony to Congress

as the just-retired commander of the U.S. Southern Command — warned that urban terrorists in El Salvador were increasing their numbers. He cited recent intelligence reports indicating that the number of leftist guerrillas operating in San Salvador had increased tenfold — from 50 to 500 — since late August 1985. Appropriately, in early January of 1985 the U.S. Military Group had begun special anti-guerrilla warfare training that covers hostage-taking situations.

That will bolster the urban warfare and house-clearing training provided to El Salvador's Airborne Battalion by a *Soldier of Fortune* team in February 1984 (See "Taking It to the Streets, SOF Trains Salvadorans in Urban Warfare," *SOF*, August 1984.) But it's definitely too late to do Cienfuegos any good. ✕

## FLAK

Continued from page 10

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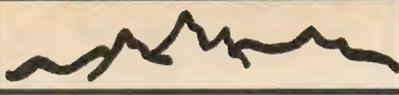
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| Advertiser                     | Page    | <b>ADVERTISERS INDEX</b>                 |          |
|--------------------------------|---------|--|----------|
| A Little to the Right          | 77      | LL Baston                                | 93       |
| American Historical Foundation | 13      | Loompanics                               | 81       |
| Assault Systems                | 78      | Midwest Sports (formerly Exotic Sports)  | 78       |
| Auburn-Wolfe Publishing        | 73      | Nam Graphics                             | 84       |
| Barnett International          | Cover 4 | North American School of Firearms        | 90       |
| Brigade Quartermasters         | 91      | Paladin Press                            | 1,16-17  |
| California Corporation         | 84      | Parallex                                 | 4-5      |
| CCS Communications             | 79      | Phantom Div./PMRS                        | 73       |
| Citizens for Reagan            | 112     | Phoenix Systems                          | 75       |
| Cold Steel                     | 23,81   | Pioneer & Company                        | 26       |
| Collector's Armoury            | 79      | Refugee Relief                           | 79       |
| Combat Weapons                 | 14      | Robert K. White                          | 85       |
| Deibel Military Equipment      | 86      | Second Chance Body Armour                | 83       |
| Delta Press                    | 22      | Shelton Wholesale, Inc.                  | 27       |
| Desert Publications            | 89      | Sherwood International                   | 7,74     |
| Doubleday Military Book Club   | 8-9     | Silver Phoenix II                        | 15       |
| Dutchman                       | 95      | SOF Convention                           | 28-29    |
| Dynamit Noble                  | 75      | SOF Exchange                             | 20-21,88 |
| Enforcer's Outfitting          | 83      | SOF Subscriptions                        | 48-49    |
| Excalibur Enterprises          | 84      | Spyderco                                 | 83       |
| Gun South                      | Cover 2 | Survival Books                           | 90       |
| GUNS & ACTION Subscriptions    | 97      | Survival Store                           | 79       |
| GSAD Inc. (Golden State Arms)  | 72      | Tripwire Enterprises                     | 94       |
| Heckler & Koch                 | 11      | Universal Military Outfitters            | 80       |
| Horizon Publishing             | 87      | U.S. Calvary                             | 25       |
| House of Weapons               | 92      | U.S. Optics                              | 86       |
| INCO                           | 76      | Valley Surplus                           | 82       |
| International Historic Films   | 84      | <b>SUPPLY LOCKER</b>                     |          |
| Interworld Distributors        | 82      | American Pistol                          | 104      |
| Jet Stream Ventures            | 80      | Apex World Trade, Inc.                   | 101      |
| Kaufman's West                 | Cover 3 | Blue Angel Fireworks                     | 103      |
| Knifeco                        | 19      | CATCO                                    | 101,105  |
| Larc, International            | 82      | CCS Communications                       | 104      |
| Law Enforcement Association    | 74      | Chilmark                                 | 106      |
| Lenny Magill Productions       | 99      | City Video                               | 92       |
|                                |         | Cloudland Enterprises                    | 102      |
|                                |         | Countermeasures Technology               | 105      |
|                                |         | Creative Horizons                        | 102      |
|                                |         | Devil's Brigade                          | 104      |
|                                |         | Eden Press                               | 101      |
|                                |         | Feather Enterprises                      | 104      |
|                                |         | Ferde Grofe Films                        | 103      |
|                                |         | Global School of Investigation           | 105      |
|                                |         | Guaranteed Distributors                  | 105      |
|                                |         | Heritage Arms                            | 101      |
|                                |         | Holiday Discount Sales                   | 106      |
|                                |         | J. Flores Publications                   | 103      |
|                                |         | JR Stupero                               | 103      |
|                                |         | Lifeknife                                | 105      |
|                                |         | LRRP Security Services                   | 101      |
|                                |         | Mathews Police Supply Co.                | 102      |
|                                |         | Megatron Enterprise, Inc.                | 102      |
|                                |         | Neptune Fireworks                        | 104      |
|                                |         | Norbay Securities                        | 105      |
|                                |         | Numrich Arms                             | 102      |
|                                |         | P&S Sales                                | 102      |
|                                |         | Philatelic Services (WWI Historic Issue) | 103      |
|                                |         | Prime Targets                            | 104      |
|                                |         | RP Knives                                | 106      |
|                                |         | Sheffield Steel                          | 104      |
|                                |         | Sin Loi Productions                      | 101      |
|                                |         | Special Action Commando School           | 102      |
|                                |         | Stackpole Books                          | 103      |
|                                |         | The Ultimate Game                        | 106      |
|                                |         | Victor Tango                             | 105      |
|                                |         | Wells Creek Knife                        | 101      |
|                                |         | Westbury Sales                           | 103      |
|                                |         | Wilderness Challenge                     | 104      |

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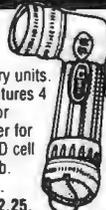
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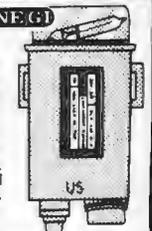
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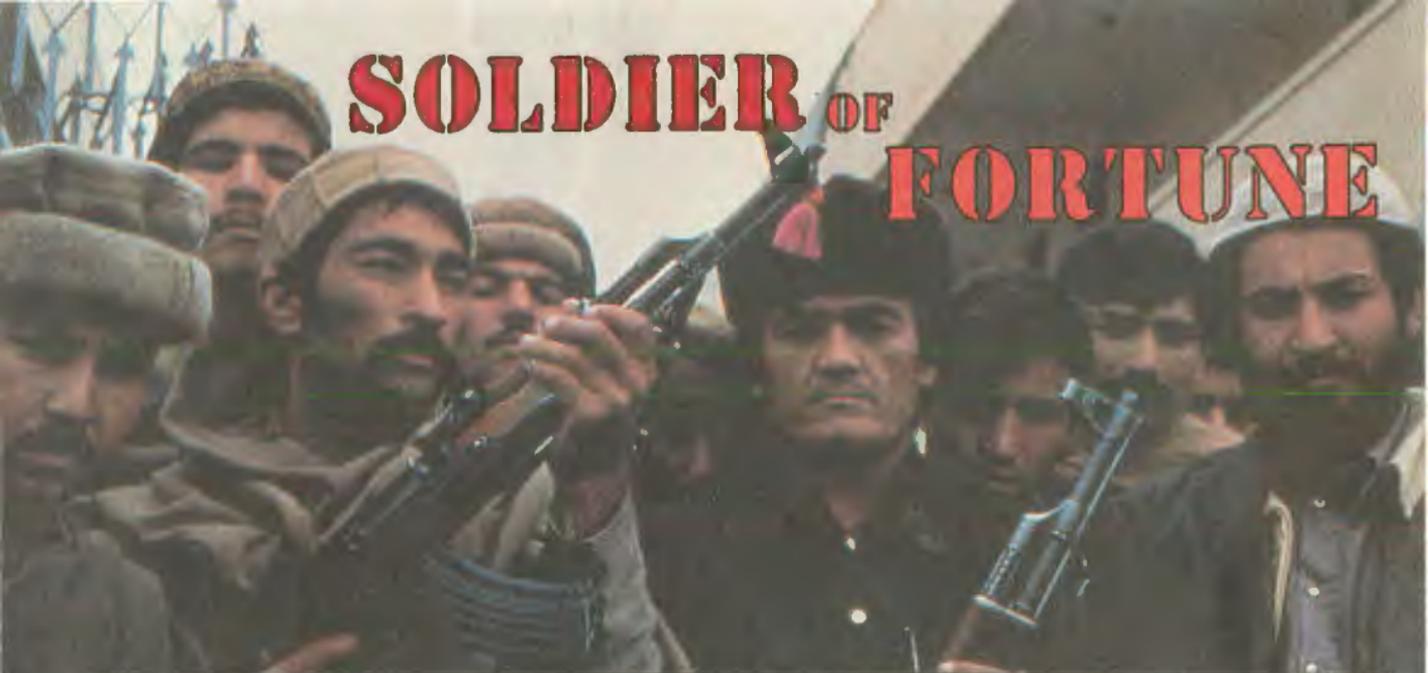
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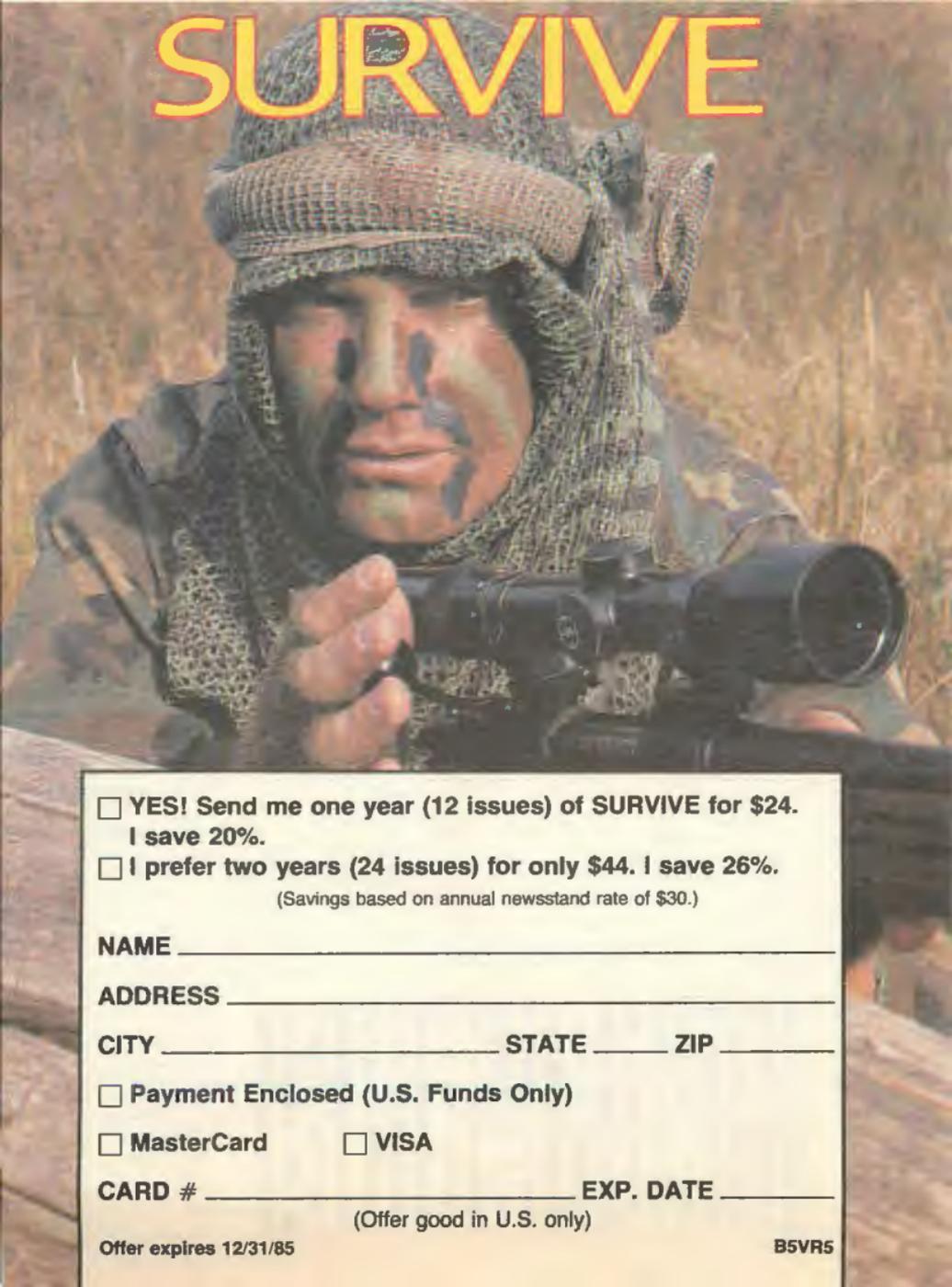
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