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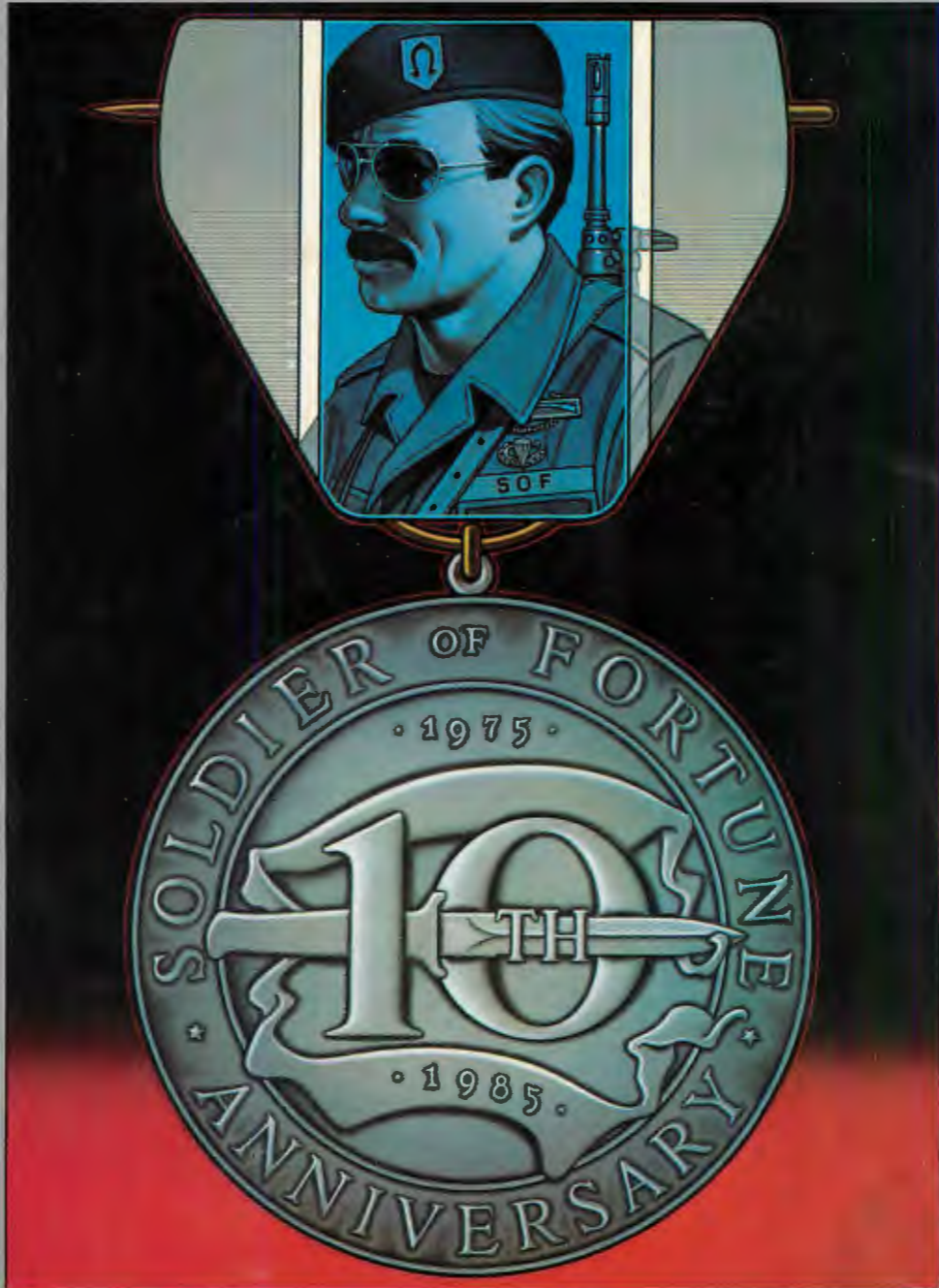
**164-PAGE 10th ANNIVERSARY ISSUE**

**AUGUST  
1985**

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# **SOLDIER OF FORTUNE**

**The Journal of Professional Adventurers**



SOLDIER OF FORTUNE AUGUST 1985



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and his "Mercs"  
Attempt to Invade Angola**

**BAPTISM OF FIRE:  
SOF'S FIRST COVER  
1975**



# A WORD FROM THE PUBLISHER

**T**HOUGH most of our supporters know the accomplishments of *Soldier of Fortune Magazine*, the 10th anniversary is a good time to remember where we've been and what we've done. SOF is proud of its support of the struggle for freedom. And we've given that struggle our money, our ink, our sweat and sometimes our own blood.

In the past decade SOF has redefined "participatory journalism." So — with no apologies — I'd like to list our past accomplishments and present battles.

## AFGHANISTAN

In April 1980, SOFer Galen Geer brought the Free World's first sample of Soviet AK-74 ammunition out of Afghanistan. Geer also grabbed a nuclear-biological-chemical air filter from a Soviet BMP-2 infantry fighting vehicle. It is easy to believe these filters were used to protect Soviets from their own devices.

In September 1980, I secured and delivered 5,000 rounds of AK-74 ammo to U.S. officials in Pakistan for testing and evaluation. I was also the first Western civilian to test-fire the AK-74. And SOF picked up the West's first sample of the Soviet 30mm round from an AGS-17 grenade launcher. I later delivered it to officials representing a NATO member nation.

We also conducted training in Afghanistan, not the least of which was SOF demo editor John Donovan's instruction on the use of anti-tank mines. Once the Freedom Fighters learned to remove the mines' safety clips, Soviet armored convoys had a lot more trouble crossing Afghan territory.

SOF staffer Jim Coyne brought a

Soviet-made PFM-1 anti-personnel "butterfly" mine out of Afghanistan in April 1981. Then we became the first private organization in the West to test-fire the RPK-74 light machine gun in September 1982. In 1983, Coyne and Peter Kokalis, SOF's small-arms editor, were the first Western civilians to test-fire the AGS-17 grenade launcher. And the first samples of the new line in Soviet body armor seen in the West were brought out of Afghanistan in May 1984 by SOF staffers.

In July 1984, David Isby, the magazine's Soviet analyst, became the first Westerner to test-fire the Soviets' AKR assault rifle.

But credit for the biggest measure of SOF's success in helping Afghan Freedom Fighters should go to our readers. Since 1980, you have given over \$100,000 to the Afghan Freedom Fighters Fund ... all of which has been turned over to the Afghans without administrative cost deductions.



## CENTRAL AMERICA

Since February 1982, SOF has sent over a dozen training teams to El Salvador to supplement the efforts of the U.S. Military Group. The magazine's training missions have covered many subjects, from first aid and medical instruction for medevac crew chiefs to sniping and anti-guerrilla urban warfare. In addition, the El Salvador/Nicaragua Defense Fund — and again SOF's readers deserve a lion's share of the credit — has sent over 12,000 pounds of new and used military gear (but no weapons or ammo) to the armed forces of El Salvador. As in our other sollicita-

*Continued on page 147*

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**SOLDIER OF FORTUNE** (ISSN 0145-6784/USPS 120-510) is published monthly by **SOLDIER OF FORTUNE Magazine, Inc.**, Boulder, Colorado. Controlled Circulation Postage Paid at Boulder, CO. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to **SOLDIER OF FORTUNE**, Subscription Department, P.O. Box 348, Mt. Morris, IL 61054. Subscription rates for twelve monthly issues: \$26.00 — U.S.A., Canada, Mexico. All other countries, \$33.00. Special domestic and foreign rates on request. **U.S. FUNDS ONLY.** Single-Issue Price — U.S., \$3.00; United Kingdom, 2.40; Canada, \$3.50.

**CONTRIBUTORS:** Manuscripts, photographs, drawings are submitted at the contributor's own risk. Material should be mailed to **SOLDIER OF FORTUNE**, P.O. Box 693,

Boulder, CO 80306, and cannot be returned unless accompanied by sufficient postage. Any material accepted is subject to such revision as is necessary to meet the editorial requirements of SOF. All manuscripts must be typed double-spaced. All photographs should be credited and be accurately identified. Payment will be made at rates current at time of publication. **NOTICE:** **SOLDIER OF FORTUNE Magazine** is a magazine of national and international distribution. There may be products for which sale, possession or interstate transportation may be restricted, prohibited or subject to special licensing requirements in your state. Purchasers should consult the local law-enforcement authorities in their area.

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**COVER:** Ten years ago, *Soldier of Fortune* magazine burst onto America's newsstands, spraying traditional publishing types with shrapnel and spawning a new journalistic genre. Our coverage of world hot-spots was elevated from barracks-room banter to an art form. When it worked — and succeeded far beyond establishment expectations — a host of gory imitators fell into file. Despite that, national attention shows there is a difference between SOF and all the rest. We think this special 10th Anniversary issue will prove that. Our cover is an exclusive illustration by noted California artist Larry Noble. Frame it if you'd like.

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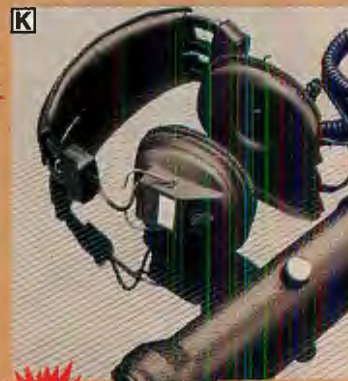
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## BIRTHDAY WISHES...

Sirs:

Your publication soon will commemorate its 10th Anniversary. As a member of Congress who strongly opposes communism I want to express my appreciation for your support . . . for funding to assist the Nicaragua Freedom Fighters. I have personally observed the situation in Central America . . . and I am gravely concerned over the anti-American policies of the government of Nicaragua. One Cuba in the Western Hemisphere is more than enough. I believe we have a strong responsibility to prevent the seeds of communism from spreading in this area so close to the United States.

U.S. Rep. Bill Nichols,  
Chairman  
House Armed Services  
Investigations  
Subcommittee

The principles of human freedom are not exercised, nor even known in many parts of the world. But due to tireless efforts by your staff, *Soldier of Fortune* continues to sound the bells of freedom and bring hope to those who yearn for the liberties that we who live in this great nation often take for granted. On the 10th Anniversary of *Soldier of Fortune* Magazine, I extend my congratulations and best wishes for continued success.

Lieutenant General Al Gray,  
USMC  
Commanding General  
Fleet Marine Force, Atlantic

Noting the 10th Anniversary of *Soldier of Fortune* . . . I extend to you my heartiest congratulations and wish you continued success.

Colonel Terry A. Arnold,  
USAF  
Chief, Media Relations  
Division  
The Pentagon

On behalf of the 28 member organizations of the National Vietnam Veterans Coalition, we send you our best wishes on the 10th Anniversary of *Soldier of Fortune*. SOF is responsible in large part for building a positive image of Vietnam veterans for their service in Southeast Asia and has emphasized the importance of counterinsurgency warfare as part of a strong national defense capacity.

J. Thomas Burch Jr.  
National Coordinator



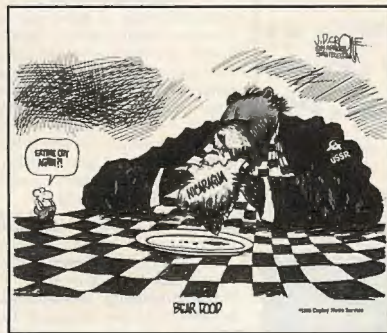
## FLAK

The first duty of government is national defense. If we are to enjoy our freedoms, we must be prepared to defend them. *Soldier of Fortune* has proven that it opposes the enemies of freedom and does so without apology. Congratulations on your 10th Anniversary and best wishes for many more decades of service.

U.S. Sen. Howell Heflin  
Senate Judiciary Committee

We are thankful for the material support that *Soldier of Fortune* has provided for the struggle of Afghans and [for] revealing the Soviets' atrocities in Afghanistan. SOF has proved itself very valuable in introducing the . . . struggle of our courageous people to free their country from Soviet occupation.

M. Nabi Salehi  
Islamic Unity of Afghanistan  
Mujahideen



Congratulations to SOF on its 10th Anniversary. As an actor, I have especially enjoyed your behind-the-scenes coverage of action films and the detailed reporting you have provided on the military training actors must go through to make this type of film. The coverage has been accurate and exciting. SOF also is a first-class magazine for the latest on weaponry and tactics . . . and for its support of our law enforcement agencies, veterans and a strong national defense.

Arnold Schwarzenegger  
Hollywood, Calif.

SOF is an example of hard work and commitment to the ideals and principles of American society. Your 10th Anniversary confirms the confidence of many in your ability to

meet their needs. You can take great pride in the fact that the 10 years of hard work have proved . . . your magazine's reputation for journalistic excellence. Congratulations on your dedication to the preservation of the basic freedoms of humanity.

U.S. Sen. Pete Wilson  
Senate Armed Services  
Committee

Congratulations to SOF and its staff on your upcoming 10th Anniversary. I just wanted to let you know that I admire your honest advocacy of worthy causes and your recognition of the communist threat for what it is. People everywhere have the right — and the obligation — to fight to preserve basic freedoms. Your magazine has provided a valuable service in espousing this message and in so doing earned itself a well-earned and lasting niche in the American magazine publishing arena.

Charlton Heston  
Hollywood, Calif.

I am a subscriber and reader of *Soldier of Fortune*. I am convinced you perform a real public service. Congratulations on your 10th anniversary of publication and keep up the good work.

U.S. Rep. William L.  
Dickinson  
House Armed Services  
Committee

*Soldier of Fortune's* efforts to assist our cause are definitely valued. If we had more supporters of your stature, our struggle already could have successfully brought democracy to Nicaragua and peace, prosperity and stability to Central America. It is gratifying to congratulate you on your 10th anniversary.

Mario J. Calero, U.S.  
Representative  
Democratic Force of  
Nicaragua (FDN)  
New Orleans, La.

*Thanks so much to these and other fine folks who have sent along 10th birthday wishes to SOF. We are proud to be here. The occasion has been a time for us to rededicate ourselves to going further, doing even more to serve our readers, and to refine our efforts through the next decade.*

*Continued on page 8*





# NINJA KNIFE FIGHTING

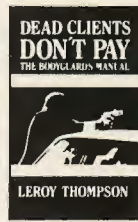
by Dr. R. Kelly Hill, Jr.

Night falls. The glint of cold steel slashes through the darkness. The threat is real, but are you ready? Modern-day Ninja Dr. R. Kelly Hill, Jr., shows you how to become the self-reliant person you aspire to be. You won't learn esoteric knife moves better confined to the dojo or sports arena, but training skills and techniques meant for actual close combat. Benefit from Dr. Hill's special knowledge of anatomy—how to target areas of the body to stop any attack fast. Learn about selecting a knife, different grips, training targets and drills, conditioning, and the Ninja response modes. 8½ x 11, hardcover, 124 photos, 128 pp. **\$19.95**



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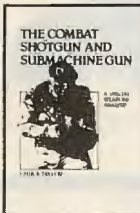
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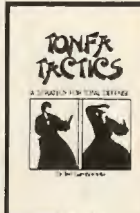
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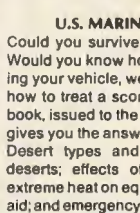
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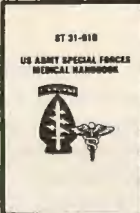
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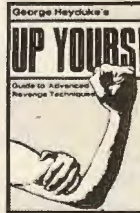


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## CONTRIBUTORS COMMENT...

Sirs:

Last year my son and I attended your convention. I remember Major General Singlaub saying that if we wait for our government to take a positive stand against communism, we'll all have a long wait. He said it would be up to the individual citizen to put out the effort needed to preserve our freedom. His words came back to me as I listened to the pitiful bleating of dreamers in the House of Representatives who decided not to support \$14 million in aid to the Nicaraguan Freedom Fighters. Therefore I intend to budget \$25 per month to SOF's El Salvador/Nicaragua Defense Fund.

Kenneth D. Hartwig  
Baudette, Minn.

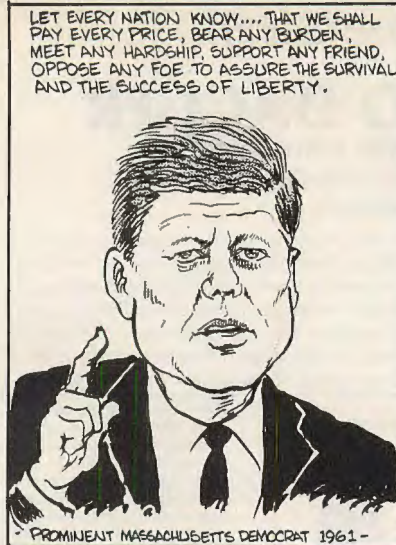
The Nicaraguan Freedom Fighters seek to bring true liberation to their country. Their motivation is remarkable considering they don't get a paycheck. Those who give a damn here in the real world know these brave men need all the help they can get. With that in mind I enclose \$100 as a "contra-bution" to the Nicaragua Defense Fund. I challenge others to give all they can.

Craig Manness  
Manchester, N.H.

I heard from my dad that [SOF] is helping the Freedom Fighters. I am sending \$5 to help beat the communists. I got the money collecting cans and bottles.

Brian Pepperell, Age 8  
Hayward, Calif.

*There aren't enough words to properly express SOF's gratitude for the continuing financial and material support our readers give to our funds to help the struggles for liberty in Central America and Afghanistan. More and more people dig deeper in their pockets, yet more and more help is needed. Freedom is a precious commodity, purchased only at great sacrifice. Donations from youngsters like Brian are particularly inspiring. If all parents are raising their children to be the patriotic good citizen that Brian obviously is, our nation's future is bright and victory over tyranny assured.*



## HAYDEN-FONDA HATE MAIL...

Sirs:

I came across this little tidbit and thought your readers might be interested [A news brief reporting on Tom Hayden, founder of the 1960s leftist group, Students for Democratic Society, husband of actress Jane Fonda and a liberal Democrat member of the California General Assembly. Hayden wants to build a national memorial to protesters of the Vietnam War]. My idea would be to bronze Mr. Hayden himself and put him in a suitable place, perhaps inside a latrine at Fort Bragg.

John McAdams  
Houston, Tex.

I would like to call your attention to a recent poll of America's youth about their favorite role models. Jane Fonda was ranked fourth. I'm 15 and I hate her. She is no role model of mine.

Mike Donovan  
Endicott, N.Y.

The radio talk show "Open Phone America" recently had a caller who has donated land to build a memorial to all the peace movement members. He is asking for people to send him donations. The group is called Vietnam Peace Memorial and its address is at P.O. Box 9364, Phoenix, Ariz. 85026. I thought SOF writers might like to send along their feelings about this project. It is another disgusting slap in the face of our Vietnam vets. I would send along a copy of my letter to VPM, but by the time you deleted the expletives, there would nothing left to print.

Steve Berry  
Louisville, Ky.

*Health-conscious people like Jane Fonda and Tom Hayden will be the first to tell you that you are what you eat. Fonda and Hayden are too full of themselves to be believed. SOF soundly condemns efforts for a memorial to persons or groups that publicly denounced the heroic efforts of our finest fighting men who fought, bled and died for the freedoms which should be enjoyed by all people — even Fonda and Hayden.*

## FITTER CONFUSION...

Sirs:

You were right the first time. The photo in your February issue is of a Sukhoi-17 Fitter. Mr. Jakubowicz' letter (FLAK, May SOF) describes the Su-7 Fitter A, not Su-17 Fitter C. The confusion is natural. Fitter C is essentially a Fitter A with a movable outermost wing section. It's the only operational swing-wing aircraft directly derived from a previous swept-wing type, a good example of the Soviet-style evolutionary weapons development. This approach simplifies logistics and saves money. The plane pictured in your February issue is identifiable by the ridge along its spine and its more elaborate nose radar probe.

John Tillman  
Athena, Ore.

*You join a growing list of sharp-eyed readers who have gotten us squared away on the Fitter A/Fitter C situation. Perhaps we'll finally get it down pat when NATO helps out by changing the name of the two models to reflect a difference. Until then, we'll just keep trying to get it right through research.* ☒

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Be advised, however. The reward is only for Nicaraguan pilots, crew members, or their communist trainers who defect with the aircraft in working condition. It is *not* being offered to U.S. citizens or others who might wish to attempt a highjacking. Qualified parties should fly the Hind to a neutral country, land and contact SOF through local government authorities. SOF will pay \$1,000,000 in U.S. currency or other negotiable tender upon receipt of the Hind.

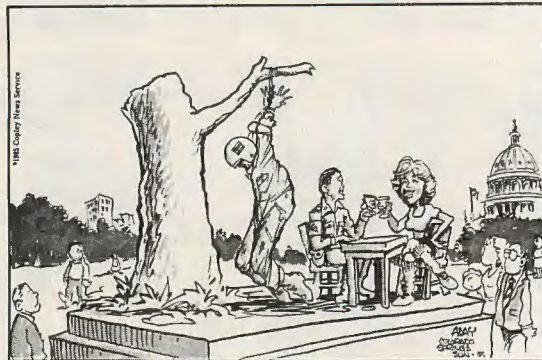
For full details and a Hind reward poster, send \$3 in check or money order to Hind Poster, SOF, P.O. Box 693, Boulder, CO 80306.

## SAIGON'S ANGELS???

Believe-it-or-not, there's a Vietnam Vets Motorcycle Club and they're holding a rally in honor of MIAs and POWs, 4-8 Sept. 1985 in Vienna, Mo. Write Vietnam Vets Motorcycle Club, Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 930481, Norcross, GA 30093, for information.

They are also taking up a collection for the National League of Families and asking that contributions be sent to POW/MIA Fund, Dept. SOF, Maries County Bank, Vienna, MO 65582.

# BULLETIN BOARD



## MONUMENTAL TREASON...

Sometimes you think you've heard it all. Then — just when you're jaded enough to think there can't be any more surprises — some bozo like Tom Hayden comes up on the wire to announce he's collecting money for a *national monument to Vietnam War protesters*. Too bad this guy — and his blushing Red bride Hanoi Jane — didn't show similar balls when the country needed their service and support.

But Hayden and Hanoi Jane have never been the pair to let patriotism or any other honorable emotion stand in the way of treason or disrespect to the people who fought while they fiddled around the world supporting the enemy or wringing crocodile tears from the liberal community. I've got a few captured North Vietnamese bills in my gear somewhere. Those should be appropriate for Tom the Traitor's effort. If he raises any other money, you can bet it will also be commie cash.

We'd much rather have a sister in a cathouse than a brother who coughs up even one penny for this travesty, but that hasn't stopped speculation here at SOF or among resentful readers over what this proposed monument might resemble.

We think Hayden should be given the benefit of Vietnam Veterans' opinions on the subject so he's not stuck with something he has no control over — like the Black Gash in Washington, D.C. Since the People's Committee for Memorial Design is unlikely to accept our suggestion of a bearded, beaded wimp staring up through drug-dilated eyes from the bottom of a two-holer behind some barracks at Fort Bragg, we solicit *your* sketches or design concepts.

Let us see what your idea for a Vietnam War protester's memorial is. Send sketches — and an explanation if necessary — to Bulletin Board, SOF, P.O. Box 693, Boulder, CO 80306. We'll print the best in Bulletin Board in a future issue. All other factors being equal, preference will be given the submissions by veterans and other non-protestors.

## TICO TOLERANCE WANING...

The yellow streak runs right through the upper echelons of U.S. journalism, across the spineless backs of some Congressmen and into direct conflict with the struggle for freedom in Central America. One of the latest victims is Bruce Jones (See "Bruce Jones: Is He CIA or Concerned Citizen?" SOF, June 85).

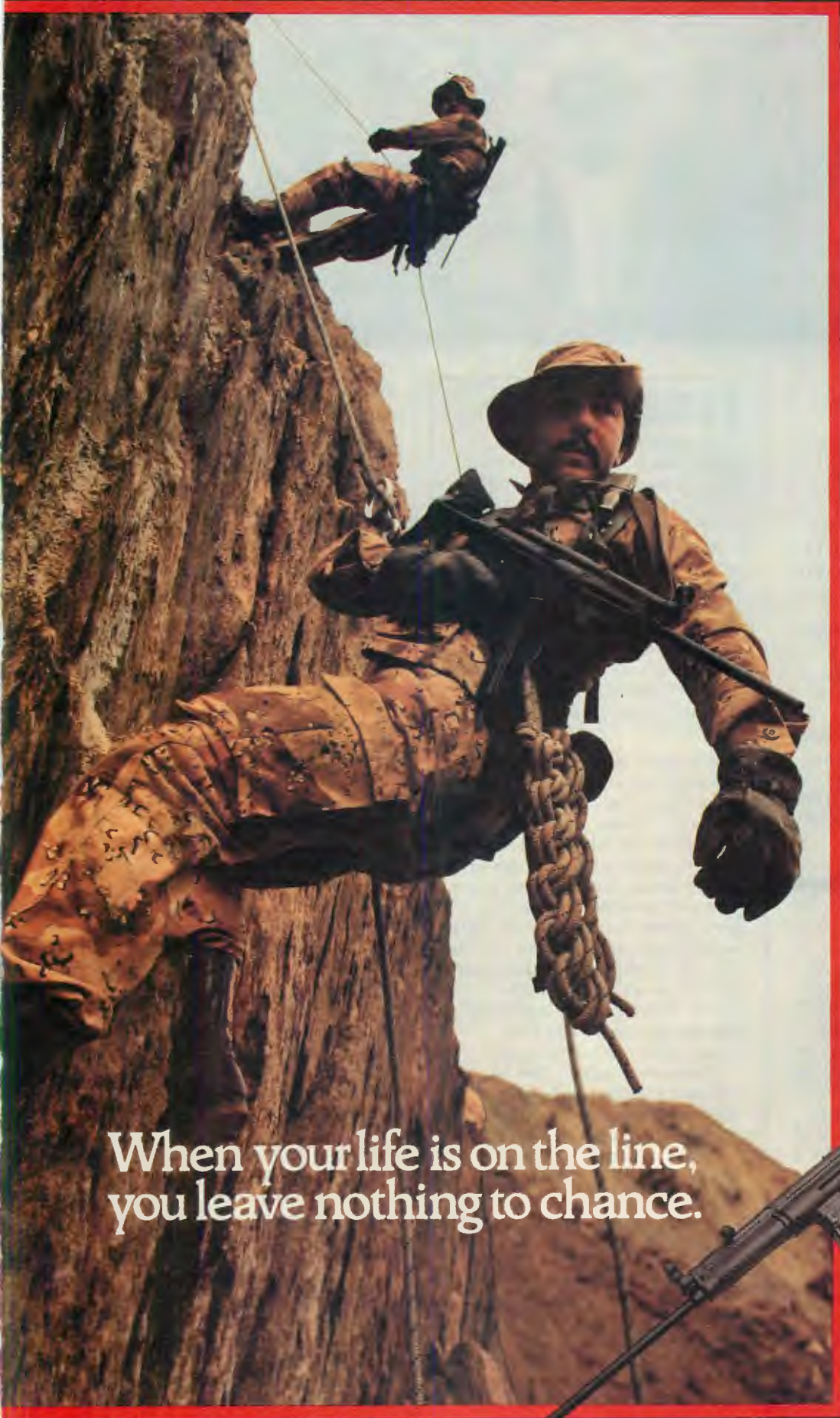
Jones was a U.S. expatriate citrus farmer in northern Costa Rica who occasionally helped anti-Sandinista Freedom Fighters operating in nearby Nicaragua. A *LIFE* magazine interview about Jones falsely identified him as a CIA agent. As a result, Costa Rica declared Jones *persona non grata* and deported him. Jones and his Costa Rican family lost their home in the process and it is difficult to farm via long distance telephone from the U.S.

Since Congress voted against more aid to Nicaragua's Freedom Fighters, Jones said the communists have become increasingly bold about cross-border ops to kidnap and interrogate Costa Rican *campesinos* about movements of anti-Sandinista rebels. And Costa Rican officials, who were quietly accommodating the rebels and their logistic needs while U.S. aid money was rolling in, are now cracking down at the behest of communists within the Costa Rican government.

An example is the recent capture in Costa Rica of two U.S. citizens, two Brits and a Frenchman. The five private-sector trainers were captured 24 April with nine Nicaraguan Freedom Fighters about a half-kilometer inside Costa Rica, near El Castillo, Nicaragua.

Two SOF sources in Central America said the 14-man squad was captured as the result of an informant's tip to authorities. Wearing cammies and heavily armed with AK-47s, grenades, Claymores and an RPG-7, the 14 men were surrounded shortly after crossing into Costa Rica by nine members of a rural guard unit. The nation has no standing army and the Costa Rican rural guard operates under authority of the Interior Ministry, headed by Enrique Obregon, the unsuccessful Communist Party candidate for president of Costa Rica in 1964.

All 14 men were jailed without bond. The two U.S. citizens, both identified as members of the Civilian Military Assistance organization, were Steve Carr, whose age was described as late 20s, of Naples, Fla.; and Robert Thompson, 52, of Apalachicola, Fla. SOF was unable



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





to determine the identities of the other men captured. One source who knows the Frenchman but declined to provide his name said he had served in a French airborne unit.

As this issue went to press in mid-May, the men were still in jail and waiting to see if they would be tried on charges or simply deported. Their trial had been switched from San José to San Carlos, closer to the capture site. They face possible charges of violating Costa Rica's neutrality laws and possessing illegal weapons, both of which carry stiff penalties.

One CMA spokesman asked SOF to notify readers that his group no longer uses its former Alabama address. The new address is: Civilian Military Assistance, P.O. Box 22790, Memphis, Tenn. 38112.

## **B**ARGAIN BASEMENT ARMORY...

One of SOF's primary objectives during my recent visit to the remote Salvadoran Army *cuartel* near the Honduran border was to establish and equip a small-arms repair station that would end their dependency on the *Maestranza*. Having already done this for the Atlacatl Battalion the year before, I had a clear idea of what they needed, where to go for it and how much to pay.

Professional gunsmithing equipment is best obtained from Brownells, Inc. (Dept. SOF, Route 2, Box 1, Montezuma, Iowa 50171). From Bob Brownell we purchased the following: steel wool (medium and fine); Moto-Tool kit plus accessories (including the #424 mandrel and #427 polishing point for cleaning up the feed ramps on Argie High Powers); stainless-steel brushes; cotton swabs; 4½ and 6½-inch flat-nose pliers; curved-nose

## **Ω**MEGA GROUP...

Typically, Publisher Robert K. Brown was away and missed the photo session he ordered up on the occasion of *Soldier of Fortune's* 10th Anniversary. Pictured are the staff members of Omega Group, Ltd., which includes SOF, *Guns & Action* and *Combat Weapons* magazines, and Omega's mail-order business, SOF Exchange. Also away when the photo was shot were Alex McColl, Nick Nichols, Ralph Bicknell, Steve Salisbury, William Guthrie and Bob Rolfson. Photo: Dale A. Dye

needle pliers; gunsmith pin-punch set; combination nylon/brass punch set; ballpeen, crossspan, brass and rawhide hammers; jewelers' screwdriver set; fold-up hex-key tool, Loc-tite (medium strength); gunsmith needle-file set, Garand trigger-guard tool; ceramic stones; bronze vise jaws; leather vise pads; Scheutz M16 wrench; bore light; gunsmith tool kit box; 52-bit Magna-tip Master Super screwdriver set plus the stubby handle; Gun Scrubber; Naval Jelly rust dissolver; and Break-Free, 16-oz. bottle with pump spray.

Micrometers, calipers, drill bit, plier and wooden-handle utility screwdriver sets were found at amazing prices from Harbor Freight Salvage Co. (Dept. SOF, 3491 Mission Oaks Blvd., Camarillo, California 93010).

Aircraft safety-wire pliers and stainless-steel safety wire (.030-.032" diameter) for the M60 GPMG is best ordered from Aircraft Components, Inc. (Dept. SOF, 700 North Shore Drive, P.O. Box 1188, Benton Harbor, MI 49022 — phone: (800) 253-0801).

Military cleaning rods, chamber and bore brushes, .30- and .50-caliber headspace and timing gauges, broken-case extractors, M60

and Browning combination tools, and other accessories and maintenance equipment are available at reasonable prices from William J. Ricca (Dept. SOF, 323 Union Street, Stirling, NJ 07980) and Sherwood International (Dept. SOF, 18714 Parthenia Street, Northridge, CA 91324). These outfits are also excellent sources for military small-arms parts (we obtained the M2 HB barrel carrying handles from Sarco).

Specialized supplies, such as Quicksilver Engine Cleaner and Sweet's 7.62 Solvent for working on really trashed-out bores (the norm in El Sal) are handled by Sinclair International, Inc. (Dept. SOF, 1200 Asbury Drive, New Haven, IN 46774).

Significant quantities of a remarkable new multipurpose lubricant with Teflon, Super Lube, in spray cans and individual packets, were donated by manufacturer, Synco Chemical Corp. (Dept. SOF, 24 Davinci Dr., Bohemia, NY 11716 — phone: (516) 567-5301 — write or call them for a free sample). This unique product changes from a penetrating spray to a long-lasting protective grease coating which won't drip or run.

Finally, local sources (discount hardware outlets) were used to provide a metal tool box, extension cords, wood-chisel set (used as carbon scrapers), ¼-inch electric drill, carborundum stones, bench-grinder and heavy-duty vise. Made-in-Taiwan will do nicely for the latter two items at about \$35 each. No need for the \$200 American-made versions. And, don't forget Q-tips (with wooden sticks) from your local discount drugstore.

The entire package can be assembled for less than \$700, if you include all the maintenance kits

*Continued on page 146*

# SURVIVAL

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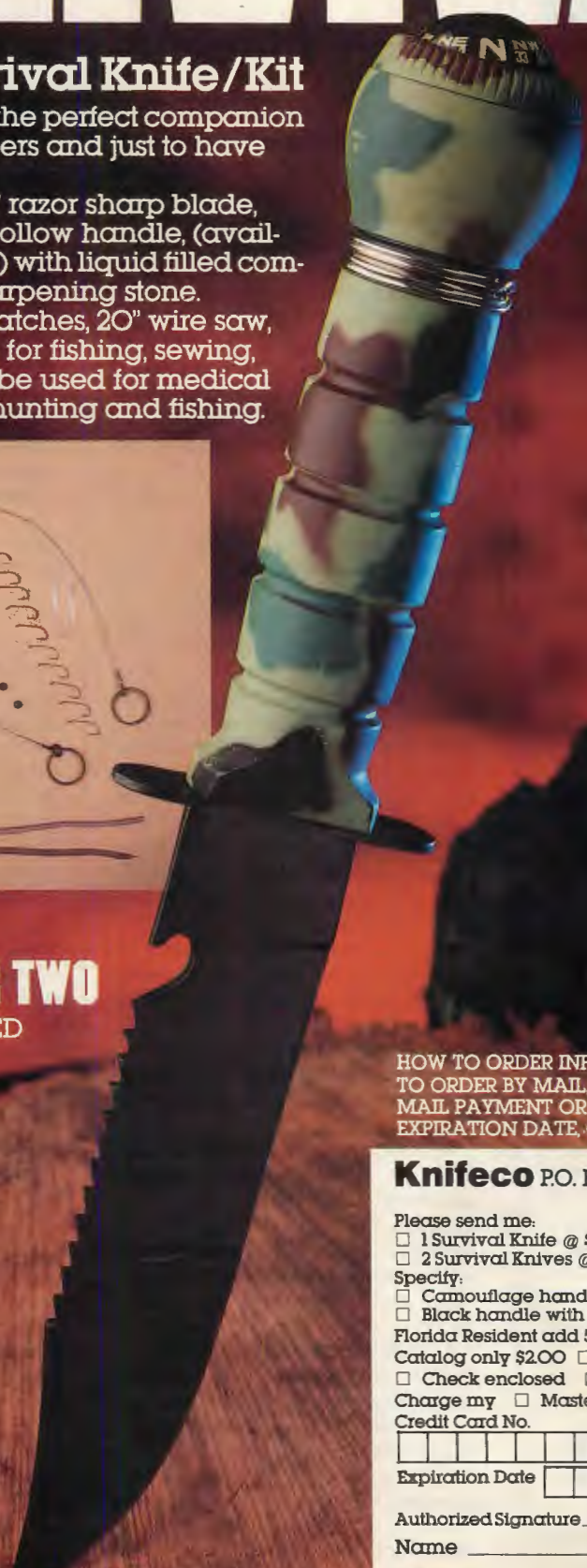
Quality features include 6" razor sharp blade, waterproof 4½" aluminum hollow handle, (available in camouflage or black) with liquid filled compass, leather sheath with sharpening stone.

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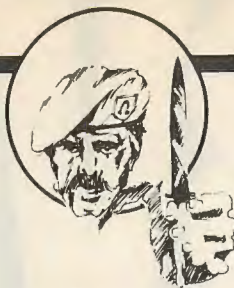
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# BATTLE BLADES

by Bill Bagwell

## A Forum for Fighting Knives

A free exchange of information is vital to us as we conduct our daily lives. A person who has a variety of information available on a given subject can use his own native intelligence to form the opinions that guide his actions. That's as it should be in a free society.

Unfortunately, there has been too little free exchange of information in the country about disturbing subjects such as the proper composition and construction of fighting knives. That situation may have cost lives over the years.

And it's why I thank God for *Soldier of Fortune Magazine*.

You would have to have been a custom knifemaker yourself for the past 15 years to realize how effectively the majority of the contemporary knife press in this country is controlled by a very small and select group of men. This has had a dramatic effect on knifemaking as a *functional* art and craft. In some knifemaking circles the suggestion has been made that the term "fighting knife" may actually be giving custom knives a *bad name* with the public and may even be hurting the sales of some collector-grade knives.

In that sort of atmosphere it has been difficult and frustrating for the few men who continue to struggle and make *functional* combat-grade cutlery that *will work and won't break*. They only carry on with the understanding that the man in the field may have to stake his life on his blade. That critical motivation has been forgotten or ignored by some.

The tragedy is that the popular knife press — with its almost exclusive emphasis over the past decade on knives for the collector — has not only fostered a school of knifemaking that emphasizes art but has also spawned a whole generation of knifemakers who *don't know how* to make a blade that will stand the rigors of hand-to-hand combat. Most of these makers are well-intentioned and honestly don't realize what it takes to make a truly deadly and durable edged weapon.

As a result, knife users have been subjected to a mediocre level of performance in combat cutlery. Most of the people who carry blades into



Bill Bagwell turns base metal into combat magic at his forge near Marietta, Texas. Photo: Bill Guthrie

harm's way simply haven't had adequate information at their disposal to make a well-rounded decision about the knife they chose.

This is why I want to publicly thank Robert K. Brown and his dedicated staff for publishing *Soldier of Fortune Magazine*. It provides a unique opportunity for me — and other custom knifemakers — to air our views and opinions. He has provided an absolutely open forum for information. There have been no constraints placed on what I may say. None whatever.

Mine is not the only valid voice in this field and I'm assured by the magazine's policy that opposing viewpoints will be given space and consideration. As a result, people in this country who have need of a fine edged weapon can be exposed to differing viewpoints about combat knives. Men who make edged weapons and who have been unable to bring their work to the attention of the public are no longer without a way to let people know that they are out there.

*Soldier of Fortune Magazine* has, for the past 10 years, been maligned in some quarters and misunderstood in most. An editorial policy of candor and accuracy is not necessarily the way to make everyone happy. It is the only policy which will enable free men to make accurate, considered judgments relating to their own well-being and that of their nation. *Soldier of Fortune* exemplifies the meaning of freedom of the press and I am proud to be a very small part of Bob Brown's team. SOF is what freedom is all about. ✘

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Rely on SOF to continue its 10-year-strong commitment to principles you believe in. We'll continue to put our weight behind our veterans, our police forces and a strong national defense. We'll continue to press for resolution of the POW and MIA issues. We're expanding our "hot spot" coverage, we're intensifying our watch on other media, we're reviewing more books and films that interest our readers and we're pushing hard to test every new weapon that we can lay our hands on, regardless of who makes them and what we've got to do to get them.

---

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# SIXTH ANNUAL SOF CONVENTION AND COMBAT WEAPONS MILITARY EXPO



**SOLDIER OF FORTUNE** will hold its sixth annual convention at the Sahara Hotel and Casino, Las Vegas, Nevada, 18-22 September 1985. Preregistration fee is \$100.

This provides free admission to all seminars, Combat Weapons Military Expo, the banquet and all convention activities, with the exception of optional events. All conventioners must preregister. Write SOF CONVENTION '85, P.O. Box 693, Boulder, CO 80306. For hotel reservations, call the Sahara Hotel and Casino at (800) 634-6666 or the El Rancho at (702) 796-2222.

**COMBAT WEAPONS MILITARY EXPO** — Weapons, equipment and militaria vendors will display their wares on 20-22 September. Get a close-up, hands-on view of everything from aircraft to SCUBA gear, ammo to armor, and starlight scopes to IR camouflage. For information contact William Weber, 17100 Norwalk Blvd., Suite 116, Cerritos, CA 90701.

**FIREPOWER DEMONSTRATION** — SOF's weapons-demo team will once again stage the rock 'n' roll show on the firing line. Small-arms expert Peter Kokalis will scatter the sand with machine guns of nearly every description. And blast-master John Donovan will demonstrate his explosive toys.



**SEMINARS** — For the less adventurous, SOF will offer a fascinating schedule of seminars. Speakers will conduct information exchanges on such topics as knife fighting, automatic weapons, sniping, the French Foreign Legion, Afghanistan, Central America and the Middle East. And better military intel than you'll get anywhere else without a security clearance. Free to conventioners — \$25 for non-conventioners.

**THREE-GUN MATCH** — SOLDIER OF FORTUNE's action-packed Three-Gun Match, a world-class competition involving skill with pistol, rifle and shotgun will be held at the Desert Sportsman Rifle and Pistol Club, 18-20 September. Entrance is by invitation only and competitors must write for an application. Send SASE to Bill Brooks, 4901 Indian trail, Wilmington, NC 28403.

**PUGIL-STICK TOURNAMENT** — Gather every evening at poolside to see bloodthirsty bayonet fighters swing at each other to XO Dale Dye's exhortations. Five dollars per game will put you in the running. Sign up at the convention.

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**SCUBA CLASS** — SOF's underwater-demolitions expert John Donovan will conduct SCUBA classes for the beginning diver. All you need is fins, mask and snorkel — we'll provide the rest. Contact John Donovan, P.O. Box 486, Danver, IL 61732 and be PADI certified.



**RAPPELLING SEMINARS** — Professional wall-crawler Fritz Borchardt will once again be leaping and bounding through his exciting rappelling classes. And for those who participated last year and couldn't get enough, a tactical-rappelling class is being offered. Contact Fritz at P.O.Box 548, Nederland, CO 80466. Please send SASE.

**PARACHUTING COURSE** — Would-be winged warriors be warned! The Phantom Airborne Division will be conducting parachuting courses concurrently with the Convention. Two-day course for novices and returning jumpers. For information contact Cliff Albright, Phantom Division, P.O. Box 22505, Memphis, TN 38122.



**O**VER the past eight years, SOF's FULL AUTO column has provided the world's most widely read forum for the discussion of automatic weapons. I have been writing FULL AUTO for the last half of that period and have noticed the column attracts a wide range of interest levels from collectors to technologists. Collectors represent a significant proportion of those who follow FULL AUTO each month and those with a special interest in standard machine guns of the world are among the most intense fans. They should be interested in a historical perspective on one of the world's worst: the U.S. M60 General Purpose Machine Gun.

The M60's dismal history can be indirectly traced to 1943. American ordnance planners had become enamored of the concept of the "general purpose machine gun" as championed by the Germans with their MG 34/42 series guns. This was supposedly a machine gun light enough to be carried by one man at the squad level but capable, when mounted on a tripod, of fulfilling the sustained-fire role.

The Browning machine guns in U.S. service during World War II were heavy in comparison to their German rivals. The water-cooled M1917A1 and the air-cooled M1919A4 weighed 41 lbs. and 31 lbs., respectively. The MG 34 weighed 26.5 lbs. and its replacement, the MG 42, tipped the scales at only 25.5 lbs. In addition, the MG 42 made extensive use of easily produced, welded and riveted sheet-metal pressings.

A captured MG 42 was fired at Aberdeen Proving Ground in February 1943. Although the high cyclic rate and several other features were not viewed with favor, the many desirable characteristics led to a contract with Saginaw Steering Gear Division of General Motors Corporation for the development of two models of what was called the T24 light machine gun — essentially a conversion of the MG 42 to caliber .30-06.

A year later, a 10,000-round endurance test was started on the T24 at Aberdeen. The test was suspended after only 1,483 rounds had been fired with 50 malfunctions (mostly failures to eject). Subsequent studies indicated that the receiver had not been lengthened sufficiently to allow for the difference in length between the German 7.92mm cartridge and the U.S. caliber .30 M2 round. In addition, the rear lugs on the bolt body had not been formed far enough to the rear to allow the bolt sufficient space to recoil completely behind the ejection port in the bottom of the receiver, and the receiver yoke interfered with the cartridge guide plate by almost a quarter of an inch. Finally, the retracting handle had been made



# FULL AUTO

by Peter G. Kokalis

## The M60 Embarrassment



**The M60 GPMG mounted on the M122 tripod. Photo: Peter Kokalis**

**An M60 gunner from the Atlacatl Battalion waits for the Gs in El Salvador's deep bush. Photo: Peter Kokalis**



too short and thus interfered with the bolt during the recoil stroke. As extensive re-design would have been required, the project was terminated.

Concurrently, a Colt design based on the BAR, with modifications proposed by Springfield Armory, Auto-Ordnance Corporation and High Standard, called the T23, was also proving unsatisfactory.

An interim solution was sought by adoption of the M1919A6 on 17 February 1943. This was nothing more than the excellent M1919A4 equipped with a folding bipod, sheet-metal buttstock, light barrel, carrying handle and muzzle-booster cap/flash suppressor to increase the reserve power of the gun. Dependable and rugged, it was far superior to any other light machine gun tested. Unfortunately, the complete package weighed 32.5 lbs.

The first direct step in the development of the M60 was the design of the T44 7.92mm machine gun. This was, in essence, the German FG 42 (*Fallschirmjäger Gewehr* — paratrooper rifle — 1942) with the MG 42 belt-feed mechanism mounted to the left side of the receiver. For this project the U.S.

Ordnance Corps called upon the Bridge Tool & Die Works of Philadelphia — a firm that was long on engineering talent but had no previous weapons or end-user experience. The T44 machine gun (not to be confused with the T44 rifle which eventually became the M14), proved to be too light for the sustained-fire role and never went beyond the prototype stage.

By 1948, Bridge had fabricated the first model of a machine gun called the T52 under the supervision of their Chief Engineer, Lewis E. Sauerwein, Jr. Once again emphasis was placed on the salient features of both the FG 42 and the MG 42. Extensive use was made of formed sheet-metal components. The feed system and trigger mechanism of the MG 42, in modified form, were incorporated. The FG 42's operating rod and rotating bolt, originally taken from the World War I Lewis gun, were also altered and used.

The T52 was changed a number of times, finally resulting in a prototype called the T52E5. The first version — called the T52E1 — had a wooden forearm and buttstock. The trigger-housing assembly, bipod, muzzle device and front sight were those of the FG 42. By the time of the T52E3, the wooden parts had been replaced with stamped sheet metal. Eventually, rubber coverings were used on metal parts handled by the operator to reduce heat transfer. The T52E3 was developed in both light-barrel and heavy-barrel versions. Disintegrating "push-through" links (later adopted as the M13 link) were designed. The headspace was fixed (always a bone of contention with the Browning machine guns) and the barrel was of the quick-change type. Operation was by a rather unique gas-expansion and cut-off system.

After the T52E5 appeared, a mass-production feasibility study was conducted by the Inland Division of the General Motors Corporation, an experienced defense contractor. The Inland version was called the T16E3. Service tests were conducted at Fort Benning and at Fort Greely, Alaska. Weighing 23 lbs. and chambered for the 7.62x51mm NATO (T65) cartridge, it was type-classified by the Army Ordnance Corps as the M60

*Continued on page 147*

# SHERWOOD...PRODUCTS WITH A FORWARD VIEW

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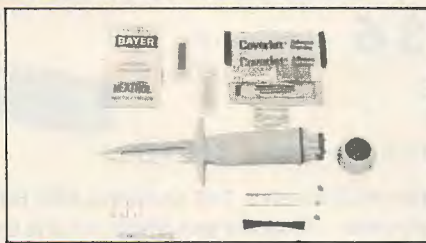
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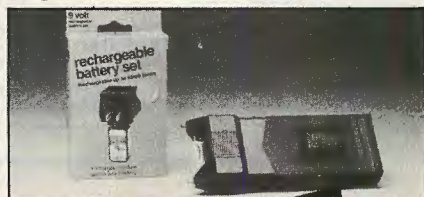
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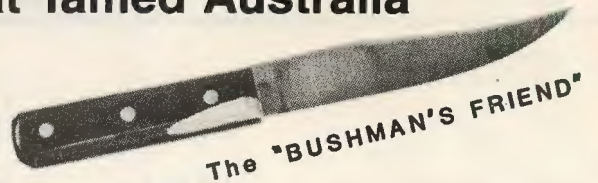
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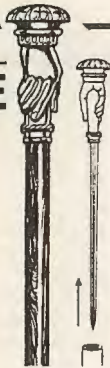
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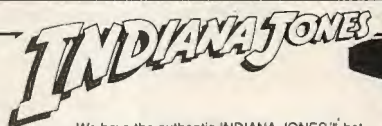


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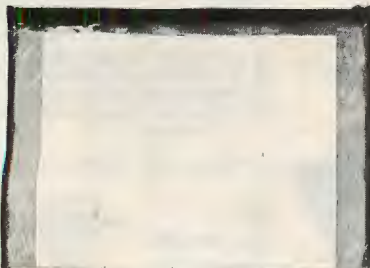
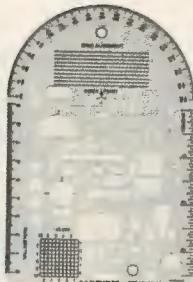


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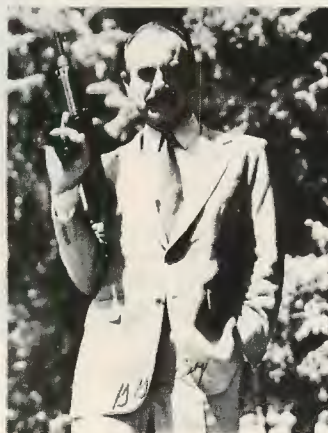
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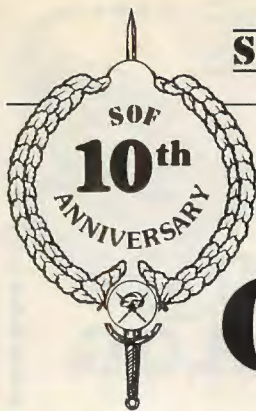
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# GUNS OF GRENADA

## Communist Cache in the Caribbean

by Robert K. Brown

ONE way you can tell a Workers' Paradise is by the guns that guard the gates. Like Chicken Man, they're everywhere. State Security thugs have them. Vodka-soaked soldiers have them. Even "construction workers" like the ones Castro sent to peaceful Grenada have them.

If you want to eliminate a Workers' Paradise forming in your backyard, you simply take the guns away from the construction workers and disarm the radicals sworn to protect them like the Revolutionary Military Council of Grenada's New Jewel Movement. At that point — if you're still interested after the smoke of a successful combat operation has cleared — you've got to get into the area and examine the weapons to see how the communists export world revolution.

Most Americans who anxiously followed the Grenada operation via the minuscule access allowed to the media realized military units from neighboring island-states joined U.S. soldiers and Marines in wresting Grenada from communist control and rescuing American students at the island's medical school. But few realized the extent to which the tiny, idyllic island had become an armed camp thanks to Soviet puppets in Cuba. That's because they couldn't analyze *the guns* before the Workers' Paradise was plastered by our troops.

That's also why SOF correspondents rushed to the island as soon as we could get them there. We knew better than to trust the hastily obtained TV, newswire and DOD pictures of weapons caches on Grenada for the real story of Soviet influence in the area. Most reporters think all guns are the same. They aren't. I intended to prove that with a trip to Grenada almost before the smoke of battle had cleared.

Weapons location and identification was a priority when I rushed off an Air Force Hercules on Grenada's airstrip and slipped away from escorts to begin my own investigation. I wanted to know what kind of hardware was on site, and what means the invasion force had considered necessary to neutralize enemy weapons.

Feeling a little like an archeologist, I

found the Guns of Grenada could be clearly traced through three distinct layers relating to development of the island and the arrival of the communists. My list had three columns titled Pre-communist, Communist and (happily) Post-communist.

Pre-communist Grenada was — according to its guns — an idyllic, post-colonial tourist island whose major security problems were posed by intoxicated natives and the ever-present threat of post-examination



Multibarreled 23mm anti-aircraft guns were another gift from the Soviets to the people of Grenada.

Brown inspects cases of shiny new Soviet F1 grenades.



riots at the medical school. Available guns were limited to used British police weapons. They were bolstered by a couple of World War I-vintage LMGs which likely constituted the Grenadan police version of coastal artillery.

Webley break-open revolvers chambering .455 Brit ammo — fitted with lanyards and loops — were a large part of the Pre-communist artifacts I found. Over beer provided by grateful natives I conjured up images of the saddle-soaped British colonial officers who carried such weapons. Lieutenant Fauntleroy-Smithers stands boldly before his cowering troops with one hand on his hip and his Webley in the military target-rest position.

"Jenkins, if you don't return to that trench, I shall have to shoot you!" You get the picture.

Pre-communist Grenadan security policemen also had a good supply of Federal Laboratories 203A 38mm Riot Guns. In the U.S. the term usually means a lethal scattergun for SWAT teams, but in peaceable Pre-communist Grenada these "Riot Guns" fired nothing more dangerous than CS gas, probably designed to quell rowdy bands of celebrating medical students. For heavier duties, the Grenadan police had a few Lewis guns.

From a childhood spent watching war movies in theaters, I developed an irrational affection for the British MG that looks so much like a truck axle with a pie plate on top. Lawrence of Arabia would have felt right at home with the guns of Pre-communist Grenada.

Then came the commies.

American students on the island said the island changed character when the Cubans arrived to bolster Maurice Bishop and his Marxist New Jewel pals. Castro's minions brought the second layer in the Guns of Grenada. The island arsenals began to swell with ComBloc weapons ranging from infantry rifles and anti-tank weapons to heavy AA cannon and armored cars. Then there was that lo-o-o-ong airstrip. Only the 82nd Airborne and the 24th Marine Amphibious Unit prevented the addition of MiGs.

But the New Jewel crazies and their Cuban supporters were fomenting revolution on Grenada. And what weapon symbolizes revolution? The AK! If you said anything else, go buy a copy of *Good Housekeeping* and let me get on with this narrative. I found crates of Moscow Typewriters ... over 1,600 of them on Grenada.

The communists had supplied plenty of ammo for them. DOD figures indicate capture of more than 5 million rounds of .30-cal. cartridges. Even discounting some rounds designed for a few .303 British Enfields, some .30-cal. Carbines and 7.62mm Russian Rimmed for several Mosin-Nagants dug up by U.S. troops, there were still *millions* of rounds of 7.62mm Com-

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**SHIPPING COST**

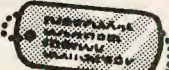
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**Black Commando Dog Tag Set —**

A Kaufman's Exclusive  
 2 GI stainless steel tags, specially treated to be non glare flat black plus 2 black (4" and 24") ball chains \$5.00/set



**Regulation GI Dog Tags—**

set of 2 stainless steel tags and 2 stainless chains (4" and 24") \$3.00/each  
 Want us to print them? WE'LL PRINT ANYTHING up to 6 lines and 15 spaces per line.  
 Printing ..... only \$1.00 per tag (\$2.00 per set)



PLEASE, NO DOG TAG IMPRINTING ORDERS BY TELEPHONE.

**Military Elite Distinctive Dog Tags—**

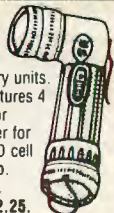


We've taken the official distinctive insignia of elite professional troops and affixed them to a genuine GI tag. Sold with 4" stainless chain...perfect for use as a keychain or worn with your dog tag set. Choose the elite dog tag of: Special Forces; Airborn/Rangers; Paratroopers; USMC Recon; USMC Globe & Anchor; 101st Airborne; or 82nd Airborne \$6.00/each.

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

**Angle Head Flashlite—**

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



**NEW for 1985!**  
 **Camouflage Angle Head Flashlight —** Styled exactly as above except that switch is protected and body is in new Woodland Camouflage Pattern. Brand New \$9.95/each; 2 for \$18.95.

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Bloc. Maybe Castro was worried about frat parties at the med school getting out of hand. The ammo came to Grenada in crates marked "RICE." That's right. Fifty pounds of rice in a one-cubic-foot box. Who would be suspicious?

Second-rank communist weapons were also deep in the second layer of the Guns of Grenada — RMC militia were issued Mosin-Nagants and SKSs — but the real proof of communist intentions on the island lay closer to the top. Stacked on the cases of grenades and around the multibarreled 23mm AA guns were lots of first-line RPG-7s. Since they had anti-armor weapons, the Grenadan communists apparently decided they also needed at least two BTR-60 IFVs.

As you connect the dots, this spot-check of the improved inventory draws an ugly picture. The Grenadan armory changed over a period of months from a modest arms locker — with probably fewer than 1,000 small arms — to an arsenal capable of equipping well over 10 percent of Grena-

da's men, women and children. In fact, there were enough assault rifles, machine guns, submachine guns, pistols and crew-served weapons to arm about half the adult males on the whole island. Given the avowed purpose of the RMC — self-defense in an entirely peaceful archipelago — I can only call that overkill.

The top level of the Guns of Grenada consisted of weapons brought onto the island when the combined forces of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States and the United States of America blasted across Grenada. Having some advance knowledge of what Maurice Bishop and the RMC had laid away for a rainy day, the combined force carried enough hardware to hit like a small hurricane.

M16s, FN-FALs, MAGs, Sterling SMGs, Dragon missiles for the APCs and fortified points, M2 HB .50-calibers and the full panoply of machines for movement in the air and on land and sea hit the Grenada coast. The great majority of weapons in Post-Communist Grenada were infantry weapons. Despite the recent ComBloc arms build-up, little of it had been issued . . . yet.

The precision of the raid was shown by the high percentage of sniper rifles. Simplest were those M16s mounted with that slick little three-power Colt scope. Most of the users were trained battlefield snipers. Their job was to watch for RTOs, officers, noncoms, crew-served weapons and other snipers of the RMC. Some snipers on Grenada carried M21 ART-equipped, accurized M14s but they managed to stay out of range of photographers.

An interesting — but little-known — weapon employed by U.S. forces on Grenada was Klaus Horstkamp's .50-caliber Browning long-range precision rifle. Throwing 500-grain bronze bullets at 3,400 fps, these weapons were primarily employed by Special Ops types involved in the raid. Navy SEALs claim several easy 600-meter, one-shot kills, according to the inventor. (More information on the Horstkamp rifle is available from the dealer: Stroessner & Hunting Firearms, Inc., Dept. SOF, 1218 Harrison Rd., Colorado Springs, CO 80906.)

These deposits of Free World arms marked the end of communist Grenada the same way ashes marked the end of Pompeii. If even a fraction of the communist firepower on the island had been effectively employed — and if the Point Salines airstrip had been completed — the allied strike on communists in the Grenada invasion would have been more like the eruption of Vesuvius.

Modest force employed by the international group coupled with precise ordnance delivery by well-trained troops kept that from happening.

What I concluded on Grenada was that if we'd waited even six months — or done it another way — the ground would've been littered with allied aircraft, armor and corpses.

And that would've been another kind of story told by the Guns of Grenada. ☒

## GRENADA'S ARMS INVENTORY

### Rifles and Machine Guns

Soviet AK-47 Assault Rifles	1,626
Soviet 7.62mm PKM Machine Guns	9
Czech Model 52 Rifles	1,120
Enfield Rifles	58
Simonov Carbines (SKS)	4,074
Bren LMGs	2
Mosin-Nagant Rifles	2,432
M3A1 Submachine Guns	32
Sterling Submachine Guns	55
Sten MkII Submachine Guns	17
Soviet PPSH41 Submachine Guns	180
Miscellaneous Sidearms	300
.22 Caliber Rifles	31
Shotguns	300

### Crew Served Weapons

73mm SPG-9 Recoilless Guns	8
ZU-23mm Anti-Aircraft Guns	12
DShK 12.7mm Machine Guns	1
Soviet 82mm Mortar	10

### Ammunition

7.62mm	5,516,600 rds.
73mm	162 rds.
82mm Mortar	8,962 rds.
14.5mm	2,320 rds.
12.7mm Soviet HMGs	29,120 rds.
23mm Anti-Aircraft	
Gun Ammunition	86,332 rds.
57mm Rocket Grenades	366 rds.
75mm	940 rds.
Dynamite	1,200 sticks
Flares	24,768

### Miscellaneous Weapons

RPG 7 (Rocket Propelled Grenades)	6
RPG 2 (Rocket Propelled Grenades)	46
Federal Tear Gas Gun	8
Flare Guns	8
Grenades	1,824

### Vehicles

BTR-60 Armored Fighting Vehicles	2
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Figures courtesy of Department of Defense.

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Flexible cable temples, gold frames.  
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**Change-A-Matic Aviator Glasses**  
Lenses darken outdoors, change back to lighter tint indoors, gold frames. A \$30.00 value only \$14.95. 2 pairs for \$28.90.

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A \$30.00 value only \$14.95. 2 pairs for \$28.90.

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The **Combat Goggle** is designed to deflect fragmentation. In actual demonstrations, sample lenses have deflected .22 caliber long rifle bullets at three feet without penetrating the lens (see also *Soldier of Fortune* article, March, 1985, page 10.) To enhance sighting ability, all Carbonite® 360 lenses are coated to reduce double imagery and have been spectrographically corrected to give optimum contrast and definition from bright sunny days on the desert or snow covered mountain tops to the thick of a heavily overgrown jungle.

The **Combat Spectacle** frame is made of shock absorbing nylon with interchangeable and adjustable cable/paddle temples. Frame colors are black, navy, and demi brown. Special nylon spectacle frames also available in mountain climber style (Expedition) with detachable leather side shields.

The **Shooters Spectacle** is a metal frame in either gold or black, with interchangeable lens capability. Lens color tints are: gray, brown, amber, vermilion, and clear. Lens are made of the 2mm Carbonite® material for the ultimate in eye protection.



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- # 3023—**MI-SIERRA COMBAT SPECTACLE** Nylon frame, black, demi-brown, red, navy, bordeaux. Cadmium Oxide lens. Interchangeable temple..... \$39.95
- # 3024—**MI-ADVENTURER COMBAT SPECTACLE** Nylon frames in black (interchangeable temples) and demi-brown (straight temples). Lens—clear, gray, amber, vermilion ..... \$29.95
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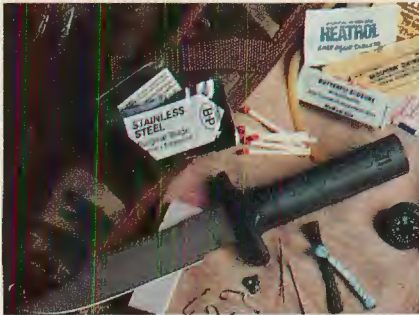
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**#4108 — Lifeknife Trailmaster.** The Volkswagen of the Lifeknives. 5¼" 440 stainless-steel blade with sawback, super-tough molded VALOX thermoplastic handle with survival codes, watertight storage space, screw-cap with precision luminous liquid compass, camouflage CORDURA nylon sheath and sharpening stone. Complete survival and first-aid kit, including fishline, hooks, sinkers, snare wire, needles, bandages, ointment, sterile surgical blade. **\$31.95**



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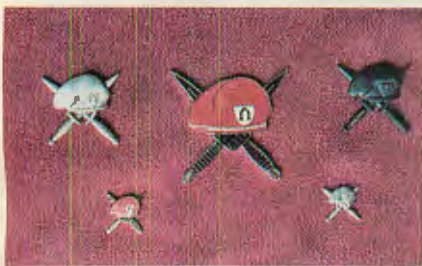
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# TURNCOAT TALES

by Richard Becker

## Was There a Phantom Blooper? And Who Were Salt & Pepper?

**A**LMOST immediately after they arrived in Vietnam, American servicemen began to hear the stories. They got their unit assignments, they got their area indoctrination briefings, they got their VD lectures, and — as soon as they hit the hooch for the first time — they got a frightening earful of stories about Americans *fighting with the enemy*. Added to the trauma of being a “fuckin’ new guy” were comments like these from the veteran bush-beasts.

“Better get your shit together in a hurry, Newbie. The Phantom Blooper’s been knockin’ the piss outta our patrols.”

“Don’t shit yerself if you see a white dude and a splib dude shootin’ at you in a fire fight, Boot. We got old Salt & Pepper workin’ in our AO.”

Incredulous questions led the FNG to learn he might actually encounter deserters on patrols; turncoat Americans who wanted to kill him. For the sake of his sanity, he concluded it was either all bullshit or he was fighting one crazy war. He was correct either way.

They were among the most persistent and pervasive rumors of the war in Vietnam. They concerned renegade Americans who had become elusive figures — phantoms of the jungle — seemingly able to slip in and out of sight at will. Regular reports from units operating in all of Vietnam’s war zones said Americans fighting with VC or NVA units sniped at patrols, hijacked vehicles, made propaganda broadcasts over bullhorns, led full-blown assaults on allied positions and otherwise aided the enemy. Since few American soldiers could offer any proof to substantiate the rumors and jungle fire fights rarely provided a clear view of the enemy, there was a tendency among field commanders to categorize the rumors as “interesting but unlikely.”

But were they rumors? Unfortunately, they were not.

Marine Force Recon teams in I Corps periodically reported spotting “Salt & Pepper” in the field. Photo: DOD



When the story of a "white VC" first broke in the American press in the late 1960s, it was discounted. The very idea of American deserters fighting under the communist flag in Vietnam seemed incomprehensible. Many Americans — in and out of uniform — wrote it off as fantasy from bored journalists with a belly-full of *ba-muoi-ba* and a yen for sensational copy. When the war in Vietnam ended, so did the rumors of American turncoats in combat. And then Robert Garwood bobbed to the surface in early 1979 to rekindle the fire of indignation. His 14 years of captivity, which involved active collaboration with the enemy for which the U.S. Marine Corps court-martialed and convicted him, convinced many Vietnam veterans that they may not have been seeing phantoms in the jungle after all.

The Garwood affair caused a serious re-examination of the subject (See "Bobby Garwood: Traitor or Victim?" SOF, September 1979). Declassified documents from the Central Intelligence Agency and Defense Intelligence Agency obtained through the Freedom of Information Act confirmed that convicted collaborator Robert R. "Bobby" Garwood was *not* the only U.S. serviceman to actively collaborate with the communists during the Vietnam War. The rumors had some basis in fact. Other Americans took treachery much further and *did* turn weapons against their own countrymen.

The first reports seemed to surface from Marine patrols in I Corps which regularly indicated turncoats were in action beginning in 1967. Despite command efforts to put a lid on it and avoid sensational publicity, the word spread rapidly among the squads and platoons who were most likely to encounter American deserters turned communist fighters. It also spread south of the DMZ and rapidly became part of the lore that grew up around the war.

Reports declassified since the war indicate *at least five Americans* switched sides and actively worked with both Viet Cong and North Vietnamese units. Many of those reports contain eyewitness accounts from grunts in the field as well as sketches drawn by the men who claim to have seen or been fired on by American deserters. There are a few oddballs, but the reports and descriptions run curiously to type and deal with nicknames that are familiar to most veterans. The Pentagon refuses to match these with specific names, but they acknowledge the existence of such turncoats as "Salt & Pepper" and "Porkchop," — *noms de guerre* that were invented by U.S. troops after regular sightings.

Arguably the most infamous of the confirmed traitors was a tag-team labeled "Salt & Pepper." Marines and soldiers reported sighting them on sweeps near the DMZ or the Laotian border from 1967 to 1974. The pair became legend in the northern provinces and the subject of heated speculation concerning their origins. Naturally, the Marines claimed they must be a "couple of

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Richard Becker is a two-tour veteran of Vietnam, where he earned four personal decorations and was wounded in action. He has been researching and writing on the turncoat issue since 1970, and currently resides in a Washington, D.C. suburb.

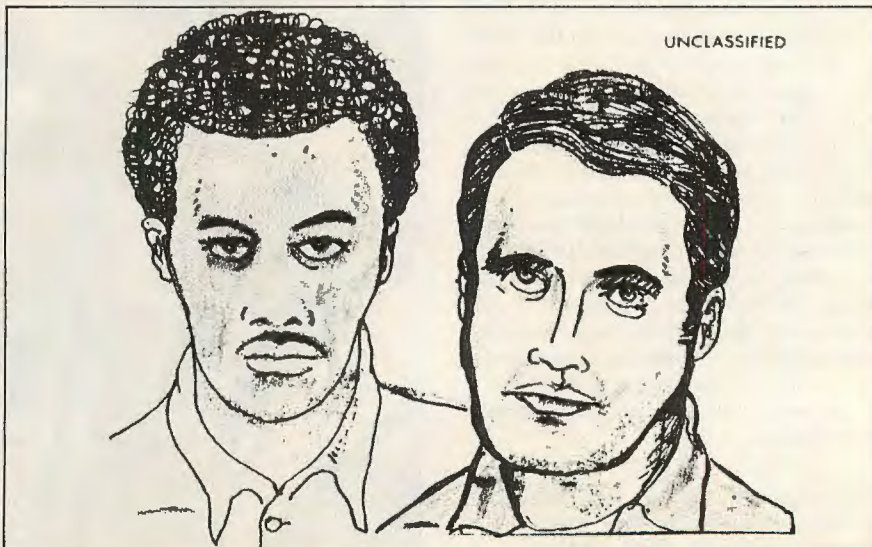
doggies" and the soldiers felt sure Salt & Pepper were "two jarheads that got fed up with the chickenshit."

Marine Force Recon Teams penetrating deep into uncontrolled territory reported seeing the pair on a number of occasions and described Salt & Pepper as "wearing NVA web-gear and carrying AKs." They were also frequently reported to be working with enemy units in the coastal lowlands of Quang Ngai Province where on several occasions they narrowly escaped pursuing U.S. and South Vietnamese troops.

Their escapades were communicated to disgruntled Americans at home through AP and UPI wire stories. The people in Vietnam even got to read about Salt & Pepper in the pages of *Pacific Stars & Stripes*. There is some difference between those reports and reality.

Intelligence summaries indicate that up until the summer of 1974, the men — always employed as a team — were primarily involved in non-battle situations such as preparation and dissemination of propaganda and procurement or transport of supplies for enemy units. In August of 1974, ARVN intelligence reported both men had participated in an attack on a government outpost east of Quang Ngai City. A Vietnamese after-action report, made available to U.S. officials, noted that the actual attack was under the control of "a Caucasian and a Negro American."

**All that is known about the faces of the famous turncoat duo "Salt & Pepper" came to light in this declassified sketch from the DIA files. Photo: Defense Intelligence Agency**



South of that area another defector, described as a burly six-footer with blond hair, was operating as a sort of VC logistics expert. The Americans knew him as "Porkchop" — a name derived from the bushy sideburns he wore to cover burn scars on his face. Porkchop worked almost exclusively in Binh Dinh Province.

U.S. Army investigators believe he was the most active and — judging from the allegations against him — probably the most successful of all the American defectors. Porkchop is credited with such incredible escapades as flagging down military vehicles and then hijacking them at gunpoint. In his most daring venture on behalf of the communist enemy he stole two U.S.-supplied M113 Armored Personnel Carriers from an ARVN armor pool by simply chaining one to the other and driving them out the compound gates.

Americans were always easily identified in Vietnam's sea of Asian faces but Salt & Pepper and Porkchop apparently traveled freely and entered major urban areas with no real trouble. Reliable American and Vietnamese sources report those three and several other deserters made their way into Danang for short R&Rs from field operations. Defense officials refuse to confirm such reports but they concede that American turncoats must have had assistance and protection from NLF infrastructures in major population centers.

Still, their behavior seemed carefree in areas like Danang which were crawling with ARVN and American military units. Two known turncoats were reported riding around the city during the 1970 Christmas season. Efforts by U.S. and Vietnamese Military Police to apprehend them failed.

And no one came close to capturing a turncoat demolitions man called "Tex," despite his bold incursions into allied areas. The traitor with a Texas accent liked to enter U.S. compounds and plant explosives. His name has been linked with reports of sabotage at a U.S. Marine Ammunition Supply Point outside Danang in 1969 although the official version of this devastating incident denies any such activity.

If approached by a sentry, Tex would launch into a carefully planned cover story and strike up a conversation with his unsuspecting countryman, putting him at ease with down-home patter. Then he was gone: only an explosion in a supply or munitions stockpile reminded the Americans that he had been there.

"Tex" was mostly reported active in the III and IV Corps areas. According to one source, he was wounded in a shoot-out near Bien Hoa in late 1969 and disappeared from sight. No further reports followed, and as far as is known, he was never apprehended.

Along with Pepper of the infamous duo in I Corps, another black — strangely, he did not acquire a nickname — was rumored to be active in a Central Highlands area close to the Cambodian border. Although accounts of his activities are contradictory, he is reported to have deserted from the 1st Cavalry Division. The story indicates he was wounded in a fire fight, captured by the NVA and nursed back to health. Following his recuperation he was persuaded to switch sides. U.S. intelligence agents later heard that he had married a Vietnamese woman and settled down to raise a family. Such reports were out of character with Vietnamese unwillingness to accept foreigners into their culture, but the rumors persisted.

And then there was the infamous "Phantom Blooper" of practically everywhere in Vietnam. This ghostly, unconfirmed figure was clearly the most well-known and frequently reported supposed turncoat of the entire war. He was seen everywhere from the DMZ down to the tip of the Delta. His nickname came from reports that he invariably carried an M79 grenade launcher (Blooper) which he reportedly used with great accuracy on American troops. One Marine veteran who first heard of the Phantom Blooper in late 1967 speculates that he was actually an NVA or VC who had become quite adept at handling a Blooper.

"In those days," he says, "we wouldn't have believed anyone but a well-trained and experienced American could be so accurate with a Blooper. That's likely why everyone speculated that he was an American deserter who took his favorite weapon with him."

The Phantom Blooper was reported to be most active in the AO known as the "Arizona Territory" to 5th Marines, many of whom believed the spectre may have been a former Marine. Although troopers reported the Phantom Blooper to be a Caucasian, he could easily have been a tall VC or NVA who had picked up an M79 from a dead American. In the battle for Hue during the Tet Offensive of 1968, Marines under fire from an M79 were able to kill an enemy they had tagged the Phantom Blooper only to discover he was an NVA with a captured M79.

Despite that, many Marine veterans are firmly convinced that the Phantom Blooper was a turncoat American and that *he was none other than Garwood*. That allegation, like so many others, was never brought out at Garwood's trial.



**Robert R. Garwood disappeared from his unit in 1965 and resurfaced in 1979. Although he claimed to have been a POW, he was convicted of being a collaborator. Photo: USMC**

An increased willingness to talk about the Vietnam War has not led the Department of Defense to share what it knows about American turncoats. Pentagon officials continue to be closemouthed on the subject of defectors and collaborators. That's likely why so many Americans were taken by surprise when Lieutenant General Eugene F. Tighe, former director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, finally conceded in his June 1979 testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee that "there remains the possibility that a defector" — later identified as Army PFC McKinley Nolan of Washington, Texas — "may still be alive in Southeast Asia" (See "Alive in Cambodia? McKinley Nolan, Turncoat," SOF, February 1980).

Previously classified documents indicate that Nolan, while attached to Alpha Co., 216th Battalion, 1st Infantry Division, went over to the Viet Cong in November 1967 while stationed in the Saigon area. The circumstances relating to his defection were not provided, but he was reportedly accompanied by a common-law wife who is listed variously as "Vietnamese" or "Cambodian."

Nolan's activities with the VC were not as dramatic as those of other turncoats. He gave voluntary written and recorded propaganda statements which were used on leaflets and aired over Radio Hanoi and Liberation (VC) Radio. He is known to have lived in Tay Ninh Province for a time, and was also spotted in other areas close to the Cambodian border. During this period, a number of American and Vietnamese POWs locked up in camps near the border reported seeing Nolan but remembered that he kept his distance from the other POWs.

At some point Nolan became dissatisfied with the VC and decided to throw in with the Khmer Rouge battling in Cambodia. Exactly why he joined the Cambodian communists is unknown, but in November 1973 he was reported with KR forces occupying Mean Chey Village. Nolan is said to have had at least one close encounter with government troops that almost resulted in his capture by soldiers from the Cambodian 1st Shock Battalion in early 1974.

The last reliable sighting of Nolan — still in Cambodia — was in November 1974. A former intelligence officer who served in the border area said recently that the Khmer Rouge "planted Nolan beneath six feet of terra firma" once he had outlived his usefulness.

One of the more bizarre reported cases of defection to the enemy involved a young

Navy Hospital Corpsman named LaPorte. In 1968 he was assigned to a Marine Force Reconnaissance unit in I Corps. According to former team members, LaPorte changed sides following a covert parachute insertion into enemy territory.

Maneuvering to be the last man to jump, LaPorte reportedly steered his chute away from the DZ and landed in trees behind the unit. Once on the ground he immediately opened fire on his former buddies. The surprised Marines returned fire but were forced to withdraw and leave LaPorte when they were attacked by a large enemy force.

The Recon Team was extracted to tell their incredible story in a classified debriefing. Marine G-2 found the incident important enough to launch an investigation which revealed LaPorte had given considerable thought to defecting prior to the mission. He had given most of his personal effects to a hooch maid, saying he wouldn't be back and wouldn't need them any more.

LaPorte's ultimate fate is unknown. Shortly after his defection, he was reported to be traveling with a local enemy unit, but later dropped from sight. There is no record of his being encountered by Marine patrols

working that area. The Navy and Marine Corps, however, apparently still have LaPorte on their minds. His case file is "still open."

General Tighe's 1979 testimony noted that the reports of Vietnamese refugees have "alleged first-hand sighting knowledge" of Americans staying behind in southern Vietnam after the war. He went on to say that some of these refugee reports "allude to deserters." That was partially corroborated in mid-1983 when a Bangkok-based U.S. diplomat revealed to the media that some U.S. deserters and defectors were then living in North Vietnam and that the U.S. Army knew who they were.

Robert Garwood was clearly not the only defector during the Vietnam War, but the prominence of his case served to refocus public attention on a long-neglected aspect of the war. It also prompted a number of vets to come forward with tales of even

**U.S. troops in Vietnam were accustomed to using M79s on the enemy, but when they got hit by them, the rumors flew. Tales of the "Phantom Blooper" cropped up all over South Vietnam. Photo: DOD**

more defectors.

In late 1979, a Vietnam Veteran, then still on active duty, told of a tall, freckle-faced Marine who he said was responsible for at least six American casualties in the Khe Sanh area during March 1971. This defector is said to have led RPG teams from the NVA 17th Regiment against U.S. armor supporting Lam Son 719, the ARVN incursion into Laos. A second source has since corroborated this tale and said that this deserter was later killed in a clash with troops from the Hac Bao (Black Panther) Company of the ARVN 1st Infantry Division.

Another veteran who served in the II Corps area told of a black traitor in the Central Highlands who worked with the communists. He went the whole route — wearing black pajamas, carrying weapons and traveling with bodyguards. He reportedly helped in offensive operations, wrote leaflets and made broadcast appeals to other GIs.

Not all defectors and deserters in Vietnam stayed in the countryside or became involved in combat operations. It was common knowledge among in-country GIs that a number of deserters were hiding out in the





Saigon/Cholon area as well as in a few of the other larger cities. Many dabbled in the drug trade and — to a lesser extent — the arms trade. They got away with such activities with the assistance of ARVN police, who conveniently looked the other way for a share of the take. A few of these individuals were apprehended by Military Police, but most managed to maintain a comfortable lifestyle by manipulating the black market.

Unofficial estimates place their number at between 150 and 200. None are officially known to have turned themselves in during the evacuation of Saigon in April 1975. State Department officials privately concede, however, that some may have managed to slip aboard evacuation aircraft during the chaos and confusion of the last days and returned to the United States. Military people in this category — DOD officials refuse to identify any of them — are still considered to be deserters rather than defectors or cross-overs. It's likely some of them worked with or for the communists as a matter of expediency and survival in an alien environment.

It was all very low-key, but the American military did not sit idly by and ignore reports of active collaborators during the war. In 1971-72, a small U.S. Army Military Intelligence detachment was based at Danang with the specific mission of tracking down

**Dense vegetation made visual contact with the enemy an uncommon occurrence. Imagine a soldier's surprise when he saw another American firing at him. Photo: DOD**

and either capturing or eliminating "Salt & Pepper." The team had a chopper at its disposal around the clock and was backed up by ground support vehicles enabling them to move quickly when sightings were reported. On several occasions, according to a wire service story, both defectors were almost apprehended. In one instance, they had been reported dead and villagers pointed out a grave which allegedly contained the body of a "white VC." The remains were exhumed and sent to a lab for study by forensic experts who determined them to be those of an Asian male.

All speculation became rhetorical following the January 1973 ceasefire and the subsequent withdrawal of U.S. forces from Vietnam. Reports of American defectors and turncoats were passed to the Joint Casualty Resolution Center (JCRC) in Thailand, which also headed the search for Americans listed as POW/MIA. The JCRC was later moved to Hawaii, where it is presently functioning.

Attention was refocused on Vietnam War defectors again recently through the much-

publicized revelations of a veteran identified in wire stories in early 1984 only as "Marvin." According to reporters, Marvin told them one of his duties as a member of an "assassination team" in Vietnam was to track down and kill American defectors and turncoat collaborators. There are a number of inconsistencies in Marvin's story, however, and many Viet Vets are reluctant to accept his tale.

There are some interesting, perhaps explanatory, parallels between the course of the Vietnam War and the proliferation of deserter-turncoat stories. During the early years of the war, U.S. soldiers went to Vietnam with a sense of purpose and motivation. Even if a GI *thought* he saw a white man shooting at U.S. troops he only whispered about it. As the war effort became bogged down and public support deteriorated, the rumor-mill moved into high gear and it was easier to accept that Americans may have defected to actively fight against "an unjust U.S. involvement in Vietnam."

We may never know whether or not many of the rumored traitors were real or just colorful images conjured up by young men thrown into a war they couldn't understand. Whatever the truth is, no one who fought the shadowy war in Vietnam will deny there were phantoms in the jungle. ✕





Spain's  
Airborne Elite

**CAZADORES  
ESPAÑOLES**

by Leroy Thompson



Spanish Parachute Brigade pocket crests: top (left to right) — Parachute Brigade, Engineer Group, Parachute Instructor; bottom (left to right) — Para Brigade HQ, Logistics Group, Artillery Group.



Parachute Brigade insignia.



This Spanish Air Force para sergeant wears the black beret with Air Force para beret badge. Rank insignia and the parachutist's brevet are on the right breast.

WHETHER it's terrorist bands raising hell in Madrid or tank formations rolling across the borders of Spain, aggressors will find they have a tough bull by some very sharp horns. The first matadors into the ring when Spanish sovereignty or interests are challenged will likely arrive from the air over the enemy's heads.

Madrid's Ministry of Defense keys the nation's offensive combat capability on airborne troops. The nation maintains some very capable parachute formations which train hard to live up to the last three words of the *Paracaidista* battle cry: "Vencer o morir!" (Win or Die!) Although Spanish parachute units existed as early as the Spanish Civil War, Spain's airborne troops commemorate 23 February 1954 as their founding date. On that day, the First Parachute *Bandara* "Roger De Flor" (named after the legendary mercenary captain of the Grand Catalán Company) made their first mass jump.

Other *bandaras* (roughly equivalent to a U.S. battalion) were added over the next decade along with support elements, and in 1965 the Spanish airborne forces were organized into a Parachute Brigade. This unit is deployed as the pointy end of the nation's combat power.

Spanish paras (*cazador*) have made operational jumps in the Western Sahara and *bandaras* continue to be deployed periodically to such places as Tenerife and Spanish Morocco. The Spanish Parachute Brigade currently consists of three *bandaras*, a Headquarters Group, Logistics Group, Engineer Group, Artillery Group, and other support elements. The Spanish paras are professional soldiers who expect to serve overseas and train rigorously to handle special missions.

Paras rank with the legendary Spanish Foreign Legion as one of Spain's principal intervention units. Such high potential for combat or deployment to one of the world's hot spots requires training in air-assault tactics as well as airborne operations. The principal para assault helicopter is the UH-1H Huey. Most jumps are made from C-212 Aviocars, which can carry 18 fully equipped paratroops. Current tactical plans call for Spanish paras to be deployed to combat in increments much like the U.S. 82nd Airborne Division or the French 11th DP. *La Brigada Paracaidista* could be expanded to division strength during an emergency when the Spanish airborne school would be operating at full capacity.

Parachute training for would-be *cazadores*

is provided at *La Escuela Militar de Paracaidistas del Ejército del Aire de Alcantarilla* (the Air Force parachute school). Although it's officially administered by the Spanish Air Force, para instructors are drawn from highly experienced men in both the Army and Air Force. Spanish Army Special Forces troops, Navy U.E.B.C. specialists (a unit equivalent to U.S. Navy SEALs) and others who require parachute capability for special missions are all trained at the central school. All graduates are authorized to wear the black beret which marks them as members of Spain's airborne fraternity.

Exchange parachute training is carried out with France, the USA, Argentina, Portugal and several other countries. The basic parachute course is a fairly typical military static-line regimen but SpecWar soldiers generally graduate to advanced free-fall courses.

The basic free-faller's brevet is awarded to those who've jumped from under 5,000 meters and the advanced free-fall (HALO) brevet is presented to those who successfully jump from higher altitudes. The advanced insignia—a stylized free-faller with "HALO" inscribed below—is highly respected throughout the Spanish military.



Spanish Foreign Legion parachutist's brevet (top) and Spanish Foreign Legion Special Operations Unit insignia (bottom).



Insignia for one of the Special Operations Companies.

In addition to the Army's Parachute Brigade, the Spanish Air Force maintains three parachute companies under its direct control. The Spanish Navy has its "SEAL" units, including the crack "Comandante Gorordo" team and the Army has the *Unidades de Operaciones Especiales* (Special Operations Units). Each of these unconventional warfare units has a mission that roughly matches their equivalent formation in the American order of battle.

They are normally organized into company-sized units and stationed at strategic points inside and outside of Spain's borders. At present two SF companies are assigned to each of Spain's military regions as part of the Territorial Defense Brigade. Only one SF company is assigned to the Balearic Islands but an entire Special Operations Group is based in the country's 1st Military Region which includes the capitol.

As in the American Army, Spanish SF troopers are primarily selected after volunteering from other airborne units. They wear green berets much like the ones worn by their U.S. counterparts. Each trooper receives advanced training in both guerrilla warfare and counterinsurgency operations. They are also skilled in deep-penetration reconnaissance, raids and interdiction missions.

RIGHT: Fighting knife used by Spanish Special Operations personnel.



Spanish Army Parachute Brigade beret badge (top) and Spanish Army Special Forces beret badge.

Before he gains his green beret a Spanish SF soldier must pass a rigorous period of training in such subjects as land navigation, close combat, NATO and Soviet Bloc small arms, communications and cryptography, small-unit tactics, patrolling, ambushes and counterambushes, field first aid, intelligence gathering, demolitions, survival and night movement.

There are a variety of special weapons available to these units but a favorite is the Star Z70/B SMG. Use of a blade in close combat or special missions is also stressed and a Toledo-steel fighting knife is an important part of each man's armament.

At least 10 days out of each month are spent in the field mastering skills that are regular aspects of American Army Ranger training. Based on the assumption that they might someday be pressed into operational service inside Spain's borders itself, the SF units train in the villages and cities within their regions as well as in "los boonies." Spanish special-warfare troops quickly become masters at military application of mountaineering and skiing. Many are SCUBA qualified although the primary mission for waterborne and underwater clandestine operations rests with the Spanish Navy equivalent of American SEALs.



Para Brigade insignia. Left column: (top) 1st Bandera, (bottom) Logistics Group; middle column: (top) 3rd Bandera, (middle) 2nd Bandera, (bottom) Para Instructor; right column: (top) Engineer Group, (bottom) Brigade HQ.

Special Operations troops sometimes finds themselves seconded off to the *Tercio* or the Spanish Foreign Legion. Like the 2nd REP of the French Foreign Legion, these highly skilled Spanish troops have become an elite within an elite and add much to the clandestine operational capability of their units.

Also listed on the rolls of Spain's airborne fraternity are policemen of the GEO hostage resource and counter-terrorist unit. These specially trained and highly skilled men are all members of Spain's National Police Force and marked by a distinctive brown beret worn when in uniform. They are all graduates of the parachute school and were originally trained by West Germany's hard-hitting GSG-9. GEO forces are regularly employed on security details for the King of Spain and other missions much like the U.S. Secret Service.

Spain may lag behind other NATO nations in overall military capability, but tactical planners in the country have fortunately not neglected the importance of special-warfare formations. Spanish parachute and special-operations troops are well-trained, highly motivated and tough enough to make NATO planners glad Spain is a member of the alliance. ✕



# PARA KNIFE

## A New Bit of British Kit

by Leroy Thompson



RIGHT: Sturdy, compact, black-bladed utility knife is a favored addition to Para equipment. BELOW RIGHT: British issue markings on riveted scales include traditional Broadhead.

Steel stock for Para knife blade is a full quarter-inch across the back.



**T**HERE's a new battle blade banging around on the combat kit of Great Britain's hard-fighting airborne soldiers. Not many examples of this newly adopted weapon have made it across the Atlantic but it's clear that the "Red Devils" of the Parachute Regiment have been handed an excellent survival/utility/fighting knife. It's an important adjunct to their equipment.

Units of the Parachute Regiment are deployed from the barren wastes

of the Falklands to the steamy jungles of Belize and in the urban war zones of Northern Ireland. They need the best tools and weapons available. That's likely what prompted the Ministry of Defense to order up a new, standard blade for the Paras and begin issuing it last year.

As is the case with much British Army equipment, the new knife is simple yet functional. At 12 inches in overall length and 12 ounces in weight, the Para knife is designed for

rough use in a variety of tasks by field soldiers. The seven-inch blade is 1 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches wide near the point and is almost  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch thick at the back. There is no false edge, but the cutting edge is sharp all the way back to a short ricasso. That feature indicates the British designers were leaning slightly toward more utilitarian uses for the blade. The design of the point and the thick back enable the knife to stand up to pressures applied in prying open ammo cans or other non-combat



acceptance mark, an identification number and an "84" date of general issue. The lack of any type of checkering on the handle panels is a disadvantage for soldiers who may be using the knife with wet — or bloody — hands but the knife does have a very comfortable grip, heft and feel in the average-size hand. The flared pommel is drilled for a wrist thong which can come in handy during parachute operations to secure the knife to individual equipment.

The knife has been well-balanced for hacking and scraping motions but it does not handle well when slashing or thrusting. Obviously, the new Para blade designers considered their knife would see more general use than knife fights. That's a logical conclusion given conditions on modern battlefields. Since the ubiquitous Sykes-Fairbairn Commando dagger still has an honored space in the kit of quite a few Paras, the designers probably surmised the dagger would be used for close-quarters combat and the utility knife would be used for camp chores. That may represent false logic since few combat men have room or inclination to carry more than one knife unless they are given a special mission that would require such redundancy.

Still, the new Para utility knife can perform fairly well in a hack-and-slash situation. It is strong and properly weighted for a hacking or slashing attack. Presuming the Para who uses the blade in that sort of encounter has kept his knife properly sharpened, he should be quite able to lop off limbs or deliver killing blows.

The sheath is of inexpensive leather which is riveted and sewn together. It will not stand up to much time and pressure, especially in tropical climates. Paras will likely find a substitute of local manufacture when they are deployed to jungle areas. The sheath features a retaining strap with an eye and stud closure. After some break-in, the closure works easily and provides relatively quick access to the knife. The sheath is designed to be worn on the left side of standard kit, or — if worn on the right — with the knife in reverse position.

The Parachute Regiment utility knife certainly isn't going to convince anyone to trade in his Randall, Parrish, Timberline, or Life survival/fighting knife but it does demonstrate the point that a *utilitarian* blade doesn't have to be expensive or custom-made. ✕



tasks.

The blade and other exposed metal is blued to eliminate gleam and flash problems. The heavy blade is strong enough to withstand hammering blows if a Para should feel the need to use his knife to drive tent-pegs or nails in garrison. That doesn't indicate the designers have ignored the possibility of a Para using his issue blade to dispatch an enemy.

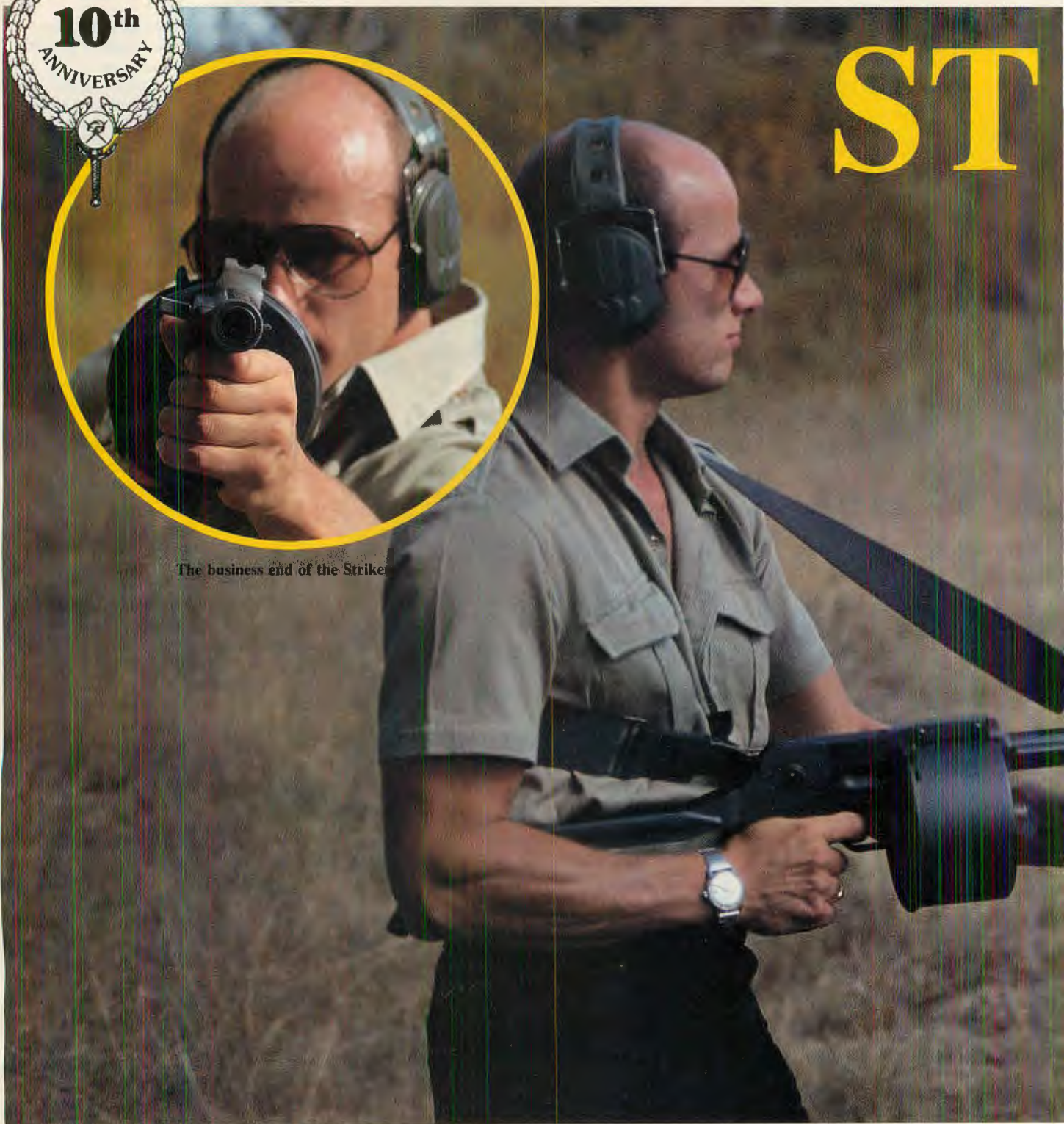
The crossguard is large enough to protect the hand and keep it from

**British Paras' need for a no-nonsense utility knife has been filled.**

sliding forward over the blade in a fight but it is not designed for parrying. The grip fills the hand well and is of the shape normally associated with machetes in the United States. The grip panels are of smooth wood and are stoutly fixed to the knife by three large brass rivets. One side of the handle on a sample is marked with the broad-arrow MOD



# ST



The business end of the Striker

**I**T looks like the evil Manville Gun from the movie *The Dogs of War*, but the Armsel Striker semiautomatic shotgun was born in 1978, two years before Hollywood had a clue that such exotic weaponry was available in the real world. This multishot scattergun was designed in Rhodesia but is currently being manufactured in South Africa. Like many of the world's most effective weapons, the Striker has an

interesting history.

Import sanctions during the war severely restricted the availability of specialized weapons in their country so the Rhodesians became very inventive. They designed weapons, vehicles and equipment to suit specific needs in a bloody bush war. Some of these inventions survived the fall of Rhodesia and were taken across the border to South Africa where they are being put to

good use. The Striker shotgun made that journey.

Only one functioning Striker was actually made in Rhodesia toward the end of the war. At the end of hostilities, the weapon was taken across the border and Armsel of South Africa (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 5945, Johannesburg 2000, RSA) became interested in developing it. After six years of patient nurturing, Strikers are now rolling off Armsel

# RIKER

## South Africa's Revolving Scattergun

by Brady Ridgway



production lines at the rate of 500 per month. That does not mean they are readily available, either in South Africa or in the United States.

The South African Police have put stringent restrictions on private ownership of Strikers. The shotgun was originally intended as a home-defense weapon, but few South African homeowners can lay their hands on one. Sales within South Africa are

restricted to security organizations, farmers in rural areas or people who can otherwise convince the police they have a good reason to need a multishot weapon designed for something other than hunting.

At first glance the Striker looks like a stockless PPSH41 with a forward handgrip added. Those appearances are deceiving. What appears to be a drum magazine is actually a spring-wound, 12-shot rotary

ammo-feeding device that functions much like the cylinder of a revolver. The weapon is cylinder-bored and can accept either shot or slug loads of many types. The Striker features a skeleton stock that folds forward over the receiver. It can be fired with the stock in either folded or extended position.

The Striker fieldstrips into four main components: frame (including pistol grip and folding stock), barrel (including shroud and forward grip), trigger group, cylinder and cylinder cover. A rugged composition material called "Meehanite" or EN19 is used throughout the frame of the Striker but the weapon's barrel is the really interesting item. It is made from Dural alloy and Armsel recommends that owners do not use wire brushes for bore cleaning since that would tend to erode the coating. Still, the barrel is capable of sustaining extremely hard use. The Striker I tested had fired about 10,000 rounds and still showed no signs of wear. A perforated shroud surrounds the barrel to facilitate cooling.

The pistol grip and foregrip are made from fiberglass-reinforced polycarbonate and are extremely tough. The folding stock and cylinder cover are metal and oxidized to a dull-black finish. The cylinder is also made of aluminum and is rated by Armsel to withstand 26,000 rounds per chamber or a total of 312,000 rounds before any failure is predicted. With proper care, a Striker should still be firing long after more conventional shotguns have fallen apart.

The finish on the weapon is rough and not designed for beauty, as befits a close combat weapon. Sights must be ordered special from the manufacturer but they are worth the extra money. Strikers are designed to use Armson OEG Red Dots which are excellent quick-pointing sights. The top strap of the weapon has been drilled to accept this unit. The sight must be fitted while the cylinder cover is off since the attaching screws go through the bottom of the top strap and up into the sight. Without it, aiming the Striker is strictly a matter of instinctive pointing using line of sight over the barrel.

Other available accessories include a black web sling and a black nylon carrying bag. The weight of the Striker makes purchase and use of the sling advisable. It is long enough to permit the weapon to be carried at the ready. The carrying bag is small and unobtrusive but less of a necessity. It will conceal the Striker with the stock folded as well as a limited amount of ammunition in the two small side pockets.

Disassembly of the Striker is fairly simple and the only tool required is an allen wrench which is supplied with the weapon. The folding stock is extended and the clock-style rotating mechanism of the cylinder unwound. That's a matter of pulling and releasing the trigger a sufficient number of times until the spring is free of tension. A

winding key on the front of the cylinder cover must then be unscrewed and removed along with the central pivot-shaft.

To remove the cylinder cover from the frame, the allen wrench is used on four screws which attach the two components. Once this has been done the cylinder cover drops easily off the weapon. To separate the cylinder from its cover, two securing plates must be removed by hand. That reveals the mainspring which is made from coil-wound piano wire and extremely durable. The manufacturer recommends owners do not attempt to tamper with the spring assembly.

Disassembly is completed by removing the pistol grip and stock from the frame. Once again the allen wrench is used to remove three screws holding the two components together. A crossbolt safety can then be moved to the "fire" position which allows the pistol grip to be removed using a rearward and downward motion. During this procedure, the trigger must be held back and out of the way of the trigger guard. The Striker is assembled in the reverse order.

This weapon has some interesting and innovative safety features. To prevent an accidental discharge that might be caused by dropping the weapon with a live round in the chamber, the Striker has been designed in such a way that the chamber under the hammer remains slightly off-center until the trigger is pulled. Pulling the trigger halfway to the rear brings the chamber into line. Pulling the trigger all the way to the rear cocks and releases the hammer, firing the round. The firing pin is short and inertial so the Striker can be dry-fired without any damage.

When the trigger is released, the cylinder revolves clockwise, bringing the next chamber into the slightly off-center position. It's quite safe but the system involves a long, heavy trigger pull. Armsel claims any good gunsmith can lighten trigger pull considerably but they manufacture the Striker with the heavy pull for safety reasons. With the safety on, the trigger can be pulled halfway to the rear which brings a chamber into line but the hammer is blocked. This feature is designed to facilitate loading and unloading of the weapon.

Loading the Striker is not difficult but doing it quickly and efficiently takes practice. The winding key is rotated clockwise until the mainspring is fully wound. During this procedure, the cylinder will make only  $1\frac{3}{4}$  revolutions because the two drums inside the cylinder restrict travel to prevent over-winding. When fully wound, the number 12 chamber lines up with the loading gate. Grasp the pistol grip in the left hand and engage the crossbolt safety switch located behind the trigger guard. Next open the loading gate and drop a selected round into the chamber in the same manner you load most single-action revolvers. Pull the trigger and release, bringing the next chamber into line with the loading gate and drop in another round. When all 12 rounds have been loaded, close the loading gate and re-wind the mechanism.



**ABOVE:** Twelve-shot magazine can be removed by simply disassembling a two-piece plate at the rear of the cylinder.

**BELOW:** The Striker's ability to hit a target can be enhanced by adding the South African-made Armson laser-dot scope.



**RIGHT:** Close-up of the Striker hammer group.

**BELOW:** The Striker was designed to allow easy loading of shotgun shells into the cylinder.



## SPECIFICATIONS

System of Operation:	Spring-driven, revolving cylinder with clockwise rotation
Caliber:	12-gauge, 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ inch
Capacity:	12 rounds of most available types
Length:	30.7 inches (stock extended) 19.7 inches (stock folded)
Height:	6.5 inches
Width:	5.7 inches
Weight:	9.26 pounds (empty)
Barrel length:	11.81 inches



Topped with an Armsel scope, the Striker is a formidable weapon.

There is no facility for ejecting spent shell cases. To unload or clear the Striker, the mechanism must again be fully wound and the loading gate opened. With the pistol grip in the left hand and the safety on, the shooter simply uses his right hand to pull the ejection rod sharply to the rear which ejects the round or shell case. Then pull the trigger and release to align the next chamber and repeat the procedure.

The safety switch, which protrudes to the right when the weapon is on safe, is disengaged by pushing it through to the left with the trigger finger. This maneuver is difficult for left-handed shooters but it is a simple task to reverse the safety. Armsel does not recommend this procedure, especially for Strikers that will be general issue weapons since it could cause confusion about the condition of a modified gun.

The shooter should always pull the trigger smoothly to the rear in one fluid motion in firing a round. The tendency is to take up half pressure immediately, bringing the chamber into line before completing the pull. That's fine provided the cycle is completed. If the shooter decides not to fire and releases the trigger, the cylinder will rotate causing him to skip a round.

Despite what you'd expect from a short, skeleton-stock 12-gauge, Striker recoil is relatively tame. The gun can be fired as fast as the trigger can be manipulated and Armsel claims an experienced shooter can usually get all 12 rounds out in *three seconds*. I was not able to make anything like that speed and I doubt the validity of the factory claim. I would bet on five to 10

seconds for even the most experienced shooter.

Armsel claims the Striker has "literally no felt recoil" and "can be fired with one hand." That comes surprisingly close to the truth as I discovered in test-firing the weapon. Although it is physically impossible to totally remove recoil from any conventional 12-gauge weapon, Striker recoil is *very moderate*. In comparison to my own 12-gauge pump, it is almost non-existent. The reaction to firing a round is more of a gentle shove than a jar. In rapid fire muzzle climb can be fairly easily controlled but shooters handling the Striker for the first time tend to scatter patterns across several yards of terrain. Still, for a shotgun with an 11-inch tube, the Striker is surprisingly accurate. A string of 12 slugs fired at 30 yards grouped well even in rapid-fire sequences.

There is some gas back-blast problem associated with firing the Striker. In the original prototype, excess gas escaped through seven large holes in the forward cylinder cover. It was functional but shooters found their arms or shirtsleeves blackened after a few rounds. Armsel redesigned the system and put just three smaller holes in the half-plate at the rear of the cylinder. This allows the shooter to look at the primers and see how many live rounds are remaining but back-blast can be felt on the face when firing the Striker from the shoulder. It's not uncomfortable and most shooters learn to ignore it after a little practice with the weapon. Eye protection of some sort when firing the Striker is a good idea, especially if the shooter wears contact lenses.

The folding stock of the Striker is rough but functional. On most 12-gauge shotguns the sharp edge of a metal stock can damage

the cheek but the light recoil of the Striker eliminates the problem. It's fairly easy to keep a tight cheek-weld without discomfort in sustained firing. The stock can be folded over the top of the weapon by pressing a locking button located behind the pistol grip. I do not recommend firing with the stock folded unless that's absolutely necessary. Even when firing the Striker from the hip, the extended stock gives more positive directional control. With the stock folded, the Striker suffers from a lack of natural "pointability."

Striker chambers will accept only 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch shells but that leaves an infinite variety of types from which to choose. The manufacturer recommends only factory-loaded, plastic-cased ammunition but the weapon will accept paper cartridges quite readily with only an occasional jam. That can be cleared by inserting a lever through one of the holes in the front of the cylinder cover and revolving the cylinder until the offending cartridge is clear of the frame. It works but it's not something I would want to have to do while under fire.

In running 60 rounds through the Striker, I experienced only three misfires. One was caused by a recessed primer on a round and the other two were light hits from the firing pin. The last two misfires cycled through the gun and fired on a second try.

A number of mining concerns in South Africa have bought Strikers for their security forces and both the SAS and the Royal Marines' SBS are considering purchase of the weapon. Striker admittedly has limited potential in most military tactical applications, but it is ideal for riot-control work. Shooters can manipulate the weapon easily to skip chambers thus selecting the type of round they want to fire in a given situation. Policemen who have used the Striker indicate it is common practice to load the first chamber with a tear-gas round, insert rubber buckshot into the even numbered chambers and load the rest of the cylinder with lead shot.

The Striker has some application to defense of strategic locations in which a soldier or policeman might have to bring a large amount of firepower to bear quickly. The folding stock makes it easy to use in heavy bush or in a vehicle.

The only real criticism I have is the time it takes to reload the Striker. A pump or semi-automatic shotgun can be topped off before it runs dry to keep the gun in action, but the Striker is completely out of the fray when reloading is required. Still, 12 rounds should see most people safely through a tight situation.

Given the current trade embargo between the U.S. and South Africa, it's not likely American gun shops will be selling Strikers in the near future although Armsel is offering the weapon for export. That's unfortunate because it would prove a handy weapon in American civil or military police arsenals.

I was favorably impressed with the Striker. Within the scope of its capabilities, it is a fine, functional shotgun. ✕





# COPING WITH COUNTER-INSURGENCY

## Can America Handle the Third World Threat?

by Dale Andrade

**T**HEORIES and arguments over American preparations for counterinsurgency warfare and low-intensity conflicts are flying heavier than lead in a fire fight these days. The topic dominates conversation in all levels of the Pentagon and special warfare formations are once again the glory-boys of the U.S. military order of battle.

It's a good thing our military planners are becoming concerned with the ability to fight effectively and win in such scenarios but it's hard to understand why they took so long in coming to the conclusion that it's important. Although guerrilla wars have been fought around the world practically since men learned to pick up sticks and stones against a stronger enemy, there has never been a system or force for fighting them that has not been fraught with controversy.

Governments have been plagued by guerrilla conflicts for centuries and yet none of them considered the situation serious enough to establish a standing counterinsurgency capability. That's been a costly miscalculation and an incredible oversight on the part of the American government which was established after citizen-soldiers employed unconventional warfare to win independence from Great Britain. Some of this shortsightedness can be blamed on growing pains.

When the U.S. emerged as a world power, military thinking held that the best way to project influence was with a strong, conventional combat force. That proved valid up until the Cold War but there were reminders of the importance of unconventional warfare capabilities along the way that should have changed conventional military minds.

The first surfaced during World War II. Aside from small, under-trained Ranger formations, responsibility for unconventional warfare (UW) during WWII was



The beginnings of unconventional warfare: General William Donovan formed the OSS in WWII. Photo: AP/Wide World

passed to the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). These unconventional, maverick military men are the true ancestors of modern Special Forces. Merrill's Marauders, Rangers, Commandos and the joint U.S.-Canadian Special Service Force all fought fairly conventionally despite some rather unconventional missions. Only the OSS regularly provided a multi-faceted, specialized group of soldiers ready to fight with or train indigenous troops for extended periods of time behind enemy lines.

Under the direction of General William Joseph Donovan, the OSS was much more than just another branch of the military. With an estimated strength of only 13,000, the OSS combined the talents of Americans from all walks of life to fight or organize guerrilla activity. They enjoyed great success where they were employed. That should have been a clue for the strategists and tacticians.

Perhaps the best-known and most successful OSS operation involved "Department 101" in Burma. Using regular Army

troops, OSS Colonel W. R. Peers directed training and equipping of Kachin tribesmen to form a deadly guerrilla force which tore at the Japanese from 1943 to 1945 in Southeast Asia. That operation planted the seeds which eventually grew into a valid mission for U.S. Army Special Forces. Despite that, the lineage of today's SF is traced officially to Ranger units.

OSS troops had a major effect on the war in the ETO, particularly in France. Odd lots of Americans — both civilians and soldiers — parachuted regularly into occupied France and worked directly with the resistance forces fighting a guerrilla-style, hit-and-run war against the Nazi invaders. They were highly successful in sapping German military strength which was shifted from facing Allied troops to handle the partisan threat. Despite such obvious successes, American military planners weren't interested in having the OSS as a permanent part of their establishment.

Much of that was due to the nature of unconventional warriors. From Donovan on down through the OSS ranks, they were individualists who did everything *but* adhere to the book. After the war, President Truman — who was no lover of military mavericks — disbanded the OSS on 1 October 1945. U.S. military leaders breathed a collective sigh of relief. They were clear of cloak-and-dagger games and could get back to the conventional plotting board.

Still, there remained a nucleus of soldiers in the post-war Army that had experience in and a high regard for the effectiveness of guerrilla war. They fought for establishment of a separate UW Corps but they were stonewalled by the War Department which did not have room in a skimpy post-war budget for such nonsense. The UW advocates were told creation of an elite organization was not in line with the American democratic tradition.

With the exception of some "Ranger

Groups," approved in 1947 to operate behind enemy lines to activate or assist resistance groups and conduct small-unit combat operations, the responsibility for UW activities was gratefully handed over to the CIA. Their predecessors, the OSS, had concluded WWII involvement with a seven-volume work titled *The War Report of the OSS*. The authors concluded that "special operations of a subversive nature" offered great potential that "no commander should ignore" in his support of wartime military operations. They also felt professional military officers could learn everything they needed to know about UW in four to six hours of instruction at the appropriate service school.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff disagreed. In a 1948 memorandum, they concluded that "a separate guerrilla warfare school should not be established." Instead, the NME (National Military Establishment), in coordination with the State Department and CIA, should "select personnel, give them necessary training in established Army schools, supplemented by courses in other military and State Department schools." Unconventional Warfare was buried by the bureaucracy.

Conventional combat in Korea affirmed the military establishment opinion that a UW capability was unnecessary. The U.S. had "won" a land war in Asia using conventional methods and although the military felt that the limited victory had been less than desirable, their belief in conventional war had been confirmed. International tensions with the potential for war continued to be considered in terms of a major East-West confrontation.

The CIA was beginning to move into the field of covert operations and the military thought it convenient to let them handle low-intensity situations and Third World conflicts while they considered more important matters. Professional military men found involvement in UW distasteful for four reasons. First, the Army held no fond memories for the OSS-military establishment rivalry during WWII and they didn't want anymore of that unpleasantness. Second was the same old story of a lack of appreciation for new warfare techniques. Third, there was strong suspicion in the military about any "elite" forces that could turn out to be hard to handle. Finally, a new capability like UW would cost more money and men which would not be welcomed by Congress or the taxpayers.

The Special Forces concept was buried in a back office of the Army's growing Psychological Warfare Department. The separate branch idea was kept alive by the man who is commonly considered the father of modern special warfare, Brigadier General Robert McClure. He took up the cause and kept it under the noses of Army policy-makers until they were forced to do something about it.



**TOP:** U.S. Army Special Forces troopers are trained in the use of small arms from all over the world. Photo: U.S. Army

**ABOVE:** Special Forces combine their fighting skills with an ability to aid rural people in embattled Third World countries. Photo: U.S. Army

McClure realized the world situation was changing rapidly. Several once-potent colonial powers had expended practically all their resources in crushing the Axis during World War II and had little left to counter violent nationalist movements in possessions far from home. The wars France fought in Indochina and Algeria were classic examples. McClure also understood that the situation was not lost on the Soviets.

They were anxious to exploit the internal turmoil by fomenting and funding guerrilla wars. Facing reality at last, the Army grudgingly agreed there was a need for a counter-insurgency (COIN) capability. From the beginning of the road toward a full-blown

Special Forces program, there was a realization that the U.S. would have to exploit sympathetic forces in strife-torn countries if they wanted to beat the Soviets at their own game.

Army leaders became adamant about retrieving the UW mission from the CIA. Gen. McClure prepared plans, studies, organizational and training programs for a new formal U.S. Army UW capability — Special Forces.

The plans envisioned soldiers organized into "foreign national units" made up of men from different Eastern European countries. Under the direction of Gen. McClure's deputy, Colonel Russell Volkman, the mission of the new teams was defined to encompass five major areas.

1. Organization and conduct of guerrilla warfare.
2. Sabotage and subversion.
3. Ranger and commando operations.
4. Long-range or deep-penetration reconnaissance.
5. Psychological warfare.

## THE CUTTING EDGE

America's military might has brought the nation through many difficult challenges in two centuries but there is one particularly troublesome stumbling block. Small groups of communist guerrillas — armed with Soviet weapons and a dogmatic ideology — have stood up to, and in some cases defeated, the might of the world's most highly industrialized nation. In the doctrine of warfare it's called low-intensity conflict, terrorism or insurgency and it is the most likely challenge faced by our armed forces today.

How will the U.S. handle this increasingly common threat? Recalling some of the lessons of Vietnam and smarting from an apparent inability to prevent such activity, military planners have put together a group of specially trained soldiers who are supposed to handle the brushfire wars and terrorist incidents which threaten U.S. influence in the Third World. All of them have roots in American history, but never have they had the depth of training or importance of mission that characterizes this "new elite." They come from all branches of the military and their skills encompass everything from demolitions to foreign languages. But can these new warriors turn the tide of insurgency? Only time will tell.

Each branch of the service has at least one group of these crack unconventional units. Here's a brief rundown:

### U.S. Army Rangers

The U.S. Army Rangers trace their roots to Roger's Rangers of French and Indian War fame but their present mission began in World War II. Designed to operate behind enemy lines, Ranger forces were instrumental in disrupting German supply lines and creating an atmosphere of pandemonium. During the Normandy landings, Rangers were used as assault forces on beaches with limited landing room. Unfortunately, the Germans were ready and the Rangers suffered tremendous casualties.

In the years following WWII and during the Vietnam War, the Rangers refined their techniques as the Army's premier hit-and-run warriors. During these days of living under the threat of nuclear war, Rangers fill the role of a reaction force which is designed to slow a massive, conventional attack by the Soviet Union until the main Allied forces can be brought to bear. Rangers provide a large-scale strike capability as well as rescue potential — both phases were demonstrated in Grenada.

Rangers are organized and trained as light infantry battalions — they differ from ordinary infantry in their readiness, level of training and motivation. Three battalions of Rangers — the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 75th Infantry —



exist, and there are plans to create a regimental headquarters.

### U.S. Army Special Forces

The best known of the UW units, the U.S. Army Special Forces have been in the public eye since before the Vietnam War. They perform various missions — intelligence-gathering, sabotage or cadres for training and advising indigenous troops. Because of the complex set of missions, they require more than just advanced weapons training and guerrilla tactics instruction. They also need experience in languages and the instruction techniques necessary to teach foreigners of varying levels of sophistication. They also have a ground-level knowledge in the elements of revolutionary warfare principles, escape and evasion techniques and demolitions.

After the Vietnam War, SF was pared down to three active groups — the 5th and 7th at Fort Bragg (one battalion of the 7th is in Panama) and the 10th, part of which is stationed at Fort Devens, Mass. and the rest in Germany. A newly reactivated 1st Group is now stationed at Fort Lewis.

The reactivation of the 1st Special Forces Group represents the first major step in UW revitalization. Its battalions will be beefed up in the future and there are plans for additional rotary-wing aviation elements to be taken over from the Air Force — a much-needed step if the Army is to have an autonomous UW capability.

### Navy Special Operations Forces

The Navy is more than just battlewagons and flatops. They are also heavily involved in the special warfare game. The Navy's UW forces are divided into two Naval Special Warfare Groups (NSWG) under the commanders of the Atlantic and Pacific Fleets. NSWG 1 is based at Coronado, California while NSWG 2 operates out of Little Creek, Virginia. Each group consists of SEAL (Sea-Air-Land) Teams and Special Boat Squadrons (SBS). There are additional Naval Special Warfare Units (NSWUs) with SEAL and SBS detachments based in Scotland, Puerto Rico and the Philippines.

Navy SEALs are trained to be at home on land or in the water. They are the seaborne equivalent of the Army Rangers and their mission categorizes them as shock troops. In the event of an attack in Europe, they will infiltrate harbors and waterways to destroy ships and docks.

The HH-53 Pave Low helicopter gives the Air Force the capability to insert and extract UW missions under almost any conditions. Photo: AP/Wide World

SEALs are a double threat. They can also perform hit-and-run missions on land, using boats for infiltration and exfiltration.

In the past, the Navy has relied on reservists to fill out the ranks of UW units. Lately however, DOD has decided to include an increase of active SEAL platoons in the UW revitalization program. By 1990, there should be 70 SEAL platoons — up from 20 in 1983. The increase is a result of merging the old Underwater Demolition Teams (UDTs) with the SEALs.

Training is tough — nothing more than normal for this type of work, though.

### Air Force Special Operations Forces

The Air Force has concentrated its UW program in two sections — airborne weapons platforms capable of pinpointing and destroying guerrilla formations and an airlift section designed to ferry UW teams from other branches of the military to and from an objective.

DOD has approved the formation of a new unit, the 23rd Air Force, to serve as an umbrella command for its UW elements worldwide. These consist of six MC-130 Combat Talon aircraft, 10 AC-130 Spectre gunships, nine HH-53H Pave Low and six UH-1N helicopters grouped into the 1st Special Operation Wing at Hurlburt Field, Florida; four MC-130s (along with other special operations aircraft) in Germany and the Philippines. Also assigned to the Air Force are Combat Control Teams (CCTs), which parachute into hostile areas either alone or with Army Special Forces elements to survey potential drop zones and landing fields.

MC-130s and HH-53s are used in long-range infiltration, exfiltration and rescue operations. Unfortunately, they are too few and too old. The Air Force has received only one new MC-130 in the past four years. In accordance with the new emphasis on UW, the Air Force has asked for 10 more MC-130s. DOD told them to double the figure.

The Vietnam War taught the military the futility of the doctrine of strategic bombing in non-industrialized countries. The Air Force seems to have learned the lesson particularly well. Their new capa-

bility is keyed toward destroying small groups of guerrillas without endangering civilian populations.

#### Marine Corps Force Recon

Force Recon units don't technically fall into the category of UW or COIN, but they perform a mission that is unique enough to categorize them as special operations units.

As the name implies, Force Recon teams are used for reconnaissance. They are clandestinely inserted into hostile territory to gather information on the enemy and their mission generally precedes or follows an assault by main force units. Force Recon is the long-range eyes and ears of the Corps.

Force Recon units get into an area however they can and Marines who make it into Force Recon are parachute- and SCUBA-qualified. Recon teams consist of four men — three four-man teams to a platoon and six platoons to a company. Each Marine is trained to observe and notice things that an ordinary grunt would likely never see. At present there is only one Force Reconnaissance Company active in the Corps — the 2nd Force Recon Co. based at Camp Lejeune, N.C.



An MC-130 drops flares from fuselage pods over a target. Another gunship follows. Photo: U.S. Air Force

These soldiers from all branches of the military make up the cutting edge of the U.S. counterinsurgency establishment. Lessons learned throughout the world have shown the need for an expanded capability and the Reagan Administration has shown its support by increasing the funds that will go to UW. It may not be enough. Even with Congressional approval of Reagan's most ambitious proposal, UW would receive less than one percent of the defense budget through 1990. With those limited funds, the military will have to rely on training and motivation to get the job done. Whatever the method decided on to accomplish the mission, the U.S. defense establishment must ensure it has the UW capability to match the changing threats around the world.

— Dale Andrade

Volkman explained the threat his troops would meet with a simplistic illustration. He told volunteer UW officers that the world was divided into two groups of individuals unrestricted by national boundaries. These layers — red and blue — were held together by common ideologies. Any future war would be waged between these two factions. He characterized the blue layer as sympathetic to democratic principles and said they could be found within the boundaries of nations controlled by the red layer or the communists. It was this blue layer — within the enemy's sphere of influence — that would be used to foster resistance movements during a war. Volkman wanted the Special Forces program to train soldiers who could exploit that resistance to the Reds.

The primary tactical concern was still disrupting a Soviet invasion of Western Europe so the Army established a "Theater Special Forces Training Command" in the U.S. to direct UW forces in that area. They were on the road to a true UW force that would be versatile enough to handle any COIN situation but the CIA threatened to disrupt progress.

Military planners felt the CIA was too out of touch with tactics and battlefield techniques to be able to correctly assess and direct a guerrilla war. While the Agency clearly did not have the assets to fight a full-fledged COIN war, they were reluctant to share operational information for fear of compromising important intelligence assets. There was more to the argument than simple rivalry.

Theorists from two distinct UW schools of thought were also in disagreement over employment of guerrilla assets. The so-called "British school" held that guerrilla forces should not dissipate into the field until Allied forces were in position to support them. That seemed fine *providing* the conflict occurred in Europe but it was not plausible for creating or controlling turbulence in the Third World. Students of a second school held that the first few days of a Soviet attack were critical and even a few hours of delay in employing UW assets could be disastrous. Their theories were still aimed at the Soviets but the strategy could be modified for application in the Third World. The Army totally rejected the first strategy and was not very enthusiastic about the second but they needed some framework for planning and went with the lesser of two evils.

While the planners could now get to work, the Army proponents of UW had to confront the CIA in the control fight and deal with some intense interservice rivalry. The Army's position was obvious but the Air Force — which had become heavily involved in the psychological warfare program including aerial resupply of guerrillas and air delivery of propaganda leaflets — threw in with the CIA. The Army entrenched for a serious control fight.

General McClure needed reinforcements and prepared a briefing for the Secretary of



Demolitions are an important part of UW warfare training. These Green Berets practice setting charges under a bridge. Photo: U.S. Army

Defense in which he voiced his concerns about the bad image that UW had among military men. He said Americans would simply have to get over their dislike for elite units or be buried by an enemy that held no such prejudice. "We face an enemy who is prepared to take to the field tomorrow morning," he said. "In psychological operations we are fast approaching a state of readiness, but in Special Operations, we are years behind."

Meanwhile, McClure's staff was busily searching for a site for the new UW Psychological Warfare Center, concentrating on Fort Benning, Fort Bragg and Fort Campbell. "Make it Bragg if you can," he told them.

They could, and Ft. Bragg became the home of the 10th Special Forces Group on 19 May 1952. The Army had won the fight for control of America's UW assets. Now it was simply a matter of recruiting and training them as quickly as possible.

Soldiers accepted for Special Forces Group were trained in one or more of five fields: operations and intelligence, engineering, weaponry, communications and medical aid. New training philosophies clearly defined the differences between SF troops and Rangers. The SF Group would go deep into enemy territory in order to organize, equip, train and *control* indigenous guerrilla forces. Rangers would conduct shallow penetration of enemy lines for limited periods. In the American military lexicon, "Special Forces operations" were finally synonymous with "unconventional warfare."

Colonel Aaron Bank became commander of the 10th SF Group on establishment. Army UW advocates were euphoric but reaction within the enlisted ranks was hardly enthusiastic. By August 1952 only 259 volunteers were trained and available. Banks and McClure shifted emphasis to counterinsurgency operations and more volunteers began to appear at Ft. Bragg. By

April 1953, 10th Group was ready for the final SF evolution.

### The Nature of Counterinsurgency

The shift toward COIN ops was a function of what SF strategists perceived to be the changing nature of insurgencies around the world. As more potential flashpoints surfaced in the Third World, UW planners modified their opinions on the best way to handle them. Since there was no precedent or real experience to draw on, no consensus was reached but most authorities agreed on basic concepts.

Most of the "brushfire" conflicts following WWII were outgrowths of the decolonization of Africa and Asia. This posed a problem for U.S. policymakers who found themselves torn between allegiance to former allies and the inevitable — in some cases desirable — collapse of European control and influence outside Europe. Choosing sides became a quandary and American policymakers found themselves in bed with unlikely fellows.

In order to stop the spread of communist influence, America had to move against insurgency *wherever* it occurred even if that meant supporting less than desirable regimes. The Shah in Iran and President Marcos in the Philippines enjoyed American support despite their excesses. The U.S. military began looking at such allies to define the questions and provide answers for dealing with COIN warfare.

In the Philippines, Malaya and Indochina, guerrilla factions were clearly sympathetic to Soviet expansion efforts. Special Forces troops would not be welcomed in these factions so the solution seemed to be providing COIN training and equipment for the forces of existing pro-Western governments. It had to be very low-key. Too much U.S. involvement would raise the specter of neocolonialism.

That presented significant problems in government, military and public circles. Few Americans understood the real nature of COIN warfare. Insurgency and counterinsurgency are diametrically opposed. For the insurgents and the counterrevolutionary forces, the war is total with survival at stake. A third party — such as the United States — that becomes involved in the conflict does so with limited goals and commitments.

From the objective American point of view, involvement in these conflicts as a third party creates moral and ethical problems that do not usually coincide with the democratic norm. Such wars are dirty, no-holds-barred struggles rather than commitments with clear-cut goals and black or white issues. Success depends on the commitment and skill of the people who are involved in psychological warfare, the people on the ground who are face-to-face with the indigenous population rather than superiority in force or direct combat capability.

All that was very difficult for anyone but a dedicated UW expert to understand. Guerrilla conflicts are distinct from traditional American perceptions of war in which sophisticated weapons and machine-oriented



Two members of an SF A-team take stock of the terrain from their defensive position. Photo: U.S. Army

tactics are employed to destroy an enemy which is easily recognized and defined as a clear threat to immediate U.S. interests. When those prerequisites are absent, the American military finds it very difficult to become involved in a Third World conflict.

One thing was clear to the insiders considering U.S. involvement in communist-inspired insurgencies such as the one taking place in Vietnam. U.S. forces must be employed in a *support* role. There could be no "Americanization" of the war. Pre-Vietnam War government studies on COIN reflected the need for the U.S. to stay in the support role. They prophetically stated that if U.S. troops were used, the real objective had failed. Direct involvement should be a last resort. Unfortunately, Americans who would be asked to support the effort did not understand such things at all.

### The Test of War — Vietnam

American Special Forces troops had a dress-rehearsal for the main show in Vietnam with "Operation White Star" in Laos. To thwart increasing communist activity in the country, SF teams — wearing not-yet-officially authorized green berets — organized and trained Meo Montagnard tribesmen in the art of guerrilla war. Moving into the lush, sparsely populated jungles of the Laotian interior, SF teams helped direct harassment of the communist Pathet Lao and their North Vietnamese mentors.

The program was effective but it was not carried far enough and the communists eventually won in Laos. The SF teams were successful in bringing together a group of people that could fight their own war without direct involvement of conventional American troops. That was the basis on which they were deployed to Vietnam during the early part of the war, but unfortunately, theory and practice became sepa-

rated rapidly.

Although White Star has become the most well-known of the early COIN programs, it was by no means the only one. In February 1956, the 1st Observation Group was formed by the South Vietnam Military Command to organize guerrilla bands just below the 17th parallel in the event of an invasion. Their mission was to provide early warning of NVA military activity along the DMZ and to sabotage lines of communication behind an invading force. Trained at Nha Trang, the 305-man group functioned outside normal military channels.

By 1961, the 1st Observation Group had made shallow penetrations into Laos and limited forays into North Vietnam and the group's potential for harassment of the enemy and intelligence-gathering impressed both the military in Saigon and the planners in Washington. President John F. Kennedy was so impressed with both the White Star Program and the 1st Observation Group that within the first days of his administration, he adopted a COIN plan that called for a 500-man expansion of these covert missions.

While these early COIN programs were fairly effective, they were compromised by bureaucratic infighting. As in the early days of UW, both the CIA and the military felt they were best suited to manage COIN. The CIA was having problems with psychological warfare in Vietnam and then-Defense Secretary Robert McNamara believed that their lack of success stemmed from the limited resources available to a civilian organization like the CIA. Since the military had greater resources at their fingertips, McNamara ordered the formation of a joint military-CIA team to implement the COIN program and the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) established the Studies and Observation Group (SOG) in January 1964.

SOG was a top secret organization which reported directly to the JCS. MACV had no authority outside South Vietnam and almost all SOG missions took place beyond its bor-

ders. Every SOG operation had to be approved by McNamara and President Johnson — outside the White House information on SOG existed on a need-to-know basis. The secret group was made up of volunteers from the 5th Special Forces Group and specialists from the CIA. Under the guidance of SOG's first commander, Colonel Clyde Russell, the group ran only limited ops, mostly against the Ho Chi Minh Trail outlets in South Vietnam. Col. Russell's successor, Colonel Donald Blackburn, pushed teams into Laos in the spring of 1966. That same year, Blackburn's successor, Colonel John K. Singlaub, was given permission to operate in Cambodia. SOG was on the way toward holding an important position in COIN operations.

From operating bases in South Vietnam, SOG developed a capability to launch airborne SLAM (seek, locate, annihilate and monitor) missions behind enemy lines in Laos and Cambodia. Since SOG units operated secretly and their achievements went unreported, its soldiers failed to get their deserved medals because America could not admit that they were penetrating into forbidden areas.

Not all COIN plans were geared toward carrying the war to the enemy beyond South Vietnam's borders. By far the most successful were the Special Forces' Civilian Irregular Defense Groups (CIDG) which enjoyed a fair amount of success in the COIN phase of the Vietnam War. Sent to Vietnam in February 1962, these SF CIDG became an important part of the effort to battle the communists on their own ground. From its cautious beginnings, the CIDG program grew rapidly and by the end of 1964, 44 SF camps had been set up in South Vietnam. By living and fighting inside the communists' area of operations, these SF teams showed the people that they were serious about protecting them in the face of VC terror. The Green Berets truly won the hearts and minds of their Montagnard charges but like most of the other attempts at COIN warfare, it was not enough.

The U.S. was aware of the importance of these UW teams but they were not willing to allocate the time or resources to make them work. Whenever these teams got an armed reaction from the communists, conventional forces would take over; the generals were convinced that, at last, the enemy was going to stand up and fight. With the notable exception of SF A-teams based in the Central Highlands — again helping to organize the Montagnards — Special Forces units frequently found themselves employed on missions that should have been given to more ordinary small units. It was inevitable given the mind-set that developed in the wake of the escalating war in Vietnam. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Affairs Noel C. Koch charges that the Army used SF when they needed a highly motivated, specially trained group of men to get a job done. That's understandable but it marks a continued lack of understanding on the part of conventional military thinkers



Navy SEALs operating in the Mekong Delta during the Vietnam War hit the VC where they least expected it — in their own villages. Photo: U.S.Navy

Fast hit-and-run raids are central to SEAL tactics. This M3 Grease-gun-toting SEAL moves toward an objective.



about the methods in COIN warfare.

Because the U.S. failed to correctly identify the nature of the war, tactics were inevitably marred. The military talked loudly about "winning hearts and minds" while they misused the troops trained and motivated to do that. It was a situation that few tacticians understood and fewer professional soldiers were prepared to handle. In the face of such confusion and a lack of popular understanding at home, American military leadership fell back on what it knew best — conventional warfare.

The military saw Viet Cong main force units as the key to their dilemma and promptly took conventional measures to destroy them. The VC were challenged by a growing number of conventional units to stand and do battle. That was against the long-term interests of the communists. They fully understood the nature of the conflict.

American forces, applying the classic Army doctrine of aggressively seeking out the enemy and destroying his main force units, fought bloody battles in the rough country along the DMZ and in the jungles of the Central Highlands. The enemy fought

when they had an advantage and slipped away into sanctuaries in Cambodia and Laos when they did not. In the face of this frustration, U.S. military leaders became obsessed with "body counts" to make the American public see progress in the war effort. Unfortunately, they ignored the fact that a strategy of attrition carried out by conventional forces left the enemy infrastructure free to work on what was critical to the political phase of the war — the indoctrination of the hamlets and villages.

While certain sweeps were necessary to provide a shield behind which the pacification program could proceed, massive "search and destroy" missions became an end unto themselves and obscured the real issues of a counterinsurgency war. The revolution had started in the villages and hamlets of rural Vietnam but the U.S. was fighting a conventional battle and failing to use available assets to push the revolutionaries out of their environment.

The pacification effort — the real mission of Special Forces in Vietnam — became something of a sideshow in the most critical years of the war. Special Forces were no longer very special in the overall scheme of things in Southeast Asia.

A study in 1966 suggested that the pacification program should be the central focus of the joint U.S./Vietnamese war effort. Destruction of communist main force units by American troops was *not* the primary solution to the complex challenge facing the South Vietnamese and SF-backed pacification teams but that's where the emphasis was placed. The American command realized from the very beginning the potentially damaging effect that employment of conventional tactics and firepower could have on the war effort. They issued a complex set of rules of engagement (ROE) governing the conduct of all operations in Vietnam.

General Westmoreland, commanding MACV, cautioned his field commanders that "the utmost in discretion and judgment must be used in the application of firepower." In a statement to the press in August of 1966, he outlined the nature of the war saying that it was a "conflict fought among people, many of whom are not participants, or even closely identified with the struggle. People, more than terrain, are the objectives in this war, and we will not and cannot be callous to those people."

That should have placed the burden of COIN operations on UW units but it did not. Such sentiments were in direct opposition to the mind-set of conventionally trained officers who thought the war hinged on their ability to go out and "kill VC." If SF had been used more closely in conjunction with the pacification effort from the very beginning of the war, there would have been no need for that or for the hostile public opinion generated by growing American casualty figures. Prosecution of the war would have remained in the hands of the Vietnamese where it belonged and the American mili-

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# REDEEMING VIETNAM RELICS

## Souvenirs Become Combat Collectibles

by F.C. Brown

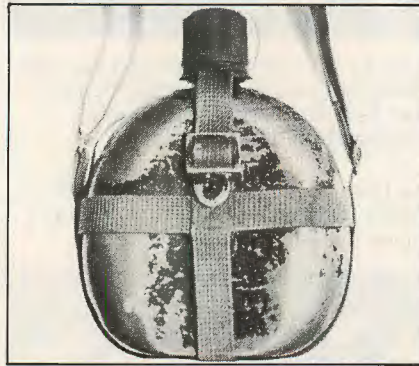
**I**T'S taken 10 years for the collectors to come out of the closet, but souvenirs from the war in Vietnam are rapidly becoming hot items among veterans and military buffs who have been starved for tangible symbols of America's most controversial conflict. Now that it's OK to admit there was a war and vets can count on not being immediately rebuked for saying they helped fight it, more and more arms and equipment shows as well as dealers in militaria are featuring war trophies or booty from the battlefields of Vietnam.

There are big bucks involved in the phenomenon. A Type 51 pistol, the ChiCom variant of the Russian Tokarov, carried by an NVA or VC officer, can fetch \$300 or more and even common communist medals such as the Viet Cong Liberation Exploit Medal Third Class sell for a minimum of \$200. That may seem incredible but it's actually quite understandable in context of the Vietnam-era sociological situation.

Unlike veterans of World War II who brought home Nazi trinkets or Japanese battle flags by the gross as trophies of their victory, most of America's Vietnam vets actually avoided picking readily available enemy equipment as souvenirs of their service. They knew about the rejection and misunderstanding they could expect back home and were not anxious to advertise the fact that they had been part of an unpopular war. What they did bring home — even their own unique uniform items — was promptly buried in an old duffel bag or footlocker and forgotten.

Then came a major mood swing in the early 1980s. America admitted her military men and women fought professionally and honorably in Vietnam despite the ultimate result of the war. The souvenirs resurfaced and the dealers began to corner a lucrative market. "Quality war souvenirs from Southeast Asia are hard to find," said one East Coast dealer. "The demand far outstrips the supply."

Among the most popular items are NVA belt buckles, made of brass/bronze or aluminum and depicting a five-pointed star (about \$50), SKS carbines (\$125-150), Viet Cong flags (\$60-75), VC and NVA medals and badges, enemy propaganda leaflets, ARVN patches and medals, and U.S. Special Forces or LRRP team patches and virtually any sort of enemy combat equipment. ✕



Canteens carried by enemy soldiers were often picked up by U.S. troops. Photo: Darrel Lulling

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

F.C. Brown is a recognized authority on militaria, specializing in China and Vietnam. He has been a serious collector/researcher for the past 15 years, has written numerous articles on the subject, and contributed to more than a half-dozen books dealing with medals and insignia. He is a member of the Orders & Medals Research Society of Great Britain, and the American Society of Military Insignia Collectors.

### COMBAT COMMERCE

I'm a little embarrassed to admit this, but what the hell. The war's been over for 10 years. The war-souvenir situation in Vietnam spawned a cottage industry, a couple of enterprising con men and several potential alcoholics among my small unit of Marines in the I Corps area.

It all started as a protest to what we angrily called the "Carrie Nation Syndrome." Some straight-laced weenie on the command staff decreed that no Marine in Vietnam below the rank of Staff NCO would be allowed to buy booze. This decidedly unpopular dictum was reinforced by simply cutting off the portion of our ration cards which authorized us to purchase specified amounts of beer and whiskey if and when we could reach a PX that stocked such things. We could have lived with it if everyone was in the same boat but soldiers, sailors and airmen in our area did not fall victim to the prohibition and could buy all the booze their ration cards would allow.

It was clearly a case of discrimination but we were in no position to bring a class action suit against the III Marine Amphibious Force. That's why we got into the war-souvenir business.

As Marine Combat Correspondents, we humped with a wide variety of units from the DMZ south and they were glad to have us along as extra guns in an even wider variety of major ops, ambushes

and assorted fire fights. In the aftermath of these punch-ups, the grunts would leap for and fight over SKS carbines and ChiCom pistols which would make legal war souvenirs. We were free to pick and choose from anything else the thoroughly zapped Zips no longer required. Before long we had a large store of illegal AK-47s, assorted enemy web gear, belts, hats, helmets and anything else we could carry to the rear in a pack or willy-peter bag.

Down the road from our headquarters was a SeaBee compound which contained a bunch of construction sailors that rarely left the rear areas. They had lots of booze and absolutely no access to souvenirs that they could take home to prove they'd been in the war. It was a case of supply and demand. We rapidly established a thriving commerce and several world-class hangovers.

When the market became saturated, we moved our scam to the Air Force units at Danang air base and scored even better with airmen who served a year in Vietnam and never got outside the wire. They'd buy anything as a genuine NVA or VC war souvenir that could not be readily identified as U.S. issue and was pitched with an appropriately bloody war story. Business was booming and so were our alcohol-soaked heads.

One particularly effective scam that

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**ABOVE:** Soviet-made gas masks played little part in the war, but they made the day for any collector lucky enough to find one.

**BELOW:** NVA bush hats (left), helmets (right), fatigue shirts and canteens often went to the Marines in I Corps because they had the most contact with them in the early days of the war.



**ABOVE LEFT:** If a patrol was lucky enough to kill an enemy officer, they might come home with a few ComBloc holsters. Photo: Darrel Lulling

**ABOVE RIGHT:** Some of the easiest-to-find enemy equipment in Vietnam included locally made web gear, stick grenades (bottom right) and cleaning-oil containers for ComBloc weapons (bottom left). **ABOVE RIGHT (top):** An NVA's battle kit might include an E-tool, pistol holster, as well as large gear and magazine pouches.

**BELOW:** An NVA belt buckle taken from a dead communist during the battle for Hue in 1968.



**ABOVE:** Web gear used by the communists was either manufactured in North Vietnam or made locally in the South. Photo: Darrel Lulling

**BELOW:** Shoulder pouches for carrying stick grenades were a favorite prize for souvenir-hunting soldiers. Photo: Darrel Lulling







# SOF's WIDE WORLD OF WAR

Over the past 10 years Soldier of Fortune correspondents and training teams have chased wars and insurgencies around the world to bring readers a unique, over-the-shoulder view of the fights for — and against — freedom. Grueling treks to and through the world's hot-spots have gained SOF a reputation for telling a story like no other magazine can. These are some of our major accomplishments in the first decade.

- ① **The Mojave Desert:** When American military planners decided to improve the nation's capability to fight in the deserts of the Middle East, SOF correspondents followed the troops into the blazing Mojave and reported on Army, Marine Corps and Air Force units being trained for rapid deployment to some of the most rugged combat conditions in the world.
- ② **Hollywood:** SOF reports on the movies — especially those that depict mercenaries or Vietnam combat troops — to keep Tinsel Town on its toes. We provide honest, insightful reviews that keep readers from wasting time and money on cheap rip-offs.
- ③ **Alaska and the Arctic:** Fighting the cruel weather in these areas, SOF accompanies American and allied military units — including the Eskimo Scouts of the Alaska National Guard — across the tundra.
- ④ **New York:** As part of increasing coverage of law-enforcement efforts to police America's mean streets, SOF is set to bring readers a first-hand report on the NYPD's low-profile Stake-Out Unit, the men who are frequently forced to shoot first and ask questions later.
- ⑤ **Washington, D.C.:** SOF experts advise members of the legislature on Soviet capabilities and testify before Congressional committees on Yellow Rain, MIAs and the situation in Central America. Our correspondents provide thoughtful, unique analyses of defense issues and foreign



policy from exclusive sources at the seat of government.

- ⑥ **Mexico:** Along America's strategic southern border and into the interior, SOF correspondents report on efforts to control the flow of Central American refugees, Mexico's declining defense capabilities, and efforts to stem the flow of illegal drugs into the U.S.
- ⑦ **Cuba:** SOF Publisher Robert K. Brown had his first exposure to communist betrayal in a visit to Cuba after the revolution. From the Marielle evacuation to Angola, SOF has tracked Castro's Cuban operatives and their efforts to spread communist influence around the world.
- ⑧ **Haiti:** Through firsthand observation and interviews with American mercs who fought there, SOF continues to cover this volatile island paradise.
- ⑨ **Grenada:** SOF military experts gave U.S. intelligence unexpected insights through on-island investigation and analysis of incriminating top secret documents abandoned by the collapsed New Jewel regime.
- ⑩ **Central America:** SOF correspondents and training teams report on and improve the battlefield capabilities of El Salvador's armed forces as well as those of the anti-communist Freedom

- ⑪ **Surinam:** SOF presents an exclusive, first-person report from an American merc who was a military commander with the Surinamese Liberation Forces. He tells of training, planning, combat and ultimate betrayal in this little-known war.
- ⑫ **Peru:** An SOF reporter eludes strict control and reports first-hand observations from battle-scarred Ayacucho. His stories provided a strange perspective on Peru's mystical Marxist Indian revolutionaries.
- ⑬ **Brazil:** An SOF correspondent obtains the first interview with noted Belgian merc Black Jack Schramme since he was imprisoned in his chosen country. It's a new view of what really happened during the bloody war in the Congo.
- ⑭ **The Falklands:** SOF's source for a firsthand report of Great Britain's hard-won victory in the South Atlantic was on the ground with the landing forces. His insights painted a stirring portrait of what the British Paras and Royal Marines went through to defeat Argentine defenders.
- ⑮ **Angola and West Africa:** For two arduous months an SOF correspondent accompanied

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war included exclusive battlefield reports. A veteran trainer told the firsthand story of his experiences with a secret U.S. Special Forces A-team working with Jordan's commandos. SOF correspondents jumped with Israeli Defense Force parachute units and filed glowing reports on these formidable airborne soldiers.

**24 U.S.S.R:** Due to a series of intelligence coups scored in Afghanistan and elsewhere, SOF is cited as one of the most authoritative sources in the world for technical information on Soviet weaponry.

**25 Afghanistan:** SOF correspondents are a favorite of the hard-fighting mujahideen. Our eyewitness reports of actual engagements with Soviet and Kabul-regime troops have provided some of the most searing insights into the Afghan Holy War to liberate their country. SOF's assessment of various tribal factions and their special interests has increased worldwide understanding of a gallant people and a brutal war.

**26 India:** Other sources were not so lucky, but an SOF reporter managed to stay on the ground during the Punjab Battle for the Golden Temple between Sikh separatists and government troops. Our coverage of violence in this populous nation included firsthand reports following the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

**27 Sri Lanka:** As this issue went to press an SOF correspondent was on the island nation preparing to file exclusive reports and photographs of fighting between government forces and the fierce Tamil Tiger guerrillas.

**28 Burma:** Regular access to the anti-communist resistance forces provided SOF correspondents with a unique perspective on this area. Our reporters were on the scene to provide exclusive reports of the Burmese Army — using helicopters provided by the U.S. to help in anti-drug smuggling efforts — cornering the Karen National Liberation Army.

**29 Cambodia:** SOF correspondents slipped through a tight security net to get firsthand observations of the resistance to continuing Vietnamese occupation of this country. Our reports from the border refugee camps were particularly moving.

**30 Thailand:** Continuing coverage of the military capabilities of this pro-Western country have been obtained by SOF staffers using helicopters, motorcycles, bicycles and parachutes. We concentrated on Ranger and Airborne units who are guarding the country's border with communist-occupied Cambodia.

**31 Philippines:** The Moro War has not ended and separatists continue to resist the troops of President Ferdinand Marcos. SOF is on the scene throughout the archipelago from Luzon to Mindanao.

**32 Taiwan:** Our SOF weapons experts traveled to this bulwark of freedom in Asia to look at military hardware and report on continued resistance to the communist regime in mainland China.

**33 Korea:** SOF correspondents spent time with crack fighting units from the DMZ south to report on the war that won't end on this troubled peninsula.

**34 The Pacific:** As part of SOF's continuing coverage of man's quest for adventure, we are scheduled to report on a dive into the murky lagoon of Truk where Imperial Japan lost much of her wartime support shipping to Allied air attacks. Coverage will also include a visit by veterans of both Japanese and American forces to the tiny island of Iwo Jima, scene of some of the Pacific Campaign's bloodiest fighting. ✎

Angolan anti-communist resistance forces patrolling the cruel bush of their homeland. Exclusive coverage of mercenary activities in this part of Africa makes SOF a source for what little information emerges from the interior.

**16 Southern Africa:** SOF explodes myths concerning the complex relationship between blacks and whites in this turbulent part of the world. Correspondents with service in Rhodesia's most well-known military formations return to Zimbabwe to view the aftermath of war and the failures of a communist government. SOF military experts assess the growing threat to stability posed by the situation in Mozambique.

**17 East Africa:** SOF continues to cover one of the last and most dangerous outposts of the French Foreign Legion. Our reports from the area are written by former Legionnaires who provide some shocking revelations about service in this fascinating force.

**18 Libya:** Despite the most stringent censorship, SOF's professional military experts manage to keep a close eye on Colonel Qaddafi and this hot-bed of international terrorism.

**19 Morocco:** SOF correspondents are on the ground with the Sultan's forces fighting an increasing threat of communist-inspired terrorism

in this strategic part of the African continent.

**20 Northern Ireland:** Despite the danger in the streets of Belfast, SOF correspondents accompany British troops on tense patrols and provide first-hand details of IRA terror tactics.

**21 NATO Nations:** Traveling with the elite combat and anti-terrorist forces of Europe, SOF correspondents give readers firsthand observations on the strengths and weaknesses of our allies. Experienced observers provide startling analyses of NATO capabilities while humping in the bush with troops on annual exercise in Scandinavia as well as central and southern Europe.

**22 Warsaw Pact Nations:** SOF analysts keep a sharp watch on the weapons and tactics of the opposition even if it requires riding an East German armed patrol boat into the Baltic Sea and interviewing communist sailors.

**23 The Middle East:** SOF correspondents penetrated Beirut even before the 1982 Israeli assault on the PLO. Firsthand reports filed by reporters on the ground with the U.S. Marines in 1983 added to our coverage of continuing factional fighting in this area. Outside professional military circles, SOF brought first word to the world of Western trainers for Saudi Arabian defense forces. SOF analysis of the continuing Iran-Iraq



## SOF's ROGUES' GALLERY

Over the years, SOF has brought readers personal glimpses of genuine soldiers and adventurers who cover the action around the world, help train people fighting for freedom in their country and — in their spare time — help put out a magazine with the reach and appeal of *Soldier of Fortune*. We thought it was about time our readers saw the faces that go with the names of these dedicated professionals.

### Brig. Gen. Harry C. "Heine" Aderholt (USAF, Ret.)

Served in the military for 34 years, 26 in unconventional warfare operations, including a tour as Air Officer for MACV/SOG in Vietnam. He was the last general officer out of Southeast Asia as CO of MACThai in August 1976.

### Cliff Albright

Retired Republic Airlines DC-9 captain, Commander, Phantom Division, Tennessee Airborne, master parachute rigger, jumpmaster and instructor.

### Sam Allen

Class Three machine-gun dealer in North Carolina. Serves on the county sheriff's auxiliary and Special Tactical and Rappelling (STAR) teams. Armorer in Central America.

### George Bacon III

Special Forces medic in Vietnam, CIA case officer in Laos, CIA Intelligence Star recipient. KIA on 14 Feb. 1976 while fighting the spread of communism in Angola.

### Bill Brooks

SOF's military history editor, veteran of the U.S. Army's 82nd Airborne Division. Completed five-year hitch with French Foreign Legion, discharged as a sergeant. Urban-warfare trainer in Central America.

### Lt. Col. Robert K. Brown (USAR, Ret.)

Editor/Publisher of *Soldier of Fortune*. Assisted Cuban and Haitian exiles in 1960s. In 1968-69, served as S-2, 2/18, 1st Division; CO of Special Forces team A-334 in Vietnam advising Montagnards. Trained in intel and CI. Has reported and advised on wars and armies on every continent for more than 20 years.

### Harry Clafin

SOF's unconventional-operations editor and former USMC Force Recon NCO in Vietnam and Laos. Owner, Starlight Training Center, Liberal, Missouri. Weapons trainer in Central America.

### Jim Coyne

U.S. Army helicopter door-gunner in Vietnam. SOF reporter and trainer in Thailand, Laos (Liberty City) and Afghanistan.



Brig. Gen. Harry C. "Heine" Aderholt (USAF, Ret.)



Cliff Albright



Sam Allen



George Bacon III



Bill Brooks



Robert K. Brown



Harry Clafin



Jim Coyne



John Donovan

**John Donovan**

SOF's explosives/demolitions editor and owner of Donovan Dynamiting of Danvers, Illinois. Former major in Special Forces. Demo trainer in Central America and Afghanistan. Master parachutist and SCUBA diver.

**Dana Drenkowski**

SOF's aviation editor and graduate of U.S. Air Force Academy. Flew more than 200 combat missions over Southeast Asia in F-4s and B-52s. Awarded two Distinguished Flying Crosses. Served in Rhodesia and Central America.

**Larry Dring**

Special Forces captain, four tours in Vietnam, decorations included five Purple Hearts, Cambodian *Medaille Militaire*, four awards of the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry, four Bronze Stars and two Silver Stars. SOF adviser in Beirut. Died 25 Aug. 1983 of heart attack.

**Capt. Dale A. Dye (USMC, Ret.)**

SOF Executive Editor, a 21-year Marine Corps veteran who rose through the ranks. Vietnam tours included 31 combat ops, Bronze Star with combat V for valor, three Purple Hearts, Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry and VN Honor Medal (First Class). Trained with Royal Marines and served in Beirut with multinational force. Indirect-fire weapons trainer in Central America.

**Maj. Mike Williams**

Served in USA Special Forces, 1952-60, including combat tour in Korea. Fought in the Congo in 1964. Served as tactical OIC, Grey Scouts, in Rhodesia in 1976-78. Adviser to numerous exile groups. Licensed commercial pilot and merchant marine captain.

**Michael D. Echanis**

Purple Heart winner in Vietnam. Martial arts instructor, former instructor for U.S. Army Special Forces and U.S. Navy SEALs. Somoza's chief military adviser until his plane crashed and Echanis was KIA on 8 Sep. 1978 near Lake Nicaragua.



**Dana Drenkowski**



**Larry Dring**



**Dale A. Dye**



**Mike Williams**



**Michael D. Echanis**



**Paul Fanshaw**

**Paul Fanshaw**

Six-year veteran U.S. Army and Marine Corps. Twelve-year veteran French Foreign Legion, parachute, small-arms and SCUBA trainer. 2nd Foreign Parachute Rgt. (2e REP), decorated for combat jump on Kolwezi during Simba rebellion.

**Galen Geer**

Served eight years USMC, including two tours in Vietnam in 1967-69, and as DI. Also served with U.S. Army '77-'79. Brought out first AK-74 ammo from Afghanistan in 1980.

**David Isby**

SOF's Soviet analyst. Specialist on Russian military and Afghanistan. Author of *Jane's Weapons and Tactics of the Soviet Army*.

**Ben Jones**

Former officer U.S. Army and USMC. Major, Rhodesian African Rifles. Numerous combat jumps with Fire Force in Rhodesia.

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**Galen Geer**



**David Isby**



**Ben Jones**



# M60

## The Great GPMG SNAFU

by Peter G. Kokalis



The M60 GPMG mounted on the M122 tripod. Photo: Peter Kokalis

**T**HE concept of the so-called "general-purpose machine gun" is a failure. And as a prime example of the GPMG, the well-known M60 has proven to be a *very large failure*. It's a tale that deserves telling for all the Americans who humped and fired M60s in Vietnam and for those of all nationalities who are saddled with the gun today.

The GPMG concept emerged from German blitzkrieg tactics of World War II. Falling somewhere between medium and light machine guns, it is supposed to be light enough for use by squads in the assault and yet heavy enough to provide sustained support fire. It is not satisfactory in either task.

As fire and maneuver tactics have developed — with increasing emphasis on fast-moving units such as immediate-reaction battalions, fire forces or strike forces — the GPMG has proven too cumbersome for employment as a squad automatic weapon. Although equipped with quick-change barrels, it is still insubstantial for protracted support fire. The GPMG's ascendancy has been matched by an unfortunate decline in the science of machine-gun

employment.

In its infancy on the battlefield, the machine gun was used incorrectly as a form of artillery. Since that time the machine gun has often been viewed as a mere bullet hose. The modern machine-gunner is usually capable of little more than pointing (not aiming) his weapon in the direction of the enemy and pulling the trigger. That gives rise to the argument that traditional tactical employment of machine guns no longer applies to the modern battlefield. That's just not so and most professionals could see it if only we had the proper weapons and trained people to employ them.

Do we have any call these days for protracted rates of fire along fixed lines? Emphatically yes, we do.

I was desperate for that potential recently in a small A camp in northern El Salvador. But my Ma Deuce crew didn't know enfilade (firing down the long axis of the target) from defilade (indirect fire on targets



An M60 gunner from the Atlacatl Battalion waits for the Gs in El Salvador's deep bush. Photo: Peter Kokalis

beyond the crew's field of view) and had never sandbagged a tripod in their lives. To make matters worse, I was too occupied with manning our sole M60, for which I had no tripod, to teach them.

Accurate defilade fire is not possible with only a bipod mount. It's also impossible to traverse and search with any degree of precision without a tripod's T&E mechanism. Finally, would you like to move during the final assault under the cover of overhead plunging fire delivered by a GPMG operated off the bipod? I wouldn't. Nor am I particularly fond of moving anywhere on the battlefield with an M60 as the only available machine gun.

The M60 was supposed to be the very model of a modern GPMG. We marched off to Vietnam eagerly clutching its rubber-covered forearm to our bosoms. It was the best. We dearly loved it, that we know, for the Ordnance Corps told us so. And then the



shit hit the fan. The M60 fell into the ultimate crucible and the hype began to pale.

This gun was flawed from its very soul to its outer skin. It fires from the open-bolt position. That's fine. It is gas-operated with a unique constant-energy gas cut-off system. That's *not* fine.

The barrel's gas vent is eight inches from the muzzle. After the projectile passes this point, gas moves downward and strikes a recess milled around the outer circumference of the chromed piston. The gas passes through seven holes drilled into this recess and into the piston's interior. When sufficient energy has been imparted to the piston it begins to move rearward. The holes move away from the gas supply and cut it off. There is no adjustable gas regulator. In theory it is not required. Debris and fouling will hold up the piston's movement only until enough gas arrives to supply the required energy.

That ignores the demonstrable fact that increased fouling will usually decrease the cyclic rate of a gas-operated machine gun. The M60 provides no means by which the

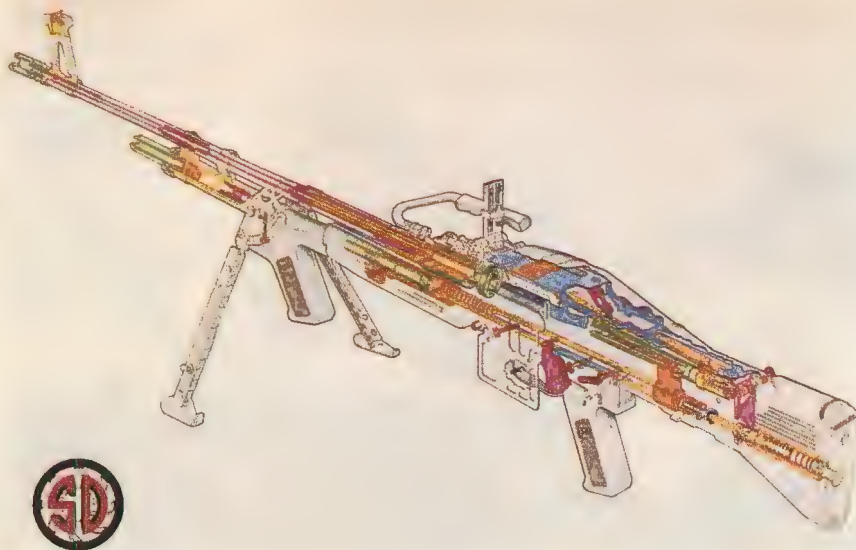
energy level can be increased to bring up the rate of fire. The system is supposed to be self-regulating and has often been referred to as a "constant volume" system. In reality, if the piston cannot be accelerated by the first impulse of gas, it may never receive enough energy to move. It happens all the time.

In the guerrilla-infested area of Ciudad Barrios in El Salvador, armorer Sam Allen and I once worked on six M60s being employed in combat. Fouling and corrosion inside the gas cylinders was so severe that four guns were completely inoperative with frozen pistons. Several of the pistons had to be removed with a punch and hammer. A little investigation revealed the gunners had been instructed by the American MTT (Mobile Training Team) from Panama *never to disassemble the gas system*. But the M60 gas system situation was bad even before the guns found their way to Central America.

Early M60s were equipped with gas-cylinder plugs that had small four-sided heads which vibrated loose during firing. A

new plug with a larger hex-head was issued. It vibrated loose when firing. A slot head was filed across the end of the plug with safety wire run across it and around the top of the gas cylinder. The safety wire regularly slipped out of the slot and the plug vibrated off the cylinder. As a final solution, a hole was drilled through the plug's head to retain the safety wire. Then it was discovered that the gas-cylinder extension (threaded to the front of the gas cylinder) would *also vibrate loose* so the experts recommended retaining it with safety wire on the lock-washer. Unfortunately, these lock-washers break frequently. The gas nut, threaded to the rear of the cylinder, would also vibrate loose and back off against the gas tube. Finally, it became SOP to safety wire *its* lock-washer also. How many gunners (U.S. or Salvadoran) carry a \$75 pair of safety-wire pliers and a spool of stainless-steel aircraft safety wire in their kits?

To make matters worse — and that's hard to do — the M60 piston can easily be reassembled backward. Believe me, if any part can be reinserted incorrectly on a military



small arm, it will be — repeatedly. When that happens only the first round will fire as no gas will enter the system. Can you imagine lying in a ditch with your face in the mud to avoid incoming rounds while trying to remove the safety wire with your hands

and teeth so you can reverse the piston? That's extremely unhealthy. It virtually means a qualified armorer must be present for this gun's gas system to be maintained or someone will die from a stupid mistake that's entirely too easy to make.

That's stupid. But the gun must have maintenance on the gas system and these components should be removed periodically with the wrenches provided on the combination tool. The tool's reamer is used to clean the barrel's gas vent after the gas-cylinder plug has been removed. *Always* replace the piston with its closed face to the rear. Remember that. Most M60 machine gunners don't.

The M60 gas cylinder is sweated and pinned to the barrel. That means when the barrel is changed an entirely new gas system comes into operation. No telling what might be wrong with it. The bipod is also attached to the barrel. Humping spare barrels means dealing with the unnecessary weight of another bipod. That's not the only problem with the M60 barrel and fixed-bipod design.

Each bipod leg includes a perforated sheet-metal skirt which stiffens the leg assembly and supposedly provides a heat-shield and handhold during barrel changes. It doesn't work, so a WWII-vintage asbestos mitten has been issued to protect the crews' hands during hot-barrel changes. Naturally, the mittens are mostly left in the

## OUR WEAPONS WIZARD

Kokalis was testing a rifle and he really didn't want to stop.

Gunfire crackled a few hundred meters away, muffled by red dust that hung thick in the air. Peter G. Kokalis, America's best-known military small-arms technician, struggled up the steep side of the hill, headed for a Salvadoran Army Huey ready to evacuate wounded, and to carry Kokalis back to San Salvador to catch the plane home. He really didn't want to go. He had been doing what he loves best.

A fire fight with communist guerrillas on one side and his beloved Atlacatl Battalion on the other was Peter's idea of the way to test the Beretta SC 70. The weapon had already been examined minutely in his workshop and hundreds of rounds had already been fired under range conditions, but Kokalis' analytical bias always favors the user. He felt he had to carry it in a combat environment before he could pass judgement.

User-testing and sophisticated technical judgement are what Kokalis' readers expect, and many of those readers must visualize Peter as a kind of a Greek-American Mr. T with the brain of Ian Fleming's "Q." The reality is somewhat different. SOP's military small-arms expert's avuncular appearance and precise, professorial diction belie his active service in U.S. Army technical intelligence, and a lifetime of dedicated study of the tools of destruction. All in all, the complex background of Peter

Kokalis has given him the unusual breadth of learning and experience that make him, simply, America's best and most popular gun writer.

Kokalis' father had arrived from Greece at Ellis Island with an apple in his pocket — which another immigrant stole from him — and built his own successful grocery business by the time Peter was a young man. Peter George Kokalis was born and raised in Chicago, Illinois, and earned his B.A. in Political Science from Northwestern University. Like many ethnic Americans, he felt an obligation to do national service and joined the Army as soon as he graduated from college. That was where he became fascinated with machine guns.

"The machine gun is, beyond all other devices," he says, "an instrument dedicated to destruction. In our century, it has been the weapon of war. All other devices have constructive uses: the rifle is used to feed people, mortars blast avalanches from hillsides and gas wells have been dug with thermonuclear bombs. But the machine gun was and is designed only to kill. It is my symbol of the madness — and the necessity — of war."

Kokalis is hard-working, religious, idealistic, and convinced that earthly utopias and world peace are not possible because of the nature of man. "And it is the machine gun," muses Kokalis, "beyond any other object, that has personified modern conflict and stripped the heroic illusions from the ugly face of war. It is a device which kills impersonally."

Kokalis is a student — and teacher — on the subject of that mechanical symbol of war. He was trained in the Browning M1919 and M2 .50-cal. machine gun. And his service extended to the introduction of the M60.

"I can't tell you how that weapon was hyped," he laughed. "Promoters of the M16 had nothing on those for the '60. We were told it would do everything but brush your teeth."

Of course, it didn't. But Kokalis can tell you for hours about how no MG *can* do everything. And *if* he runs out of arguments, he can show you examples.

Locked away in storage in Northern Arizona, Kokalis' collection contains over 350 military small arms. There are over 100 Title II firearms, and every one is mint.

"I suppose you'd say I'm a condition collector." Peter's long, slender fingers flutter over an MP44 that looks too new to be anything but a re-enactment-society replica. "See this — the original assault rifle — for instance. As late in the war as this weapon was made, most rifles were badly built. But this one is perfect. No number of overstamped imports will change the collectibility of a piece like this. And for my job, it's vital that I have one. From the AK-74 and the M16 to the G11 . . . this is their grandfather."

The MP44 would be enough, but from the Suomi SMG on the wall to the M2 HMG covering a quarter of the floor of the small lock-up, with the Brens and the Stens and the military pistols between, it's hard to concentrate. Everything's

The Maremont M60E3 GPMG is far better than the older model.

supply room or the nearest ditch. A towel, cleaning rag or fatigue shirt does the job better. The rather flimsy carrying handle, which would make an adequate handhold for barrel changes, has been foolishly attached to the receiver — not the barrel — and cannot be used to facilitate changes.

There's more. The bipod legs are designed to be folded up against the barrel by pulling outward and compressing a lock-spring. These springs break frequently and it's a common sight to see M60s being carried with one or both bipod legs dangling in the breeze. The bipod-leg plunger permits height adjustment through five positions from a minimum of 10 inches to a maximum of 14 inches. That's thoughtful but the bipod yoke is attached to the barrel directly behind the flash suppressor and that's *too far forward*.

While a bipod provides control over the weapon and produces smaller burst groups, positioning it up near the muzzle sharply restricts lateral maneuverability. And the yoke rotates about the barrel's axis only which means *no lateral pivot* without physi-



cally shifting the gun. Moving targets are difficult to address quickly under these design restrictions. Targets on the flanks cannot be engaged without lifting the weapon off the ground and re-positioning it. That's an awkward movement from the prone position with a 23-lb. machine gun.

A more sensible position for the bipod yoke would have been eight inches to the rear in back of the gas-port plug. With the bipod yoke located in its present position and

with the bipod extended, the gun can be rested muzzle down in the ground. If it can be, it will be.

The M60 flash suppressor, threaded and roll-pinned to the muzzle, has five longitudinal ports. It performs its intended function adequately which is refreshing. There are some other interesting — if not perfect — points about the design of the M60.

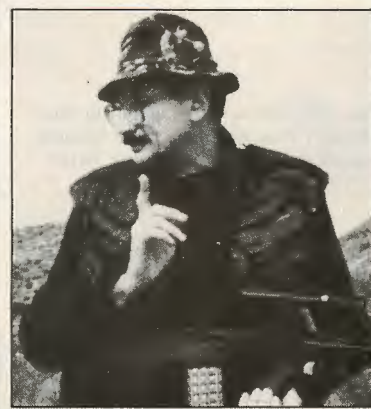
The barrel is 22 inches long without the muzzle device. The rifling has four grooves

there. Everything looks new. And everything shoots.

"This is my reference library," Kokalis explains as he paws through his guns, looking for something still more obscure than the last piece you held. "When I worked as a geologist [M.S. in Geology from Arizona State University] books were important, but reputations were made and broken by the way the rocks and structures varied from the texts. Military small arms are no different. A combat-veteran SOF reader will always tell an article or book dummed up from references. And he can tell when the author writes from his experience, and from having his hands on the gun."

Peter is famed for precision and hands-on expertise unmatched in firearms journalism. He also serves as a military-small-arms consultant to several foreign governments. In the midst of such a busy schedule, he's found time to acquire a reputation for cantankerousness.

But if you think Peter's a crank, it's because you don't understand him. Peter's like the archetypal professor, whose business it is to "think otherwise." Kokalis illustrates this best by being one of the few brown-shoe Army champions of micro-caliber assault rifles. While most of his military classmates — and many who are younger — still bewail the passage of "real men's rifles" like the Springfield, Garand and M14, SOF's military small-arms editor chronicles, explains and applauds the direction of modern firearms development.



SOF's ordnance expert and master machine-gunner Peter G. Kokalis.

"Most men who loved heavy rifles didn't have to carry them. After the broadsides of the assault rifle/'battle rifle' controversy of four years ago, I got several letters from WWII combat vets — even Marines — who sang the praises of the select-fire M2 carbine . . . partly because it was over *four pounds* lighter than the M1 rifle."

Some readers believe Kokalis is prejudiced against the small-caliber, high-velocity cartridges developed at the last turn of the century. But Kokalis denies the charge of ballistic bigotry as he defends his account of the small-arms side of the history of modern war: "Every major army in the world has developed light, select-fire weapons to fire micro-caliber ultrahigh-velocity ammo. Increased soldier ammo load and decreased soldier fatigue are a necessary

development in light of the fire-and-movement tactics of the last 40 years. No matter how the sentimentalists cry, no major army is going to backtrack to heavier rifles and their corresponding more powerful loads. That isn't prejudice, it's history."

Kokalis is unique in military journalism. He's scientifically educated and has been both working photographer and journalist.

"Training in scientific method is the biggest edge I have on the competition. Take, for instance, 'power factoring.' Many published gun writers are convinced that mass-times-velocity has something to do with power and is some kind of measure of muzzle energy that is more accurate than Newton's equations. It's unbelievable. If they'd ever studied physics in high school they would know that there's a momentum formula 'mass-times-velocity' but it simply doesn't represent energy. Power factoring was designed as a means of giving traditional calibers a scoring edge in competitive shooting. To put it generously, there is no proven relationship between power factoring and the combat effectiveness of a cartridge."

Needless to say, the average writer for or reader of average gun magazines is only confused by such statements. But, as Peter says, "SOF readers *aren't* ordinary readers. My mail shows an astounding sophistication on the part of our readers. And if you don't think they're on top of things, just print a technical error!"

— Bill Guthrie



with a right-hand twist of one turn in 11.5 inches. The bore and chamber are chrome-plated. In addition, there is a Stellite liner in the six inches of bore in front of the chamber. Stellite is an alloy made of cobalt, chromium, tungsten and molybdenum with traces of iron which retains its mechanical strength at high temperatures. It sounds good but there are drawbacks. The interference fit of the liner is critical as gas seeping between it and barrel interfaces can eventually blow out the liner. The Belgians and British discovered this the hard way and were unable to produce satisfactory Stellite liners for the MAG 58 GPMG. Stellite liners first appeared on U.S. Browning machine-gun barrels (both .30 and .50 caliber) after the Korean War. The liner should be inspected periodically. It must be free of chips and cracks and the liner expansion gap must be less than 1/8-inch, as measured with the M8 barrel-erosion gauge.

The M60 barrel is changed by removing the belt of ammo, retracting the bolt group and pushing the barrel catch (located on the trunnion block under the carrying handle) to the right while rotating the lock lever upward. Then withdraw the barrel. Trained crews need no more than eight seconds for a barrel change. Because of the bipod's location, many have stated that the chamber end of the barrel and the receiver/gas tube will fall in the mud during barrel changes in the field. I have never seen this happen. Men rarely take the time to change barrels when under fire.

A square-post front sight is sweated and pinned to the barrel. It's workable but far from optimum. While the sight is very sturdy, it is extremely high-profile and snags frequently when moving through dense brush. It cannot be adjusted for windage or elevation zero. In theory, the rear sight must be recalibrated every time a barrel is changed. In practice, no one bothers.

The folding rear sight of the M60 is mounted to the trunnion block in back of the carrying handle on a dovetail base above two ball bearings over springs. The sight must be rotated upward for use. For some strange reason, there is no battle sight in the horizontal position. Elevation can be adjusted from 300 to 1,100 meters but it's not easy. The elevation markings are small and difficult to discern even in the daylight. The open square notch is mounted to a spring-loaded slide release used for making major changes in elevation. A rotating knob is used for making fine adjustments. Four clicks on this knob equal a one-mil change in elevation. There is a windage knob on the left side of the sight but the index scale is just as bad or worse. The index marks are almost invisible to the naked eye. One click on the windage knob equals a one-mil change in deflection and the sight can be adjusted five mils right or left of zero. Night-vision equipment can also be mounted over the top cover.

Given all the problems with this sight and its inadequate scales, veteran gunners have come up with an alternative method of

zeroing the M60. Pace off 25 meters and place a one-inch-square paster on a target. Flip up the rear sight and center the windage by eye-balling. Firing single shots only, adjust the elevation knob up or down until the shots impact on the paster. Pay no attention whatever to the graduated range scale. Then, without moving the adjustment knob, loosen the screw on the range scale. Slide the scale up or down until the rear sight is set for 500 meters and lock down the set screw. The M60 is now zeroed for all ranges.

Moving up on the gun, a forearm assembly includes a ventilated sheet-metal heat guard which covers the rear eight inches of the barrel.

The underside surrounds the gas tube and is covered with rubber. Although the M60 can be fired in the hip-assault position using the extended left bipod leg for support, the forearm affords a more comfortable, reliable surface for this purpose. There's not too much trouble with this aspect of M60 design —

until you have to remove the forearm assembly for cleaning. Gunners are taught to insert the nose of a cartridge into the latch hole at the bottom rear of the guard and depress the latch. Raising the rear end slightly, they should be able to withdraw the forearm assembly. It doesn't always work that way. This simple feature can be the only component on the M60 that can prove difficult to disassemble. The latch springs also break on occasion.

The front sling swivel is attached to the left front of the forearm by two screws with lock washers. They will loosen and should be inspected often to keep gunners carrying the weapon on a sling from

The M60 first saw real action in the Vietnam War where its flaws became immediately apparent. Photo: DOD



crushing their toes when the swivel detaches from the gun. On early forearm assemblies, the swivel bracket was mounted vertically, but this was modified by canting the bracket toward the rear on later specimens. The rear sling swivel is mounted on top of the butt-stock. Surprise! That's exactly where it belongs. The black nylon "silent type" padded sling is the very best I have ever used on a GPMG or light machine gun. It's very comfortable even on long patrols — when you can find one to use.

The M60 receiver body is a bent sheet-metal pressing. It's riveted to a forged trunnion block. The gas tube is threaded and pinned to the trunnion block. The feed ramp is also attached to the trunnion block. In the fall of 1964, the feed-ramp angle was decreased to prevent the nose of an incoming cartridge from striking the primer of any live round in the chamber. A number of helicopter door guns had blown up because of this shortcoming. Two side-by-side machined guide rails are riveted to both the trunnion block and receiver body. Early receivers failed at about 50,000 rounds. The life span has been increased by the use of Bond-tite rivets on later guns.

Guide rails support and track the bolt group. The right guide rail is cut for the ejection

port. There are three holes aft of the ejection port. They were designed as a case deflector, but the concept caused "spin-backs" into the receiver and was soon discarded. The non-reciprocating cocking lever's runway is cut into the receiver body's right side. The cocking lever is held to the receiver by a sheet-metal guide which, in turn, is retained by a screw and lock washer. It's yet another problem to plague gun crews and armorers.

These screws loosen with irritating regularity and they should be re-inserted with Super Strength Loc-Tite — when and if that's available. The cocking lever's handle is not of the folding type and it will bend or break if struck with a hard object, such as the heel of a boot. The front tripod studs are fixed to the trunnion block. The rear tripod bracket is welded to the receiver body. A machined guide rail for the buffer is welded to the bottom of the receiver body. Several of the M60s I have worked with in El Salvador showed evidence of welding repairs when rebuilt in 1975 and 1977. This is acceptable only if the receivers remain absolutely firm and straight.

In principle, the M60 operates using the bolt system of the WWI Lewis Gun. The operating rod carries a fixed cam yoke which rides in a cam slot cut into the bolt body. The bolt rotates on this cam yoke which is fitted with an anti-friction roller bearing. This is another short-sighted design fault. The bearing must be inspected for chips and excessive side play on its shaft. Burrs and gouges on the front of the cam yoke (they develop after just a few hundred rounds) must be removed with a Swiss file. The piston post is permanently attached to the front of the operating rod where it ends in the shape of a scraper with helical cuts which are supposed to remove fouling from the gas tube.

The action is short-stroke as the piston travel is limited to 2.375 inches. The operating rod is separated from the bolt group by pushing the rod away from the bolt and pivoting it upward. When reinstalling, position the rear of the operating-rod yoke against the rear firing-pin spool. Push on the op rod to compress the firing-pin spring and place the operating-rod yoke between the two firing-pin spools. The bolt body can also be assembled backward onto the operating rod although I have never personally witnessed that.

As the bolt enters the barrel socket, a cartridge has been deflected downward and into the chamber by the front cartridge guide, trunnion-block feed ramp and the barrel-socket feed ramp. The barrel-socket lead cams rotate the bolt clockwise as the two locking lugs enter into the socket-locking cam. And here's where the fun really begins.

The rotating action is quite violent and most of the forces are directed against the end of the lugs, especially the top lug which has the smallest surface area. After a few hundred rounds the ends of the locking lugs will begin to chip away, increasing wear on the barrel socket camways, which in turn places even greater stress on the locking lugs. That generally means *M60 bolts have to be discarded after 15,000 to 20,000 rounds*. The bearing surfaces on the barrel socket and bolt must be kept lubricated — and not with Break-Free CLP. Latest reports indicate that guns maintained with this product are exhibiting excessive wear. If not constantly shaken, the Teflon beads, upon which Break-Free's lubricating characteristics depend, will remain in the bottom of the container and never reach the weapon.

Chipped areas on the bolt lugs should be carefully rounded with a Swiss file. Some armorers have stated that this merely removes more metal, increasing the gaps between the lugs and barrel sockets further and accelerating wear. Not so. Allowing the sharp edges to remain focuses the points of stress and increases the crystallization process that causes erosion on the lug ends. In addition, if left unattended, these sloughed-up sharp edges on the upper lug will eventually start to cut into the bottom of the feed tray.



After the cartridge has been chambered, its base contacts the bolt face, compressing the ejector spring while the extractor snaps over the rim. As the bolt rotates, the firing pin — retained by its rear spool on the op rod's cam yoke — moves forward, assisted by the force of its compressed drive spring. I remain skeptical concerning the value of the firing-pin spring as the gun can be fired without it. The firing pin, as well as its spring and cup, are M60 components that can be reassembled backward. Remember Murphy's Law?

The correct sequence is firing pin to the front (with its two spools to the rear), followed by the cup with the spring inside and to the rear.

A small bolt-plug pin must first be removed before the bolt plug can be unscrewed to disassemble the firing pin components. If you're armed with an M60 or tasked with repairing them, always keep a small bag of these pins tied around your neck. They are constantly lost. Without the pin, the gun will fire only 40-50 rounds before the bolt plug rotates off and everything ceases to function. The cam-roller assembly can also be reassembled backward, but this is not often encountered as the bolt-plug pin cannot then be replaced. Be sure the cam roller is rotated topside when reinserting these components into the receiver.

After ignition, gas action drives the piston rearward about 13/16 of an inch before unlocking commences. Pressures have by this time dropped to a safe level. The delay also contributes to the gun's low cyclic rate. The bolt rotates counterclockwise and at full unlock, the op rod's cam yoke has once more fully compressed the firing-pin spring. As rearward travel continues, the empty case is withdrawn from the chamber and spun sideward to pivot about the extractor claw, ejecting out the port on the receiver's right side.

As the bolt and operating rod move rearward they compress the recoil spring. This drive spring is of multistrand construction. Machine-gun recoil springs are subjected to sudden loading which initiates shock waves that travel to the fixed end of the coil. These direct and reflected waves combine to produce a transient load that is extremely destructive to single-strand springs. Using multistrand wire can raise spring life by 10 times by avoidance of "wind-up" produced by the twisting movement from the axial load placed on a single-strand spring. A multistrand spring in the M60 seems smart *but* the spring drags along the bottom of the op rod's interior and flat spots develop which compromise the advantage gained through the use of multistrand wire. When these flat spots are noted, the spring should be discarded.

The head of the recoil spring's guide rod is press-fit and induction-brazed onto the rod. These heads will often loosen if improperly brazed — many of them are — and



should be inspected carefully.

The buffer's plunger rests in the guide rod's head. The original buffer employed a series of composition-fiber pads with a return spring. It can be identified by its stainless-steel exterior which is clearly marked, "DO NOT OIL INTERIOR." These buffers were withdrawn in 1965 after they caused

more problems with this flawed GPMG.

As the fiber pads wore out, the gun's cyclic rate became more and more erratic. This caused serious difficulties with the sole-noid-fired M60C helicopter guns. Although they had limit switches, their ammunition drive motors were constant speed. When the gun's cyclic rate dropped, ammunition

### M60 GPMG SPECIFICATIONS

<b>Caliber:</b> .....	7.62x51mm NATO
<b>Operation:</b> .....	Gas. Constant-energy cut-off system. No adjustable regulator. Bolt/operating-rod mechanism based on those of the FG42 — Lewis Gun.
<b>Cyclic rate:</b> .....	550 rpm.
<b>Feed mechanism:</b> .....	Belt-fed using M13 disintegrating links. Single-pawl system; actuator cam roller and feed arm based on those of the MG42.
<b>Weight, empty, with bipod and buttstock:</b> .....	23 lbs.
<b>Overall length:</b> .....	43.5 inches.
<b>Barrel:</b> .....	Air-cooled, quick-change type. Four grooves with a right-hand twist of one turn in 11.5 inches. Chrome-lined chamber and bore. Stellite liner in the 6 inches of bore forward of the chamber.
<b>Barrel length:</b> .....	22 inches (without flash suppressor).
<b>Sights:</b> .....	High-profile, unprotected front; not adjustable for windage or elevation zero. Folding rear with open U-notch; adjustable for barrel zero and elevation from 300 to 1,100 meters (4 clicks = 1 mil); windage adjustments 5 mils right or left of zero (1 click = 1 mil).
<b>Accessories:</b> .....	M122 tripod, sling, 100-rd. cloth bandoleers, spare-barrel carrying case, night-vision equipment, blank firing adapter, helicopter door-gun conversion components, and cleaning tools.
<b>Manufacturers:</b> .....	Primary U.S. contractor: Saco Defense Systems Division, Maremont Corporation, 291 North Street, Saco, Maine 04072. Australia: Ordnance Factory, Maribyrnong, P.O. Box 1, Ascot Vale, Victoria 3032. Republic of China: Kaohsiung Arsenal, Taiwan.
<b>Status:</b> .....	In service with the armed forces of Australia, El Salvador, Republic of Korea, Republic of China and U.S.A.

backed up and caused a stoppage. The GAU-2A1B minigun eventually replaced the M60C because hard mounting outside the helicopter and sideways positioning, with consequent downward ejection, caused continual and insolvable difficulties.

The M60's new buffer is one of the few shining lights in the evolution of this machine gun. It's a hydraulic design and has a phosphate-finished exterior. Both buffers have a low coefficient of restitution and thus absorb considerable energy to both reduce the felt recoil transmitted to the operator's shoulder and lower the cyclic rate. The buffer, in conjunction with the operating mechanism's rather long "dwell" time, drives the M60's rate of fire down to a very proper 550 rpm.

The buffer is housed within the buttstock. Both are held to the rear of the receiver by the buffer yoke. FM 23-67 states that the buttstock should be detached from the buffer during disassembly by inserting the nose of a cartridge into the latch hole at the end of the butt and depressing the latch. I prefer to keep the stock and buffer together in the field and remove them as a unit from the receiver by withdrawing the buffer yoke. Neither of these components will normally require maintenance. The recoil spring, guide rod, operating rod and bolt group can be withdrawn from the rear of the receiver body after the buttstock and buffer have been removed.

It may be hard to believe I'm saying something positive at this point, but the

M60 buttstock is well-designed and superior to that of the FN MAG 58 machine gun. Of sheet-metal construction, its outer surface is covered with the same rubber used on the forearm, top cover and pistol grip (Mil-Std-417). There is a hinged shoulder rest. Overall, an excellent application of human engineering.

In the very earliest stages of its development the M60 used the MG 42 feed system. Employing both inner and outer feed pawls, which were driven by a feed arm actuated by a roller on top of the bolt body, the belt was moved by the maximum energy level available to the system (just after the round had been fired and once more when it reached the end of its return motion). The pawls moved in opposite directions in two phases as the bolt moved back and forth. As the belt moved only half a pitch in each phase, less force was required for its acceleration across the feed tray.

The cam roller and feed arm were retained on the M60, but the inner and outer pawl system was discarded in favor of a single pawl. Forward motion of the bolt and actuator cam roller causes the feed arm to pivot to the right, forcing the front of the feed-arm lever to the left. The lever draws the feed-pawl plate assembly to the left as well, where the pawl arms drop over and engage the next cartridge for transport and remain there until the preceding round is stripped and fired.

As the bolt travels rearward, the actuator cam roller pivots the feed arm to the left and the feed-pawl assembly transports the next cartridge to the right onto the feed-tray groove. The round is forced down into the groove by the two spring-loaded cartridge guides in the top cover. The empty link is driven out the feed tray's port on the right by the new round. A spring-loaded retaining pawl on the feed tray holds the belt by grabbing onto the second round while the first round is in the tray groove.

While this mechanism has been much criticized by those who bewail the dropping of the German two-pawl system, it does work. There is sufficient reserve power to lift a 100-rd. belt vertically, albeit somewhat sluggishly when the gun is badly fouled. Few realistic scenarios require the gunner to stand and fire with an unsupported, free-hanging 100-rd. belt.

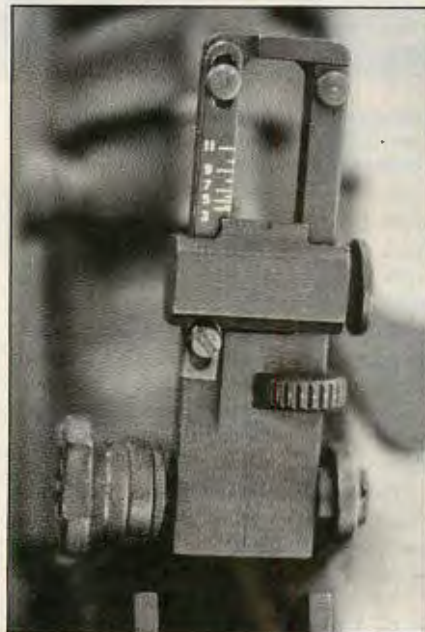
Once again, that doesn't mean the designers hit the mark. There are legitimate criticisms to be leveled at the M60 feed system. The top cover's outer shell is a thin aluminum stamping. The rear portion is covered with rubber in the area where the gunner places his support hand. The front portion is black anodized and the finish wears away much too quickly, leaving a silver mirror to shine in the gunner's — or the enemy's — eyes. I have toted many aerosol cans of flat-black stove paint to El Salvador to deal with that problem but your average grunt gunner is not going to have paint available.

*Continued on page 108*



ABOVE: The M60 GPMG field-stripped.  
Photo: Peter Kokalis

BELOW: M60 gas system with stainless-steel safety wire on gas-port plug, gas-cylinder nut and extension washers.  
Photo: Peter Kokalis



ABOVE: The sights on the M60 are graduated from a distance of 300 meters out to 1,100 meters. LEFT: The carrying handle on the M60 is mounted on the trunnion instead of the barrel where it could make barrel changes easier.



# LIBERTY CITY

## SOF's POW Patrol in Laos Yields Yellow Rain

by Thomas D. Reisinger

**L**IBERTY City was the codename for LSOF's outpost in communist Laos. It was constructed to serve as a Forward Operating Base (FOB) for our planned POW/MIA mission.

Built of bamboo and thatch, it sat on high ground above the Mekong. Zigzag trenches linked defensive bunkers we built to ring the compound in case the Laotians decided to foreclose on our lease. To the best of our knowledge, Liberty City was the only permanent anti-communist installation in Laos in the late 70s and early 80s — even though we closed it down after five months.

You've seen Liberty City before in SOF. Our January 1984 cover photo showed the site as it looked when we took Bob Brown up to see what he'd paid for in his continuing efforts to obtain a full accounting of United States POWs and MIAs. That article simply described the Laotian anti-communist resistance effort at that time as we did not want to compromise our on-going POW/MIA efforts. However, sufficient time has passed to allow us to tell the story of Liberty City, also known as FOB 81. Some names have been changed or *noms de guerre* assigned to protect those who *may* be innocent.

It all started with an intriguing phone call from Washington, D.C. to SOF's offices in mid-March 1981. It was from three ex-Special Forces Vietnam Vets who had been recruited by Lieutenant Colonel James "Bo" Gritz for a POW/MIA rescue mission which went belly-up. Medal of Honor winner Fred Zabitosky, Son Tay Raiders' Earl Bleacher and 20-year Special Forces veteran James Monaghan as well as others from the Gritz team had become disillusioned with Gritz when he could not provide the necessary funding or intelligence for his proposed mission. They called Brown, who had been following the progress of the abortive Gritz operation, and asked him to assist them in talking to George Brooks, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia. The Brooks had already given Gritz \$27,500 of their own money and the SFers and Brown felt additional contributions would be



Uniformed LULF soldier trains to man Liberty City's perimeter, just in case of communist discovery.

wasted. At a meeting at the Brooks' New York residence, Brown and the three ex-SFers convinced George Brooks and his wife, Gladys, to cut Gritz off.

Zabitosky recalls that in subsequent meetings Bob Brown asked if "Earl and I would go to work for SOF to see if there were U.S. POW/MIAs held against their will in Laos and what it would take to get them out."

Zabitosky, Bleacher and Monaghan agreed the SOF project offered some hope as it had the advantage of solid funding which was lacking in Gritz' effort.

The next three years would find the SOF POW/MIA team, consisting of SOF staffers and their associates, journeying to the mysterious and often dangerous environs of Thailand's "Golden Triangle" and into communist-occupied Laos where Liberty City (FOB 81), was established to serve as a launch area from which recon teams and/or intelligence agents could infiltrate Laos

to search for U.S. POW/MIAs.

The SOF team, after making an estimate of the situation, decided to contact General Vang Pao, the H'mong general who led the CIA-sponsored "secret war" against the communists in Laos. We hoped he could provide a source of reliable intelligence through his anti-communist contacts still deep inside Laos.

His appearance, along with his entourage, at Brown's Boulder home marked the first concrete move by SOF in its search for POW/MIAs.

"Gentlemen," the General began, "I realize what you really want is information about your missing comrades in Southeast Asia. I can help to provide such aid. But, let me give you a quid pro quo: I want the following before anything can be given by my side and what I want will have to be in three phases. First, I want the issue of chemical biological warfare against my people in Laos by the Vietnamese brought before the United Nations. Secondly, in exchange, I will have my organization turn over 17 sets of remains of missing Americans to you. Thirdly, you must assist me in arming and



equipping a battalion of my men in Laos who, in turn, will form the nucleus of a fighting force which will eventually throw the Vietnamese out of Laos."

Brown's eyes widened with disbelief. His wily guest had opened the door of opportunity for SOF to get firmly established in Southeast Asia. But at what cost? Certainly SOF alone could not change world opinion — or fund the purchase of arms for a battalion. However, Brown agreed to work toward Vang Pao's goals in order to obtain Vang Pao's cooperation. Vang Pao then gave Zabitovsky a letter of introduction to a Vang Pao agent in Santa Ana, California.

Zabitovsky and Bleacher flew to the coast to meet with that agent on 13 April, who produced another letter from Vang Pao to be given to the chief of staff of the Laotian resistance forces covertly headquartered in a refugee camp on the Thai-Laos border. SOF staffer Jim Coyne joined them and they flew to Bangkok on 26 April.

In the following days, contacts were established through the "old boy" network among U.S. Embassy officials and various indigenous personnel who provided varying degrees of assistance during the length of the mission.

On 4 May, the SOF team arrived at a Laos refugee camp and interviewed individuals who had allegedly suffered from Vietnamese attacks of yellow rain. One refugee, referred to SOF by Vang Pao's agent, provided a sample of what he claimed was "yellow rain" residue. Bleacher immediately flew it to the United States for testing in a private laboratory. We were suspicious that an official government agency might not provide an honest analysis as some government personnel might object to giving SOF credit for the find.

The private lab, which we later found out was incapable of conducting the sophisticated tests, produced negative results. Consequently, the remaining residue was turned over to Congressman Jim Leach's office through a third party who in turn gave it to

**Author assisted with organization and construction, but devoted most time in SOF's Laos outpost to medcaps and training medics.**

**Log-and-bamboo bunkers punctuated zigzag trenches that had been dug under Fred Zabitovsky's watchful eye.**

the appropriate U.S. laboratory. It was analyzed and found to contain deadly mycotoxin. A major coup for SOF! In late 1981, then-Secretary of State Haig revealed that the United States government had four separate samples of yellow rain, one of which was provided by SOF. On 10 November 1981, SOF staffer Jim Coyne was called upon to testify before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee regarding the yellow rain issue.

Meanwhile, in one of the raucous bars on Patpong street in Bangkok, Zabitovsky ran into an old war buddy who we'll call Mo Steinberg, a former Special Forces team leader in 'Nam, and at that time, a "fly anything, anywhere, any time" pilot for the Drug Enforcement Administration. Steinberg had previously agreed to obtain a chopper by hook or by crook (probably the latter) to extract any POW/MIAs Gritz might rescue. He agreed to do the same for the SOF team if the situation required it.

In early June, Zabitovsky was contacted by an American, Rob "Mingo" Applegate, a former Air Force sergeant who had spent much of the previous year in northeast Thailand a few kilometers from the Thai border. He had heard we were searching for MIA information and claimed his contacts in the Lao resistance could steer us in the right direction. A U.S. embassy official in Thailand had given him information both in Bangkok and north in Chiang Rai regarding alleged live-sightings. The U.S. government, though, would not pay for the information. Mingo hoped Zabitovsky would provide assistance to his Lao friends in exchange for information. Fred Zabitovsky assured him of our genuine interest and a

few days later, Zabitovsky, Mingo, and Coyne flew to Chiang Rai in northeastern Thailand to meet and evaluate Mingo's resistance contacts. After checking into the Wiang Inn Hotel, they were introduced to a Mr. "T" who represented himself as the Chief of Staff of the Laos United Liberation Front, and a Mr. "B," his adjutant. "T" headed up the medical section of a refugee camp and "B" was employed as an instructor in a secondary school in Chiang Rai.

After introductions, the conversation turned to POW/MIA information of which "T" claimed there was an abundance. Coincidentally, two recently released prisoners of a communist re-education camp at Muong Sai, Laos had returned to Thailand, where, through the grapevine, they related stories of seeing Caucasian (and so presumably American) prisoners during their respective confinements. Interviews were arranged rather hurriedly since a thorough briefing would have to be prepared prior to Brown's impending arrival in Bangkok.

The two informants were interviewed that day: a H'Mong who we'll call "LP," and a Lao, "TS." Their accounts were amazingly similar in regard to the information concerning the camp layout.

The Lao claimed that while being taken to a building for interrogation he saw two Americans, both in their late 30s, being escorted to another building within the compound.

The H'Mong sightings involved two Americans working on an aircraft on the adjoining airstrip. Neither, however, was able to give any clues as to the identities of the Caucasians.

Brown's arrival served as the catalyst which spurred on our activities. Much delighted with the prospects of preliminary findings, Brown hastened to arrange further and much more in-depth interviews with our sources in Chiang Rai.

After two days of discussions, it was decided that SOF's financial backing would be thrown behind "T's" organization if, in the SOF team's opinion, it at least indicated

some viability and legitimacy and could assist in our POW/MIA mission. Once again a trip was made north and we flew to Chiang Rai and settled in at the Wiang Inn for another round of interrogations. A summary of the interrogations with the H'Mong and the Lao are as follows:

Date of Interview: 16 June 1981  
Name: "LP" — a H'Mong  
Age: 32

"I was taken to Muong Sai on March 30, 1981 where I stayed for 21 days until about the 24th of April. I had been charged with murder of a village headman and was arrested with two others. I am headman of the H'Mong resistance and was born in the village of Sang Num Om in Laos.

"Pathet Lao troops accompanied me to Muong Sai. We were awakened at 0600 hours each morning and then cleaned our room. There were about 20 others with me.

"On or about April 9th, I saw two Americans. The first was tall with a beard and less than 50 years of age. He wore dark pants and shirt but had no shoes or hat. The second man was shorter and heavier with no beard. Again, he wore dark pants and shirt and had no shoes or hat.

"Both men were guarded by two Pathet Lao soldiers armed with AK-47s. I was about 10 feet away from the Americans as they walked by on their way out of the camp.

"I was told by friends that more than 20 Americans are held prisoners at Muong Sai along with at least one Thai prisoner.

"The camp where Americans are kept may be called Nado or Nadoo which is known to be a large jail for criminals and high-ranking enemy officers."

Date of Interview: 17 June 1981  
Name: "TS" — a Lao  
Age: 37

"I was a prisoner in Muong Sai until six months ago. During 1972-73 I worked in Laos under General Vang Pao at his headquarters at Long Tieng. The Pathet Lao felt I needed to be re-educated so they sent me to the prison where I stayed for five years from 1975 until January 1, 1981. My job was to cut wood. I was released because I had finished the re-indoctrination program.

"On December 26, 1980, I saw two Americans sitting in a truck with about seven Laotian soldiers also in the truck. They were on the way to the airfield where the Americans worked on planes.

"One of the Americans was blond, less than 40 years old, had no beard and wore dark yellow clothes, the shirt having long sleeves. The other man had dark hair and a beard. I could not tell his age."

After several hours spent debriefing each informant, it was decided that there was at least some hope that their accounts were true and accurate. Therefore, Brown concluded that we at last had something to focus on even if much of the stories contained circumstantial information at best.

We realized that with our limited resources, mounting a raid based on these intriguing but unconfirmed reports was hazardous at best. Furthermore, we were reluctant to support any such action unless we could be certain we could effect the safe release and return of *all* POWs in the compound.

Therefore we were ecstatic over the information obtained from a new informant.

A summary of his interrogation follows:



**Brown pauses for photos on tour to inspect the fort he'd bought.**

Date of Interview: 16 June 1981  
Name: "K" — a Lao  
Age: 43  
DOB: 1 March 1938  
Occupation: Engineer

"I have known the governor of the province in which the POW camp is located for five years and last spoke to him 10 days ago for about 30 minutes. I feel quite certain that for \$200,000 U.S. my friend will consider using the Pathet Lao military under his command to rescue by force the 10 to 14 American POWs at Muong Sai. There are approximately 100 Vietnamese at the camp but they will be killed when the camp is attacked. They will use commandeered trucks to drive the 140 kilometers to Pak Bang which will take about two to three hours. When we arrive, it will be necessary to be met at the Thai-Lao border by a representative of Mr. Brown's who would exchange the money for the Americans. Naturally, all involved must be guaranteed political asylum in the United States."

Instructions were given to "K" to report on the Vietnamese unit designations and strengths at Muong Sai, along with trying to obtain the governor's files on any American hostages or at least their names.

"K" stated he would depart for Laos on 22 June and return with the information on 4 or 5 July.

With that (and \$500 in expense money from Brown's pocket) our best hope left the room. The "buy-out" concept looked promising.

If "K" was not speaking with a forked tongue, all we had to do was concentrate on

working out the details for the exchange, i.e., money to pay for POWs. First, though, we needed the names of the POWs, and once we had the names, figure out how to vet them. We sure as hell weren't going to pay \$200,000 for some dirt-bag deserter or dope-head passing as a U.S. POW.

About this time, the leadership of the LULF was getting restless as we had not provided them with any funds for the operational base inside Laos. We can only assume that our reluctance prompted the LULF leadership to threaten to attack the POW camp on their own, hoping to free two or three of the POWs which they then planned to ransom to the U.S. They said they would use this money to fund further operations against the communists.

As a result the SOF team decided to fund such an LULF base inside Laos. It would accomplish two objectives: first, preclude the LULF from carrying out a half-assed attack on the camp which would, even if successful, jeopardize the POWs — if in fact they were there; and secondly, provide a facility to train a Lao resistance unit which we would use to provide us with security when the money/POW exchange was made at the border — if it was made.

We decided a fair number of friendly guns were necessary as \$200,000 in cash is an extremely tempting target in an area where you can purchase a "hit man" for \$5 and a bottle of bad whiskey.

Also, although we could purchase automatic weapons on the black market, such a quantity purchase of M16s or AK-47s and

gringos carrying them would undoubtedly draw the ire of Thai officialdom and result in all of us getting free room and board in the local slammer.

Our support of the LULF camp would be limited to assistance in the design and construction of what became Liberty City, and the purchase of uniforms, building supplies, tools, boots, web gear and food — no weapons or ammunition.

Brown left for the States to brief others interested in the SOF project and to see if additional assistance and intelligence could be obtained from the private sector and/or the government.

Upon Brown's departure for the States, Zabitosky filled us in on what would transpire during the next weeks. "Since we need a secure training camp, I want Reisinger and Mingo to go with me into Laos just over the Thai border and select a site. Coyne, you go back to Bangkok and complete any stories RKB wants done, hang loose and be our contact man. We'll set up a safehouse here in Chiang Rai and coordinate things in this area using runners to go back and forth between here and our training base in Laos."

Our initial trip over the border was extremely rugged, to say the least. After an all-night stay at a resistance safehouse, Zab, Mingo and I, along with 11 LULF troops began the trek, slashing through rice paddies (I thought I was through with that shit when I left 'Nam), up gently rising slopes and then up the rain-slick rocky trails for the last nine miles to Laos. Most of the walking was up 60-degree inclines with only slight respites from the agonizing climb.

Running in mile-high Denver and a regular regimen of weightlifting had put me in good shape, I thought, until about two hours into the march. The smiling faces and subdued laughter of Laotians passing me on the trail somehow funneled new life into my aching thighs and calves. Zab was hurting too as our lungs were expanding for more oxygen. Only Mingo, nearly 10 years my junior, was keeping pace with our 110-pound escorts. More than once Fred and I yelled for Mingo, who was walking point, to slow up but all we got was a ration of shit about not being in shape. We countered with, "You've been here playing games for a year, asshole; we've only just arrived." While we tried to be good-natured, we realized that only climbing mountains would put us in shape for climbing mountains. It was as simple as that.

As the young gazelle continued his efforts to show up two tired ex-Special Forces sergeants, we noted with relief the sight of a H'Mong village coming into view from just beyond the next hill.

Among the naked kids, pigs and curious inhabitants of the village, we must have appeared slightly insane as we dragged ass into the village headman's house for some welcome rest. The dog-meat filet I was handed tasted remarkably good but it was the tea, heavily laden with sugar, that revived my sagging spirits. After an hour's

break, we headed off again, this time for what I hoped would amount to only a short hike of about 30 minutes. To my chargin, however, I learned that we were only about two-thirds of the way to our remote destination, about which I profanely complained to Mingo.

Two hours later, we arrived at a Thai outpost which we aptly called "Shangri-La." Set upon a mountaintop, we looked down upon a field of clouds never having quite felt so totally removed from the normalcy of daily life. We were greeted warmly by our hosts and after more tea and sugar departed on the last leg of our Saturday excursion.

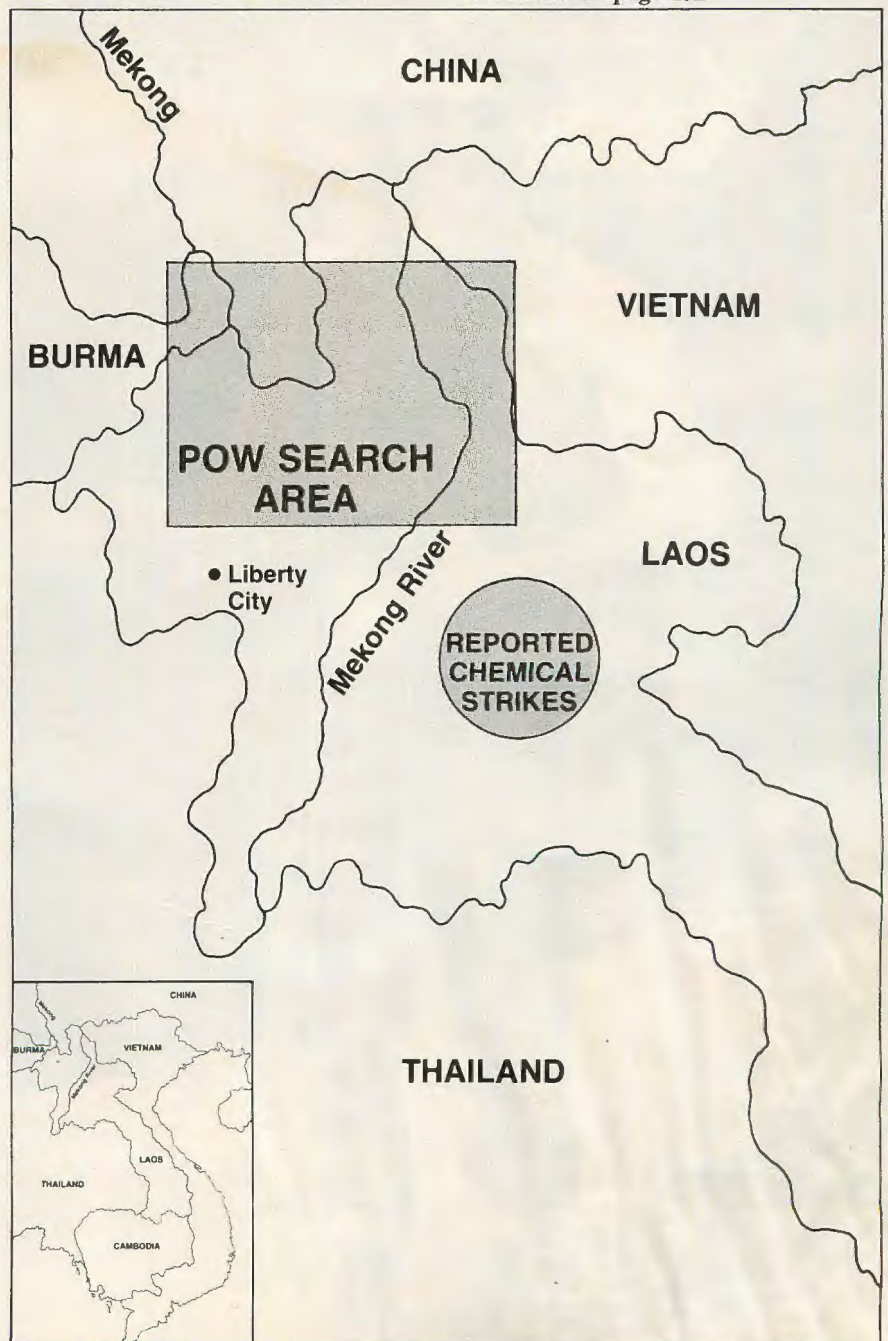
Another hour passed until we thought we had found an ideal training location. Then it was 10 miles back down to Tira's rendezvous point where we arrived three hours later, fatigued, hurting and with feet blis-

tered. Seated in the back of the truck, feeling worn out yet enthused by our accomplishments, we traded shots of Lao Cao (Laotian moonshine) with Vang Pao's nephew and fell into a deep sleep during the three-hour drive back to Chiang Rai.

With Mingo remaining behind to oversee things, Zab and I flew out to Bangkok to meet Brown and brief him on our site location. All was agreed upon and Fred and I left for Chiang Rai to set up a safehouse and supervise construction of FOB 81.

Due to possible security problems involving the Thais, Zabitosky recommended that we move our site location several kilometers farther from our original choice. Some of "T's" troops had reconned the area, and its adjacent rocks coupled with its panoramic view of the Mekong made it a strategic site.

*Continued on page 132*





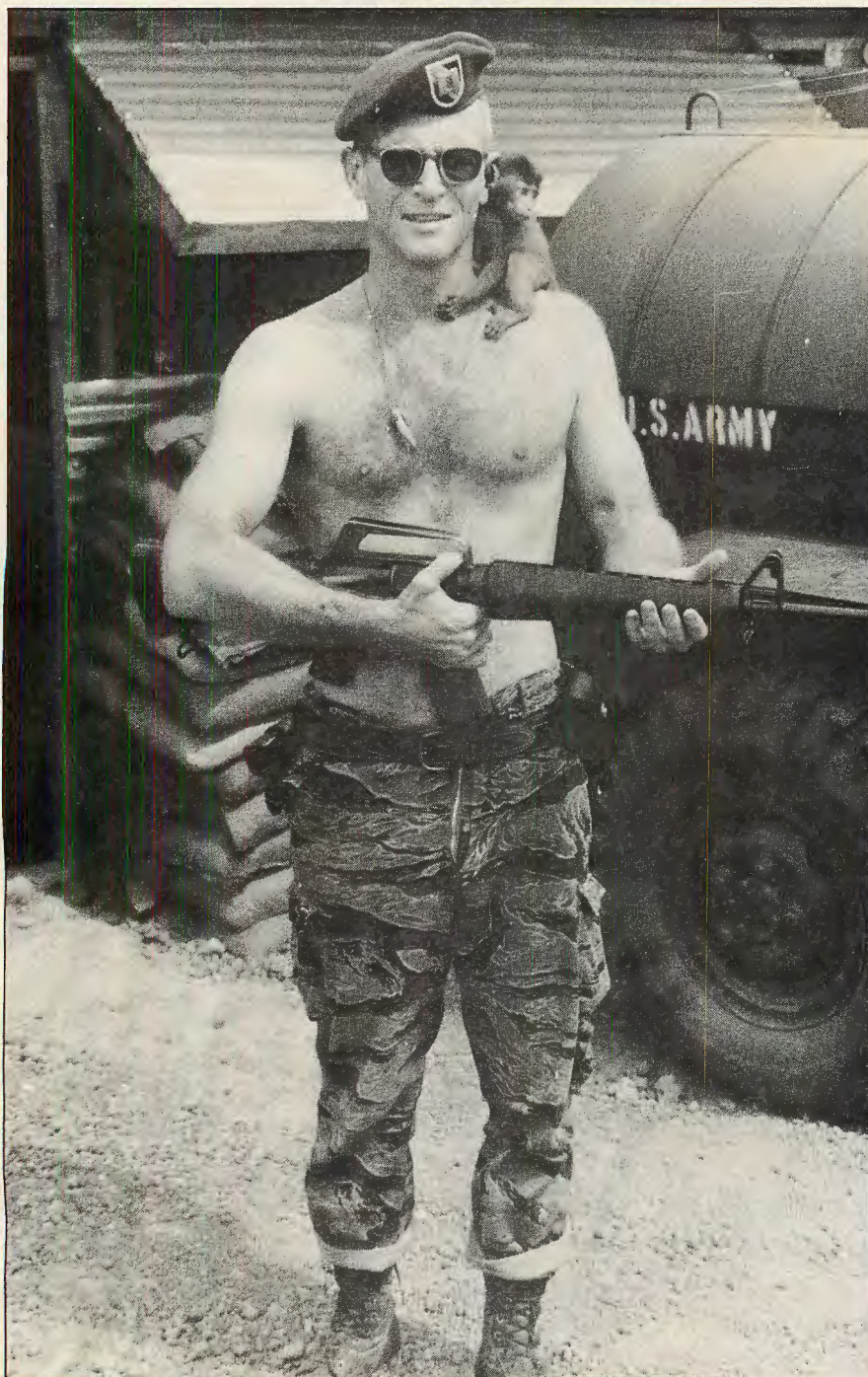


# SOF PROFILES

# RKB

## The Straight Story on Bob Brown

by James L. Pate



**R**EPORTERS from around the globe who come to Boulder to write about *Soldier of Fortune* magazine usually ask to meet Publisher Robert K. Brown. Then there is the occasional serviceman or Vietnam Veteran — mostly enlisted men — who read *SOF* and drop by in passing and ask to meet him. Others who drop in are just plain curious about “mercs and guns and adventure and stuff.”

Maybe they haven’t read the magazine but they’ve heard the wild tales. Someone said Brown has just returned from East Jabib — or someplace equally obscure — and is mustering money, guns and lawyers because the shit has hit the fan. They want to meet this guy who keeps offering huge cash rewards to communist defectors, screwing with some tyrant’s mind or upstaging the pros by sneaking unattainable weapons out of somewhere and showing them to the world.

Who is this guy, they ask, as they swing off the highway and into the peaceful college town of Boulder. Who is Bob Brown, the man who has become *the* soldier of fortune in so many circles? Answers will depend on access and that’s usually limited.

Two foreign broadcast network correspondents asking for an interview twice failed to recognize him when they visited the *Soldier of Fortune* editorial offices. When Brown walked into Executive Editor Dale Dye’s office and dropped a sheaf of papers on the desk without comment, they figured he was a particularly scruffy office go-fer or a janitor. Their continental dignity was a bit ruffled later when Brown stuck his head in again for just a second to expertly squirt a stream of Skoal juice across Dye’s desk and into a brass spittoon. They should have been alerted.

Bob — or RKB or The Boss or Prince Robert, as he’s alternately called by his staff — has been known to leave a trail of Skoal

**Robert K. Brown, left, and friend strike a pose in the front of the team house at Tong Le Chon. Brown’s team and their CIDG members had an equal share of trouble between enemies inside the wire and those out in the jungle.**

remnants in the crystal stemware of some of the world's finest restaurants. Dye typically paid no heed to the intrusion and continued to guard the gates, telling the two Europeans Brown was not available for comment. The boss was, in fact, busy with visitors he considered much more important.

Back in the publisher's cluttered den, two SOF fans from a nearby Air Force base are waiting with Executive Assistant Zada Johnson, keeper of an inner sanctum which is frequently referred to as "The Brown Hole." It's not a war room exactly, although it often looks like it might have come through a fairly spirited discussion of tactics or combat techniques. Still, Zada manages to deal with the confusion. She promises the two young airmen that the man they've come to meet will be glad to give them a few moments. She's sure of that because she knows where Brown is and what he'd prefer to do rather than talk with two reporters. In fact, Zada often knows more about where he is, where he's been and where he's supposed to be than Brown does. That's handy but frequently frustrating for staff members on tight schedules. Two days over deadline for this story because the boss just got back from another of his many foreign missions, I'm waiting along with the airmen. They get first priority, which doesn't surprise me.

My problem is where to start a story on a guy like Bob Brown, professional adventurer, quote-unquote. It depends — like almost everything else at SOF — on your perspective. Finished with the visiting airmen, Brown calls me in to provide his.

He's resplendent in his usual office *haute couture*: tennies tastefully battered, jeans sans belt faded to a pastel blue and an elegant T-shirt. This one is OD green and features a skeleton topped by a boonie hat and aiming an M16. "I Was Killing When Killing Wasn't Cool."

It's time to ponder his first 10 years as founder and commander-in-chief of *Soldier of Fortune*.

There have been many close calls along the way, Brown admits, personally and financially. On numerous Fridays during SOF's gestation, Bob wished he could date his checks as far ahead as he dates the magazine (72 days). Often in those uncertain times, only the fortuitous arrival of receipts in the Friday morning mail enabled him to issue payroll checks that afternoon.

Despite all the mystique of travel and adventure in far-off places, Brown has spent many nights sleeping on or sweeping the floors of the magazine's early quarters: first a friend's basement and then for years a 425-square-foot rental office in Boulder. He has sold and designed ads, juggled accounts — stored for the first couple of months in a cigar box under the seat of his car — and set type for stories. He questioned if it would be



**Brown was first journalist to test fire new Russian AK-74 assault rifle in Darra, Northwest Frontier, Pakistan, September 1980.**

a lasting experience.

"I just don't have the ability to raise money," says Brown. The record since the early days indicates otherwise. With no more collateral than a dream and a firm set to his jaw, he managed to raise \$5,000 in seed money in 1975 to print 8,500 copies of the first issue of *Soldier of Fortune*, an 80-page quarterly containing no color pictures and selling for \$2 a copy. Slightly more than 4,000 true-believers responded to prepublication solicitations for one-year subscriptions to a magazine that had yet to produce a single issue. Their faith covered costs for the first issue.

From that origin, Brown's sketchy concept has grown into Omega Group, Ltd., a corporate umbrella for *Soldier of Fortune* and two other magazines spawned by its successes, *Guns & Action* and *Combat Weapons*. Omega Group, the magazine staffs and Brown's mail-order business, SOF Exchange, are headquartered in a 27,000-square-foot office and warehouse building he owns on the outskirts of Boulder. Ironically, the mostly liberal community, which he refers to as "The People's Republic of Boulder," has been Bob's base since he came here to attend the University of Colorado in 1953. It's also home base for Brown's 42 full-time employees, including his former SF A-Team interpreter. Brown sponsored this Vietnamese and his family after they escaped the communists in a leaky boat. Another score of people on various retainers and contracts work for Bob around the globe.

If Brown still claims an inability to raise money, he's got a lot of people fooled. His most recent escapade was to offer a \$100,000 reward (since upped to \$1 million) to the first aircrew or individual to defect from Nicaragua's military with a

working model of the Soviet-made Mi-24 helicopter. This came only a few weeks after disclosure in *Newsweek* magazine that Brown had paid for reprints of the CIA's infamous manual on guerrilla warfare and was distributing them to anti-Sandinista rebels inside Nicaragua.

Of course the charges never cease from left-wing circles which insist that Brown and his businesses are funded by the CIA. Given past clashes between the Agency and Brown, this wild speculation grows more bizarre every time it resurfaces. "We have never received money from the CIA, period," Brown says. "If they support *Soldier of Fortune*, it has been the most successful covert operation The Company has ever had. There have been times when we could certainly have used the money."

Although his monetary schemes aren't always profitable, his trips to forgotten places like Afghanistan, Laos, Cambodia and Central America usually are. From such excursions he regularly returns with astounding insights, as well as Soviet weaponry and munitions never before seen in the Free World. Much of it has ultimately reached the proper U.S. government analysts after SOF completed its investigation and published the findings.

Although Brown and his SOF staff are painted by a broad media brush as hairy-fisted, knee-jerk conservatives or neo-nazis, the basic philosophical opposition of the publisher and his magazine to all forms of tyranny — right wing or left wing — goes largely unreported. It's more colorful (and profitable) to brand the magazine as a haven for evil "mercenaries" and ignore the more complete picture. For example, Brown has a reward of \$10,000 in gold posted for tips leading to the capture of Idi Amin.

Maybe the mass media was slow to accept the truth about SOF but a significant sector of America's reading public was not. As this issue went to press, Brown announced that after a two-year slump the 1985 10th Anniversary year began with newsstand circulation figures at an all-time high. In the 1984 Folio 400, which ranks the top 400 U.S. magazines, SOF was placed in the top five in all 24 categories of the "Men's Lifestyle" section, ranking as high as third in certain areas against such giants as *Playboy*, *Esquire*, *Gentlemen's Quarterly* and *Penthouse*.

"As you were, Pate." Modest man that he is, Brown reminds me that "this damn piece is supposed to be about *me*. Let's talk about *me*, not the fucking magazine. It's about time you had something in there about *me*."

But the whole truth? Nothing but the truth?

I wondered if Brown, an Army counterintelligence officer with a top secret security clearance in the mid-1950s, knew I'd

viewed copies of his service records. Among them were fitness reports which say "Captain Brown is courageous . . . an intelligent and conscientious officer with unusual leadership abilities. However, he is also strong-willed and most reluctant to accept constructive criticism [and] would frequently attempt to circumvent command directives and policies with which he disagreed."

As a leader Brown can be loyal to a fault to subordinates and practically impossible to read as a private person. Would he care if readers knew that he was kicked out of the U.S. Army's 5th Special Forces Group — not once, but twice? Would he want anyone to know his security clearance was in official limbo the entire 14 months he spent in Vietnam? How would we explain that all that time he held highly sensitive intelligence jobs and was officially commended by the Central Intelligence Agency for his part in the Phoenix Program?

It's hard to make decisions like that when you know a number of your boss's acquaintances are genuine guns-for-hire. Still, Brown didn't seem surprised when he found out I knew about him being a pro-Castro activist at the University of Colorado in the 1950s. He never raised an eyebrow when I asked about his organizing rallies, picketing and spray-painting "Viva Castro" on the chemistry building. Those antics and Brown's other adventures in and around Cuba over the several years since his first hitch in the U.S. Army apparently led to problems with his security clearance during a second tour of active duty. Some of his insights and opinions about Cuba reached the desk of President Kennedy and led to a mutual dislike between Brown and the CIA.

All that was amazing enough, but Brown floored me when he came right out and admitted to an unsuccessful collegiate plot to run some machine guns from Boulder out to a Cuban revolutionary group in Chicago, and to another aborted plan to hijack a Cuban vessel and hold the crew hostage in exchange for the release of political prisoners being held by Castro. That plot never got off the ground, and another using a certain bar in Key Largo as a home base also was unsuccessful. His involvement as a "peripheral observer" in a mercenary plot to invade Haiti and incite a *coup d'état* against "Papa Doc" Duvalier is already a matter of record. At least one of those activities led to his first publishing venture.

Back in 1963 Brown pirated a previously published book titled "150 Questions for a Guerrilla" by General Alberto Bayo. The general, one of Brown's many acquaintances among Cuban revolutionaries, was military mentor for Fidel Castro, his brother Raul and Ché Guevara, personally training them in unconventional warfare tactics for six months prior to Castro's invasion of Cuba on 6 December 1956. Brown used a copy of Bayo's book he had obtained in 1960 to make several thousand dollars selling reprints. The guerrilla warfare primer, which has gone through numerous printings



Posing with an Armalite AR15, Brown at sea in the Caribbean with Cuban exiles on an anti-Castro operation in 1967. Brown's earlier activities in Cuba caught President Kennedy's eye but led to a mutual dislike between Brown and the CIA.

and continues to be a brisk seller, was the first item distributed by Panther Publications, the spiritual predecessor of *Soldier of Fortune*.

There wasn't much money — or excitement — in that. Brown craved *action*, not academic pursuits like publishing. And that's when the mercenary business all began. In Rhodesia — a hotbed of foreign intrigue and mercenary activity during the early 1970s — Brown linked up with a mercenary with whom he had become friends and corresponded. Brown's experiences in Rhodesia helped nurture a seed that eventually grew into *Soldier of Fortune*, a magazine that 10 years ago raised eyebrows — but virtually no expectations for success — in the publishing industry.

But we'll get this all out of context — a common feature of stories about Brown and his magazine — if we don't start from the beginning.

Flashback to Monroe, Michigan — Bob

was born there on 2 November 1932 — but don't linger. Brown grew up mainly in Indiana, where his father was a steel worker and his mother a school teacher. He returned to his birthplace briefly after graduating high school in 1950, and attended Michigan State University for two years before transferring to the University of Colorado in Boulder. His participation in collegiate boxing and rodeo-riding made a him well-known figure in what was then still a small college town. He began a long succession of odd jobs that cast him as a cowboy, armored-car guard, trail-crew foreman, forest-fire fighter, hard-rock miner, logger, carpenter, freelance photojournalist and, finally, publisher.

After earning his undergraduate history degree, Bob volunteered for a hitch in the Army. He served from October 1954 until September 1957 as an officer in the counter-intelligence corps. Peacetime duty was pretty dull, he recalls, and he spent most of his time going from city to city conducting investigations of people who had applied for security clearances.

Brown returned to Boulder to obtain his master's degree in political science. That decision led to events which shaped his destiny, but he was more immediately con-

cerned with the Cold War. Brown became fascinated with low-intensity conflicts being fought by rag-tag guerrillas who were surrogates for the larger ideological struggle between East and West. He never had much trouble discerning bad guys from good guys or much hesitation in taking sides.

He objected violently to the tyranny of Cuban dictator Batista and backed the bearded revolutionary Fidel Castro in his budding effort to free the people of Cuba from a authoritarian right-wing regime. In fact, he chose that situation as the basis of his Master's thesis, but scholastic advisers told him the subject "lacked focus."

"I was home visiting my family for Christmas in 1957," Brown explained, "when my life seemed to take a definite turn." Typically, he sought clarification of the phenomenon in a long succession of bars on Chicago's north-side. He ended up at a coffee house called the College of Complexes, which was frequented by beatniks, bums and political radicals. Situated in a back room were benches and a speaker's podium. Brown said he doesn't know why, but he stuffed their speaker's schedule into his pocket, which led him to later hear two self-styled Cuban revolutionaries proclaim the virtues of Fidel Castro. Bob was fascinated.

"Either the Big Guy in the Sky was influencing my life at that point and had a guiding hand in directing me to the College of Complexes, or the Devil made me do it. I'm still not sure which."

Fidel Castro's revolution was raging through Cuba at the time and Brown was sure he was backing a winner. As Castro's most vocal student supporter at the University of Colorado, Brown was approached by a fellow member of the university shooting team who said he had a friend who wished to sell some machine guns.

A light went on in Brown's head, he recalls: "Machine guns plus revolutionaries equals money for Brown."

Armed with a bottle of rum, Brown followed his buddy to a house. When the bottle's level had dropped sufficiently to eliminate inhibitions, the host casually reached under a couch and pulled out a Sten gun and a Thompson submachine gun. Weapons-fancier Brown says he was in a hog's heaven.

At spring break, Brown drove back to Chicago with the Sten. Two Cuban contacts liked the gun but couldn't raise enough money to buy it. His brief career as a gun-runner was ended, but Brown still wanted to help support the Cuban revolution. He still lacked focus on the issue, according to his academic counselors, and Brown decided the only way to clear that up was to travel to Cuba personally. It was an early example of what has become a Brown trademark. You don't make conclusions about a situation without seeing it firsthand. At SOF, that's known as the "go and do" school of journalism and a cornerstone of Brown's editorial success.

In the summer of 1958, Brown and a friend went to Miami and visited Castro's headquarters to make arrangements to meet



RKB, holding .338 Magnum Winchester and ART scope with Lt. Col. Cruz, El Salvador, April 1984.

Castro. As they descended a dimly lit stairwell, Brown joked about being under surveillance by some government agency. In the lobby of the dingy building two men wearing shiny black shoes and three-piece suits identified themselves as FBI agents and invited Brown and his buddy to come to their office for a little chat.

Brown was advised to be careful in his support of Castro. He was told there was a lot about Fidel the U.S. government knew and Brown did not. It was Brown's first clue that all might not be roses and revolutionary zeal among Castro's forces. The FBI also indicated they had information which linked Brown with alleged moves to organize college students for an invasion of Cuba in support of Castro. Brown smiled, realizing to himself that a long-forgotten drunk had led an FBI informant to report an imminent collegiate invasion of Cuba. Then he told the agents he was going ahead with his plans to visit the troubled island nation.

Checking in at Havana's Hotel Deauville, Brown and his buddy made contact with the Castro people and waited. And waited. Brown exhausted both money and patience and returned to Boulder without meeting Castro. He had yet to learn of the Latins' *mañana* syndrome.

He vowed to return, but before Bob could save enough money Castro declared victory over Batista on 1 January 1959. With the new ruler of Cuba tightening his control, Brown reached the island a month later and wangled a part-time job as a stringer for Associated Press.

Havana was awash with revolutionaries, spies and political radicals from all over Latin America and the Caribbean. Brown

met people who invited him to join in a plot to invade and overthrow Somoza's government in Nicaragua. He declined that offer and another to join a group planning a *coup d'état* in the Dominican Republic because, as Brown recalls, "they were obviously half-assed operations." He was subsequently proven correct when the first group was quickly captured and members of the second conspiracy were all executed.

Brown was learning some disillusioning lessons in Castro's post-revolutionary state. He began to see that Castro had betrayed the revolution and had been a communist all along. He wound up his time in Cuba with a festering hatred of communism and a new direction for his master's thesis: "The Communist Seizure of the Free Cuban Labor Movement."

Given his insights, Brown became entangled with the anti-Castro Cuban exile movement in Miami, rotating between there and Boulder, still working on his college thesis and free-lancing articles whenever and wherever he could. A penchant for writing led to his first tangle with the CIA.

In August 1962, the *Denver Post* printed an analytical piece written by the young political maverick from Boulder. In that analysis, Brown chronicled specific instances of CIA bungling in Cuba. A week after publication, Mort Stern, then editorial page editor of the *Post*, called Brown to relate a conversation that he had had with a well-known Washington columnist, Charles Bartlett. Bartlett told Stern that Brown's article had ended up on President Kennedy's desk. When he had digested the information, JFK called in the CIA brass for an ass-chewing. "If Bob Brown didn't already have a CIA file, he sure got one then," Brown says, laughing at the recollection.

In the meantime, some of Brown's earlier activities in Cuba began to emerge as poten-

*Continued on page 147*



# DOUBLE-CROSS IN THE CONGO

## Belgian Merc Speaks from Prison

by Hugo Merckx

*Mercenary soldiers lead tenuous lives plagued by danger and deceit. Most often they stumble into trouble on some misadventure. If they manage to avoid that, mercs are often left in the lurch by their employers or betrayed as political scapegoats when their usefulness is ended. In the murky world of the true mercenary, you can be sure of only two things: such soldiers rarely make a fortune and they generally join the fray for a wide variety of reasons.*

Two of the most famous mercs of the modern era are Colonels "Black Jack" Schramme and "Mad Mike" Hoare. Both eventually landed in prison and both tell different stories about why they became major figures of the bloody fight for control of the Congo. Schramme and Hoare became legendary soldiers of fortune during the confusing series of coups and counter-coups that rocked the former Belgian colony between independence in 1960 and its emergence as Zaire in 1971.

Schramme claims he is a victim of double-dealing by the government of his native Belgium. Hoare — a South African citizen bored in retirement from conventional military service — went looking for one more war to fight. Both men eventually wound up imprisoned on opposite sides of the South Atlantic. Hoare was finally released in South Africa on 6 May while Schramme languishes in a Brazilian jail as this special 10th Anniversary issue of *Soldier of Fortune* goes to press.

The flamboyant Hoare — Irish by birth, British by manner and South African by passport — gained more notoriety in his chosen profession than Schramme. A coup attempt Hoare led against the Seychelles Islands in 1981 failed but made big headlines. He was convicted by South African authorities for hijacking an aircraft used to escape from the bungled operation and jailed in Durban.

Schramme, 55, contemplates a less-certain future at Federal Police Headquarters in Brasilia while Brazilian authorities decide whether to honor an extradition re-

quest from Belgium. When he returned to Belgium from the Congo in 1968, Schramme was arrested and charged with unlawfully killing countryman Maurice Quintin at their Yumbi headquarters in the Congo province of Kivu in May 1967.

Belgium released him after 44 days of confinement and returned his passport. His judicial dossier had already been classified top secret. With government permission, Schramme left Belgium. He moved first to Portugal and then to Brazil, where he bought a cattle ranch, married and had children. Now the Belgian government, in legal trouble itself over the incident, wants to prosecute Schramme. His fate was shaped by one of the most disputed and devious events in Africa's long struggle to throw off the colonial yoke.



Maurice Quintin, another Belgian in the Congo with questionable intent. Belgium later said he may be a murder victim. Schramme: "He was a spy."

The Congo was granted independence by Belgium — under tremendous pressure from the world community — on 30 June 1960. It was much too soon for the Congolese who were ill-prepared for self-rule. A growing nationalist movement had not matured, the country was plunged into civil war and many of the useful legacies of Belgian rule were destroyed in the bloody struggle for control that ensued.

The role and motivation of most foreign mercenaries who flocked to the area to fight on one side or the other is relatively clear — except for Schramme's. His exact political situation remains as shrouded in mystery as Belgium's true role in the post-independence Congo. Belgium has repeatedly denied charges by other African nations that Schramme wasn't freelancing during the fighting and was, in fact, a Belgian agent. It's not hard to understand how such charges might surface.

A Belgian known as "Commandant Wauthier" acted as a liaison between Schramme and Moise Tshombe, one of two rival leaders in the Congo. Wauthier was instrumental in one of many plots to overthrow General Joseph Mobutu, the United Nations' leader of choice and a Tshombe rival. Wauthier was also a member of Belgium's secret service, according to *The Mercenaries*, an authoritative history of the period by Anthony Mockler.

Prior to his arrest by the Belgians in 1968, Schramme had been viewed by the public as somewhat of a hero. Soon after the Congo's independence, the plantation he had worked for 10 years was burned and he had to flee. Unlike other mercs, he was seen as a man who understandably sought to recover what was rightfully his. He has steadfastly insisted that he is a strict idealist who was not motivated by money, adventure or political intrigue. His arrest marred that image in many people's minds and relegated Schramme to an ignoble place in history as just another bloodthirsty merc out for thrills and big bucks.

The resulting lack of legal action by Belgian authorities adds another piece of evi-



dence to support charges that Schramme was their agent in the Congo. They seemed in no hurry to prosecute him despite the fact that Schramme made a public statement that he had killed Quintin, whom he called a spy seeking to betray Schramme's famed Leopard Battalion.

Schramme might have lived happily ever after in Brazil except that Quintin's family refiled the original murder complaint in 1976. The Belgian government again dragged its feet until 1982, when it was sued by the family for "moral damages." On 24 February 1984, the Belgian Ministry of Justice filed an extradition request for Schramme's return from Brazil. He was jailed in October of that year and made his first court appearance in Brasilia on 12 December. He awaits a final decision on his fate.

Since publicizing his deposition and writing a book on his Congo experiences — *Le Bataillon Léopard* — Schramme has remained understandably quiet. Mockler's otherwise-dispassionate history sharply criticized Schramme's book as "bombastic and inaccurate, stuffed with extraordinary claims, unanswered questions and just enough information to infuriate."

Since being jailed in Brazil, Schramme has turned down requests to talk from the Associated Press, United Press Internation-

al, Reuters and Agence France Presse. But with his lawyer present, he granted an exclusive jailhouse interview to Hugo Merckx, a Belgian correspondent on assignment for *Soldier of Fortune*. Despite six guards pacing around him, Merckx also managed — using a hidden camera — to get the first photographs of Schramme taken in 15 years.

— The Editors

**H**IS cigarette burns down to a red-hot hash nearly scorching his fingers but he refuses to give it up to join other butts in a heaping ashtray. It's typical behavior for Jean "Black Jack" Schramme, who inhales just one more drag and ponders the decision of his homeland to bring him to trial on murder charges. He exhales with force and speaks with exasperation.

"No, I don't hate Belgium." Schramme seems surprised at the question. "But I do hate the Belgian ministers who have played a disgusting double role with the former Belgian Congo. And I hate some Belgian court magistrates who all these long years still want my head. . . ."

Schramme examines fingertips yellowed

by too much tobacco and finally stubs out his cigarette. He stares at the bleak walls of his cell looking for something he has not seen before and shows a small smile. "Welcome to Brasilia. Sorry that I can't even offer you a drink." The irony in his voice is obvious and understandable.

Jean Marie Joseph Antoine Thomas Schramme grew up in the ancestral mansion of his highly respected family in the northern Belgian town of Bruges. His father and one brother were prominent lawyers. Another brother was a surgeon and his sister married a foreign diplomat in Paris. But at 18, Jean's heart and mind were far from the musty confines of a library or laboratory. The honorable thing for a young man from his background seemed to be service to his country.

Schramme enlisted and served in Africa for two years with the Belgian Commandos at bases in Kamina and Kitona. After completing his service, Schramme felt more at home in the Congo and decided to remain instead of returning to Belgium. He bought a coffee plantation near Bafwasende, a wild frontier outpost about 60 kilometers northeast of Stanleyville (now Kisangani, Zaire), and lived happily in the northeast Congo for nearly 10 years.

His idyllic existence was shattered forever when Belgium granted independence to

its former colony on 30 June 1960. Ram-paging African bands supporting one proposed national leader or another sacked Schramme's plantation and burned his home. Schramme, then 30, was forced to flee and sought refuge briefly in Uganda before going to Katanga, a rich mining district in the Congo's southeast territory. He found no peace there either.

Wishing to maintain close ties to the West, which poured huge amounts of capital into the area, Katanga seceded from the emerging Congolese nation and declared itself an independent state 11 days after Congolese independence. Provincial Governor Moise Tshombe declared himself president of independent Katanga.

Tshombe's immediate problem was raising an army to defend Katanga against threats from the Armée Nationale Congolaise (ANC), warriors of the Baluba and other tribes in northern Katanga, as well as forces of the United Nations which opposed the secession movement. Tshombe began hiring foreign mercenaries to serve in the Katangan *gendarmes*. That single move is credited by military historians with reviving the mercenary profession in modern times. It also marked the beginning of Jean Schramme's continuing problems.

Belgium — smarting diplomatically from having to free its prime colony only to be blamed by world councils for the violence that subsequently erupted — supported the idea of an independent Katanga. "It's then," Schramme says, "that Belgium's double role in the Congo started."

Schramme joined up at Kamina base in



**White mercs helping keep the Congo's tenuous peace. Despite cries to make the Congo independent, its political immaturity plunged it into civil war. Note that the twin-mounted FN MAGs have anti-aircraft as well as direct fire sights.**

Katanga. His prior Belgian military service immediately landed him a leadership position. After proving himself in battle around Elisabethville (now known as Lubumbashi), he was sent to Kansimba in northern Katanga, where he recruited teenage soldiers from local tribes to form his Leopard Group. The were the nucleus of what later became the infamous 10 Commando of the bloody Congo war.

He was not the only man seeking soldiers to support Tshombe. "The recruiting of mercenaries for these purposes happened with the agreement of the Belgian government," Schramme says. "I can prove this

with official documents in my possession. Three mercenary battalions were formed including 5 Commando under Mike Hoare, 6 Commando under the Frenchman Bob Denard and 10 Commando, under the command of myself. These battalions formed mobile groups, operating all over the province. They were under the supreme command of Belgian staff officers, who officially were attached as 'technical assistants' to Tshombe and his staff."

Schramme, Hoare and Denard were commissioned majors in Tshombe's growing army. At the very beginning, Schramme's group — about 10 whites and 60 blacks — was active in the north of Katanga province. The large number of Africans under his command earned him the nickname "Black Jack."

It was then 1961 and full-scale recruiting of mercenaries was on in Europe, South Africa and Rhodesia. The U.N. estimated there were 512 regular Belgian officers and privately contracted mercenaries in Katanga alone. A U.N. resolution passed on 21 February demanded that all foreign military personnel (except, of course, U.N. troops) leave the Congo. It also stipulated that U.N. troops, which had been under orders to shoot only in self-defense, would now be active participants in the civil war. The decision probably caused much more bloodshed than it prevented.

As an effort to make sure mercenaries and Belgian regulars left Katanga, U.N. Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld appointed Conor Cruise O'Brien, his special representative in the Congo, to pull off "Operation Rumpunch." Except for about 100 of the 512 who were out on combat patrols, all the Belgian regulars and mercs, including Schramme, were rounded up in a single day without a shot being fired. Schramme was picked up at Kamina and sent with four other mercs to Leopoldville (Kinshasa) as prisoners of the ANC. After 90 days in jail a chaplain reportedly helped him escape. He caught a plane to Brussels and promptly returned to Katanga by way of Rhodesia.

Schramme and other mercs did not waste



**Schramme and Leopard Battalion member near Bukavu 1967. Snatching defeat from the jaws of victory, the end was near. The jeep-mounted FN MAG is loaded with armor-piercing tracer ammo.**

time once they returned. Their increasing tactical success in Katanga led to even more military pressure by the ANC and U.N. troops. As efforts redoubled to bring Katanga back into the Congo fold and the stakes went up, Schramme said "several Belgians showed an enormous zeal in betraying their compatriots who supported an independent Katanga."

Historians agree Operation Rumpunch in 1961 marked the beginning of the mercenary period in the Congo. The roundup succeeded only in evicting regular Belgian troops from Katanga. Author Mockler says Belgian officers "lost a good deal of face by the rapidity with which they surrendered." He indicates Schramme, Hoare and the hundred or so other mercs left in Katanga "formed the hard core, both as types and individuals, of all future mercenary activity in the Congo."

Headed with the success of Operation Rumpunch, Conor Cruise O'Brien decided to organize a coup in Katanga aimed at ending secession and bringing the province back under Congolese rule. Following a premature victory announcement, however, a Katangan mercenary force captured the U.N. garrison. Hammarskjöld died in an airplane crash three days before a ceasefire was ordered. His successor, U Thant, recalled O'Brien and the mercs laughed all the way back to the pub.

This was called the First Battle of Katanga. In the second and third battles, the merc forces didn't fare as well but they never surrendered to more numerous and powerful forces. Tshombe's power was eventually broken in 1962 and U.N. forces established a tenuous control of Katanga. Schramme's 10 Commando made a dangerous march through enemy territory to link up with Denard's 6 Commando. This unified command of perhaps 100 mercs and several thousand Katangan soldiers retreated across the border into Angola, which was still a Portuguese colony. In his history, Mockler says that's easy to understand.

"The policy of the Portuguese authorities has always been to allow mercenaries to take refuge or regroup in their territory, to help them as little as possible and to deny to the whole world that any mercenaries have so much as set foot on Portuguese soil. The permission irritates the Congolese, the lack of help irritates the mercenaries and the denial irritates everybody, but Portugal does not seem to have suffered particularly."

Schramme said his march into Angola was not meant to abandon Tshombe and was, in fact, ordered by both the Katangese leader and the Belgian government. "I was instructed to do so by Tshombe and by Brussels," Schramme says. "It was all part of a plan. At the right moment, when needed, we would be on the scene again."

Whatever the plan, the departure of supporting combat power marked the end for the independent state of Katanga. Tshombe went into exile in Spain. That apparently made no difference to Schramme, who continued to train his troops for more than a



Schramme, wearing glasses, in his first published photo in 15 years. The photo was taken secretly as six Brazilian guards stood nearby. The other man is Schramme's lawyer. Photo: Hugo Merckx



Emblem of an extinct unit: the "Commando Kansimba," or Leopard Battalion, as Schramme's 10 Commando was better known in the 1960s. Photo: Hugo Merckx

year in Angola. They bided time for about 18 months.

U.N. forces left the Congo on 30 June 1964, four years to the day after independence was declared. Tshombe had returned from exile in 1963 and became the Congo's fourth prime minister under Kasavubu. Tshombe's rival, Mobutu, still commanded the ANC with advice from Belgian military officers who remained in the Congo to lend their expertise and help insure stability.

Two black rebellions broke out against the Tshombe government and they became known jointly as the "Simba Revolt." In some of the tortured Congo's bloodiest fighting, terrorist acts were carried out by young Simba tribesmen known as *Jeunesse*. Mobutu's ANC — the only organized mili-

tary unit in the country — was unable to stop the Simba reign of terror despite the assistance of Belgian officers in Leopoldville.

Although they were forbidden from taking part in combat, Belgian officers controlled administration of the ANC. They were supposed to limit their activities to helping African ANC officers with planning and training. That didn't stop them from violating the prohibition. They simply ignored it or operated in combat through mercenary soldiers — mostly Belgians — hired by Mobutu. A typical ANC battalion was commanded by a Congolese who was advised by a Belgian regular officer. A mercenary was the actual field combat leader. Cuban "mercenaries" — in reality working for the CIA — provided needed air-transport skills.

The convoluted system did not work to stop the Simba Revolt. Tshombe badly needed the mercs and recalled them in late 1964. Denard, who had left Angola for Yemen, did not return to the Congo for another year, but Schramme marched 8,000 men from Angola back into Katanga and Hoare headed back into the action from South Africa.

Schramme's task was to control the Maniema district in the Kivu province. His headquarters were at Yumbi. With about 12 white mercenary officers and 600 black troops, he was placed in absolute command of the region. Schramme, a reticent and rather shy man, required an iron discipline among his men. No robberies, no rapes and spotless uniforms were the orders of every day. And despite their common purpose, Schramme always put himself a moral cut or two above his fellow mercenary commanders.

"I've never borne Hoare nor Denard in my heart," Schramme claims, "although I had to cooperate with them. They were only fighting for money. I fought for the country that I considered part of me." Whether for love or money, the mercs and their combat troops were able to bring order to the region.

Once the Simba Revolt was defused, a power struggle developed between Prime Minister Tshombe and President Joseph Kasavubu. It was decided by Gen. Mobutu and his ANC troops who staged a coup on 25 November 1965. Kasavubu retired to his farm and Tshombe returned to exile in Spain.

As 1966 drew to a close after a year of continuing rumors about a conspiracy to restore Tshombe, Mobutu called Denard and Schramme together at Kinshasa. Hoare had retired back to South Africa. Mobutu honored Schramme with the *Ordre de la Bravaure* (Order of Bravery) and officially commissioned him as an ANC colonel. At the same time, he told him that he intended to replace 10 Commando with an ANC unit. White mercenaries without official status would have to leave the country. Denard, seduced by Mobutu's promise to install him as general in the ANC, agreed. Schramme stalled, believing Mobutu was up to no good

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# UNDER EL SAL

## The Battle of Amitlán Abajo

by Bob Poos

This Salvadoran trooper was shot through the stomach during the second day of heavy fighting against communist guerrillas in Amitlán Abajo.

*SOF has become renowned — and sometimes ridiculed — for our unabashed support of the people who are fighting against communist expansionism in Central America. We were among the first gringos to win the confidence of the Salvadoran Army and much of our journalistic and military training efforts since 1981 have focused on their steadily improving formations. To see what they needed for success against the insurgents, we traveled with the troops, sending some of our best staffers into the fray — like former Marine Bob Poos who filed this battlefield report for our November 1981 issue.*

**C**OLONEL Napoleon Alvarado, commanding officer of the Fifth Brigade, briefing us at military headquarters in San Vicente City, capital of San Vicente Province, El Salvador, remarked with a mirthless smile: "So you want some action, eh? Well, where you're going, you will get plenty of that."

He wasn't kidding.

Where we were going was a village called Amitlán Abajo, a 20-minute helo ride north-northeast of San Vicente City in the middle of El Salvador. It had long been a communist guerrilla stronghold and the Salvadoran Army now intended to correct that situation.

We crammed into a Loach and after contour-flying through rough mountain terrain, dropped off to join the rear elements of



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# FIRE IN VADOR

## Combat in Chalatenango

by Steve Salisbury

**C**OMMUNIST guerrillas once had the crun of Chalatenango Province in north central El Salvador. That was before the Army sent Colonel Sigifredo Ochoa Perez to the area and he launched an ass-kicking contest known as Operation Cobra in March of this year.

The Commanding Officer of the 4th Brigade and his veteran troops have clearly got the insurgents on the run. The guerrillas in this turbulent area have yielded to Ochoa's constant pressure in the field and become anxious to avoid direct confrontation. The unfortunate evidence of that is reversion to terror tactics in Chalatenango. The Gs now try to maintain their hold in the area with kidnapings, robberies, bombings and assassinations.

"Since we've been constantly hitting them hard, the terrorists have been leaving Chalatenango for our neighboring departments of Santa Ana and Cabañas," Col. Ochoa commented in late February at his headquarters at El Paraíso. "Those terrorists who remain have been breaking up into small groups focusing on the destruction of economic targets: bridges, power plants, telephone lines, electricity poles."

"This has presented us with a problem. Their small groups are hard to detect. That is why I want small, specially trained units to fight the guerrillas using the guerrillas' own tactics."

That led to the formation of a Special Operations Group and eventually to Operation Cobra. In the second week of January the colonel formed a 16-man group known by its Spanish initials as GOE (pronounced "goey"). They would need special instruction but with only 55 U.S. military trainers available to the entire Salvadoran Armed Forces, Ochoa could get help from only two U.S. Special Forces soldiers who provided



Operation Cobra: Salvo commando rat-a-tat-tats Gs with M60.

an excellent four-day training program for the newly formed SOG. He considered that insufficient for a combat unit tasked with infiltrating guerrilla territory on long patrols.

SOF's success in training Salvo units was no secret to the 4th Brigade commander who quietly passed the word that he would like to have some trainers from *Soldier of Fortune* provide advanced instruction to his crack unit. SOF Publisher Bob Brown was happy to oblige. He sent military professionals who could not only complement the SF training but could also critique the SOG unit's operations under actual combat conditions. Harry Claflin, an SOF contributing editor in unconventional warfare and veteran of three tours as a Marine Force Reconnaissance NCO in Southeast Asia, headed the team. He was assisted by Joe Ramirez, a retired Green Beret sergeant major and veteran of combat in Korea and Southeast Asia.

The training began in early February and covered marksmanship, patrolling, small-unit tactics, ambushes, demolitions, booby-traps, long-range land navigation, communications, insertion and extraction techniques and a host of other subjects proven necessary for successful operations deep in enemy territory.

When the rigorous day-and-night training program was complete a demonstration of their capabilities was put on for Col. Ochoa and members of the high command from *Estado Mayor*. Everyone was pleased and Ochoa issued orders for Operation Cobra. It would be spearheaded by his new SOG and aimed at wiping out guerrilla sanctuaries in the rugged country around the El Salvador-Honduran border.

The Special Operations Group survived two guerrilla ambushes before it was over, killed 19 enemy insurgents and wounded many more. No SOG troops were killed and only one was wounded in the short, sharp clashes which interrupted the forward sweep of conventional elements. The 16-man unit regularly penetrated enemy terri-

tory and swept through communist encampments which had been abandoned by large guerrilla formations who had retreated to the bush.

But that makes it all sound too simple.

On 9 March, I piled into the last truck of a convoy conveying the SOG to the northern Chalatenango town of La Palma, sight of the first round of fruitless government peace talks with the communist guerrillas of the *Farabundo Martí* National Liberation Front (FMNLF). I was not particularly relishing the ride in the sweltering crush of a troop truck. Captain Monge, commander of the Cayaguaña Battalion, saw me in the mash of sweaty bodies and offered me the relative luxury of riding up front with him in the cab. I gladly accepted.

As we bumped and jolted along, Capt. Monge — carrying a captured guerrilla Galil — pointed out the bends in the road and the parched hills where the guerrillas had ambushed the army. But now La Troncal highway is secure, he said, thanks to Col. Ochoa's forceful leadership.

Monge recalled how desperate the situation in this area had become before Colonel Ochoa finally returned in August 1984 from

an 18-month assignment at the Inter-American Defense College in Washington, D.C. On Christmas Eve 1984 the Gs even overran the 4th Brigade garrison at El Paraíso.

"The guerrillas were firing everything: 90mm recoilless rifles, RPGs, mortars, machine guns," he remembered. "Dead soldiers were everywhere. My assistant was shot in the head. We had few survivors. Thanks to God I escaped."<sup>23</sup>

At 1700 the convoy stopped at a former tourist resort a couple clicks from La Palma which now served as field headquarters for Operation Cobra. Sergeant Chan, the SOG team leader, indicated his route would cover 80 clicks through rugged bush up and down mountains as high as 9,000 feet in hostile guerrilla country. Lieutenant Colonel Oscar Carranza, the Fourth Brigade's XO and direct field commander for the operation, summoned Chan to give him final instructions.

Operation Cobra seemed deceptively simple. The SOG would scout along the Honduran border, staying up to 10 clicks ahead of the main strike force known as Cobra Battalion. A second maneuver element, Capt. Monge's Cayaguaña Battal-

**BELOW: Sergeant Martín, with headband, fires on communist position as another 2nd Company trooper reloads magazines.**



ion, would provide security along La Troncal Highway and form a blocking force to intercept guerrillas pushed to the southeast by the sweep.

What made it all unique — and somewhat dicey — was the coordination which would be required with the Honduran Army, El Salvador's bitter enemy in the 1969 "Soccer War." Honduran commanders had agreed to form a barrier on the flank of Operation Cobra which would take place along the same frontier where they battled Salvadoran soldiers 16 years earlier over the outcome of a sporting event. While some animosity against the government in San Salvador still exists, the Honduran high command did not want Salvadoran communists seeking sanctuary in their country. If the Gs tried to escape Operation Cobra across the Honduran border they would hopefully meet stiff resistance from beefed-up border patrols and outposts.

That flank security would prove important to the SOG which was routed through the Los Bolsones area, territory claimed by both El Salvador and Honduras. An agreement between both governments had previously kept troops out of the zone and that

gave the guerrillas sanctuary. The agreement had been suspended for the surgical strikes which were a facet of Operation Cobra.

The 16-man SOG — plus yours truly — would be used as bait to prompt attacks from superior guerrilla forces in the area. When we made contact, Sgt. Chan was to hold and call in reinforcements from the Cobra main force. Despite the prospect of being dangled on a thin line, Chan and his men seemed to relish their first field assignment.

At nightfall Chan was ready to move. I shouldered a rucksack and checked my M16. There seemed nothing to it but to do it.

We stopped a truck full of villagers on the outskirts of La Palma and questioned them about Fermán Cienfuegos, a guerrilla representative at the negotiations who controlled activities in the area.

"He's on Black Hill," said the driver. The dashboard lights revealed an angry, wrinkled face under his straw hat. "The guerrillas stole my animals. Get that *hijo de puta*." Chan assured the farmer he intended to do just that and we resumed our march heading for the top of 9,000-foot Mount Miramundo. We climbed in four-man fireteams keeping a 50-meter interval between teams. This was prime ambush country and we gripped our rifles tightly until the terrain got ridiculous.

After an hour of climbing 30-degree grades, the troopers slung rifles and used their hands to struggle upward. Chan

ordered longer and more frequent rests. This was the tropics, but hypothermia can be a very real danger at altitude. It was a wicked 40 degrees Fahrenheit and foggy. Freezing rain soaked us. Gale winds lashed our raw bodies. Contact with the guerrillas would have been a relief.

A trooper finally collapsed on the verge of hypothermia and Chan ordered us into a perimeter around 2300. When they were off-watch, the troops wrapped themselves in ponchos and tried to sleep. Everyone was miserable as hell and we were less than 24 hours into Operation Cobra.

We oozed out of our ponchos at 0430 the next morning and made Miramundo's summit in an hour. We discovered the ruins of an army communications outpost the guerrillas overran in 1981 and sheltered briefly from the cold wind that whipped the clouds around at this altitude. The troops got a kick out of the guerrilla graffiti on the walls of the bombed-out structures while they lit a fire and settled in to eat.

At 1100 a squad from the 3rd Company of Cobra Battalion joined us on the summit, breathing hard and fighting the numbing chill. They huddled around our smoky fire until a SOG trooper on perimeter called for Chan. He had spotted movement.

Through his field glasses, Chan picked out a guerrilla column some distance away on a hillside and moving south. He ordered Gato, the laid-back radio operator, to pass the information to the Command Group and loudly hoped for permission to attack. It did not come. Someone else would deal with this band of Gs.

Colonel Carranza ordered Chan and SOG to join the mobile CP in a valley three clicks to our rear. The descent into the low ground was hot and steamy. When we arrived, Col. Carranza, S-3 Major Cruz and Captain Fabricio Alfaro Albarca, CO of Cobra Battalion, reviewed a new route for SOG de-

**LEFT: Dust-off: Huey arrives to medevac Salvo wounded. BELOW LEFT: Salvo patrol crouches after drawing fire as they topped hill crest on Operation Cobra. BELOW: "Hulk," being medevacked after fire fight that eventually cost him a foot, knows the price of liberty is dear.**



veloped from recent intelligence. Col. Caranza spotted me among the troops and wanted to know how I held up over last night's hump.

"Fine," I answered in a voice hoarse from the pronounced change of climate.

"That's good," he said, flashing a wicked smile. "I think you'll see combat soon."

It all depends on what you call soon.

At dusk we re-entered undisputed Salvadoran territory and climbed a hill overlook-

ing Los Planes, a village that suffers significant guerrilla harassment. Panameño, the SOG's gutsy machine-gunner, volunteered to don civilian clothes and recon the hamlet. The NCO sent him ahead with orders to see if he could contact any of the people Chan had known during his assignment to a small Army detachment at Los Planes. The gunner returned 20 minutes later. He saw no guerrillas. Chan's friends were still there.

While Chan visited, we set up security

outside the village and quickly spotted the headlights of an approaching vehicle. We thought it might be guerrillas but held our fire to be certain. In the dark, we had to allow the vehicle through unmolested. We shouldn't have.

A village woman later told us the truck was carrying 10 guerrillas and several civilians. Typical. The communists were insuring their safety by using innocent civilians for cover. The villagers were clearly terri-

SOG radio operator Gato pauses in wonder at the photographer during heat of fire fight.



BELOW: Special patrol insertion and extraction techniques such as rappelling are a staple skill in crack Salvo unit. BELOW RIGHT: Operation Cobra fire fight finds M79 blooper in the thick of things.



fied of that and other tactics. A grandmother told me about it while she spat on a dirt floor to emphasize her anger.

"They come and take anything they want, no matter what we say," she said. "The guerrillas are taking girls to fight with them. I'm afraid they'll drag my girls away someday."

"They say they're going to win," said a second villager, "but I don't see how. They are tired and sick. The people don't want anything to do with them. Many guerrillas are deserting." We found out before too much longer that there were still some Gs around who wanted to stand and fight.

The next morning SOG headed for Black Hill where we had been told Fermán Cienfuegos was hiding. At the top we ran into a hastily abandoned guerrilla camp and realized we were on a hot trail. In a hurry we crashed through dry bush to Buena Hierba, a hamlet three kilometers from Honduras. We were too late. The signs indicated as many as 100 Gs had spent the night here. Chan was pissed off about missing them. Staring around at our skimpy 16-man SOG unit, I decided I could live with the disappointment.

At 1000 we packed up and headed for the border town of San Fernando. It was a bitch of a hump in the sweltering heat but Chan pushed hard, anxious for contact. At San Fernando the villagers told us we had just missed about 50 guerrillas and I began to wonder whether we might be following a guerrilla lure into a trap rather than the other way around. This lack of contact was unusual. We were certainly a tempting target for large G formations.

We ate and bathed in the Sumpul River which marks the Honduran frontier. It was shallow and still at this time of year. I waded across into Honduras and had a frivolous thought. I could hike to the nearest telephone and place a cheap in-country call to an old Honduran girlfriend.

"Hey, baby, I would cross rivers for you."

An armed man disturbed my musing. He broke out of the bush and headed for the river wearing green fatigues and carrying a rifle slung over his shoulder. Corporal España erupted from the water naked and ran for his M16. He warily crossed the river, nearing the stranger with his rifle ready. It turned out to be a Honduran trooper headed

for a bath.


On the morning of 12 March, we linked up with Cobra Battalion on the outskirts of San Fernando. Chan briefed Col. Carranza who put us on point in the sweep toward the village of San Juan de la Cruz. Chan broke us up into three teams to walk three trails covering the high ground. It was another rough hump but we managed to hitch a ride on a lumber truck.

The driver was no fan of the local guerrilla cadre. "You're never going to catch those *hijos de putas* walking," he said. "Here, I'll give you a ride." We climbed aboard the flat-bed and rumbled up the bumpy dirt road. It was a relief but a few minutes later I wanted to be walking.

"Hold tight!" warned a *campesino*. We teetered around a narrow hairpin curve. The engine churned and the wheels spun to maintain a grip. Fortunately, we had to pull off the road to let a Red Cross convoy pass.

Chan spat over the side of the truck and arched his thick eyebrows. "Wherever the Red Cross is the guerrillas usually are nearby." He was right.

We hopped off the truck another kilometer down the road and walked up the high



The Special Operations Group (Spanish acronym SOG) on the firing line for marksmanship training.



**ABOVE:** Charging guerrilla position from which their unit was ambushed, these two Salvo troopers show what it's all about. **LEFT:** Member of 2nd Company, Special Operations Group, El Salvador, sending the enemy his regards. **BELOW LEFT:** This Salvo SOG trooper wards off the early-morning mountain chill in the warmth of a communist encampment his unit has just torched.

ground to an area overlooking San Juan de la Cruz where we linked up with the other SOG fireteams who had humped to the top. Villagers indicated we were less than 30 minutes behind a guerrilla formation. Chan led the way toward Sumpul de Avelares 10 kilometers south. He felt contact was imminent. Right again.

We had just climbed to a plateau outside the village when a recoilless-rifle round slammed into a knoll about 150 meters ahead of us. The troopers pitched into cover in a ditch alongside the road. Chan wasn't sure it was incoming and radioed to find out if Cobra Battalion in our trace had fired a recon round. While he waited for an answer several more rounds slammed into the dirt closer to our position.

The radio hissed and squawked. Cobra Battalion knew nothing about the fire. That's when the automatic weapons opened up and kicked dirt into our faces. Definitely incoming. An M60 was raking the road, searching for the SOG team.

The troopers began to return fire but had to duck again when a guerrilla blooper-man found the range. He pumped in two close rounds and shrapnel from the HE sang over our heads. We could clearly hear the hollow pop as he triggered grenades at us. He was good and getting better.

The ambient lead content of the air was

getting unhealthy and we bolted out of the ditch heading for an adjacent field. Chan dove into a depression beside me and tried to spot his troops. He knew where the guerrillas were by this time. Their fire was coming from positions on three hills forming a V around us. The range was about 300 to 500 meters.

Panameño raked the area with accurate M60 fire. Our own M79 grenadier became locked in a deadly, high-explosive duel with his guerrilla counterpart. The rest of us filled in the blanks with semiauto fire and an occasional full-auto burst. Shit was flying heavily in both directions.

"Hulk is wounded!" We could barely hear the cry over the firing. Chan wanted to know details.

"It's bad. He's been shot above the ankle. His bone is shattered. He needs bandages."

Chan tossed his battle-dressing to 16-year-old Walter to pass down a chain of troops for use on Hulk's wound. Gato got on the horn and informed Cobra Battalion command that we were taking heavy incoming and had one man wounded. Battalion thought they might get the Red Cross convoy that was passing their area to evacuate our WIA. They should have known better.

The Red Cross refused to get involved and Chan's cursing could be heard even over the gunfire. "If he was a guerrilla, the Red Cross would gladly raise its banner to rescue him." Right again. After the operation we learned through a U.S. military trainer in El Paraíso that the Red Cross evacuated four of the guerrillas we wounded in this very fight.

Things were getting tough all over for Operation Cobra troopers. A large guerrilla column had been spotted moving up from the northwest which would put them in position to hit Cobra Battalion's flank. Chan discovered from the radio traffic that 1st Company was being sent to cut them off.

Fine. We had troubles of our own. We barely noticed the 90mm recoilless-rifle fire that erupted when the two formations met to our right rear. We were still taking heavy incoming and trying to return it which made following the combat action on our flanks difficult. Chan indicated the 3rd Company under Lt. Vasconcelos was knocking hell out of a guerrilla formation to our east with 81s and .50-caliber machine guns. As the firing in our area died down we could hear the clang of rounds leaving mortar tubes and the cough of the heavy guns.

Chan and I bolted from cover to check on our wounded man. The big, tough trooper everyone called Hulk lay groaning in a ditch, his face contorted in agony. Two other SOG soldiers were tending the ugly leg wound. He would need a Medevac in a hurry if he was going to come out of it with both limbs.

While we waited and returned sporadic incoming, Cobra Battalion was slowly fighting their way into positions around the guerrilla main force which had opened up on us initially. They could see and hear it



Salvo Special Operations Group 3rd Company members pose at Miramundo during Operation Cobra.

coming. After about an hour, they began a strategic retreat and we were able to call for the helicopter.

A Huey clattered over our position looking for an LZ. Sergeant Martín, the SOG second-in-command, ran through the smoke and flames left in the wake of the fire fight to a suitable clearing and popped yellow smoke. I headed for the area helping to carry Hulk in a makeshift stretcher. The Huey roared in and we could see it was full of other wounded Cobra Battalion troops. It had been a bad one all around apparently. We pushed Hulk inside the bird and listened to his howls of pain over the rotor noise. His military career was over. They had to amputate Hulk's foot back at the military hospital.

The Gs had broken contact but they weren't through fighting for the day. SOG was still on point for Cobra Battalion. As we descended a steep hill around 1700 the trees along our route began to snap with incoming fire. It was small arms but heavy enough to drive everyone to ground. On our flank, 2nd Company opened fire on guerrilla positions they had spotted along a hillside 300 meters dead ahead.

We immediately got up and ran through the bush, crawled under a barbed-wire fence, slid down a sandy slope and charged across a road, headed for the enemy positions. The SOG soldiers were cranking their M16s on full-auto and firing from the hip. It wasn't accurate but they had the wounded Hulk on their mind. It was payback time.

We hurled ourselves against a bank and watched two 2nd Company troopers calmly firing uphill from a solid kneeling position. One of them nonchalantly dangled a cigarette from his lips as he peppered away at a target I could not see. It was pure John Wayne.

"Yee-haw!" shouted Panameño as he stood and ripped off a long burst from his M60. Two M79 grenadiers joined the fray

and we had a nice little punch-up going. Cartridge casings were getting thick on the ground around us. We stuffed one magazine after another into our rifles.

The Gs weren't taking it lying down. They poured small arms back down the hill at us. Most of it buzzed over our heads and we stayed in defilade. It might be a contest decided by who had the most ammo to burn. It was a fairly stagnant situation until the Salvo troops craned their heads and heard a distant droning over the gunfire.

*El Martillo* was on the way and the SOG troops began to cheer. It translates as "The Hammer," but *El Martillo* is what the Salvadoran troops have come to call a rocket-carrying Cessna 0-2 recon aircraft. The Gs were in for a pounding from above and the troops were ecstatic with their grandstand seats. They greeted *El Martillo* coming on-station with all the fondness American grunts bestowed on the AC-47 Spooky gunships in Vietnam.

The pilot circled the high ground scoping out the Gs' position. He pulled up and then nosed over into a droning dive triggering salvos of 2.75-inch rockets from the pods under his wings. The first ripple hit short but a second pass put HE dead on the mark. We blazed away at the guerrillas we could see scattering into the hills.

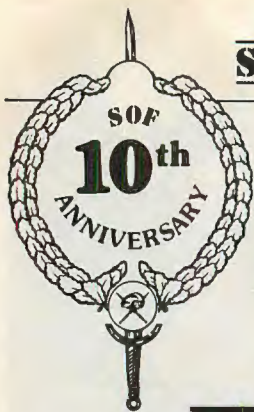
*El Martillo* interdicted the escape routes with four more rocket salvos and we began to climb uphill to check the damage. Peace — through superior firepower — had settled over the battlefield.

Back at Los Planes de Horno where SOG went to resupply the next morning, I found Col. Carranza quite pleased with the progress so far on Operation Cobra. "We have confirmed that we killed at least 10 *terrenos* (terrorists) and wounded a hell of a lot more," he said. "We have had only six wounded and no one killed."

The score was good but the news was not. "The Hondurans have already withdrawn their net along the border," Col. Carranza

*Continued on page 118*





# THE EVIL EMPIRE EYES THE BIG ENCHILADA

by Col. Rex Applegate

*The civil unrest, corruption, decline and deterioration of the power structure now taking place in Mexico is a major potential threat to the security of the United States. Destabilizing situations inside that country and along our 2,000-mile mutual border are now escalating. As long as the Soviets and Cubans continue to influence and instigate events in Mexico, civil war or a gradual political and economic dissolution is a very real possibility. As demonstrated in Cuba, Nicaragua and other areas within our hemisphere, this creates fertile ground for planting permanent communist influence. The process may already be in motion.*

*Current U.S. Central American policy and military planning calls for neutralization of Nicaragua. This concept correctly contends that a permanent communist base in any one country in Central America will lead to exportation of the communist political system to adjoining countries. Managua's continuing support of communist insurgents in El Salvador is a classic example.*

*But the destabilization of Mexico will probably come from within — especially with the Soviets helping to push it. That would effectively bypass U.S. efforts in Central America forcing Washington to react aggressively — never a popular move with our allies or in public opinion. Regardless, such a move would be the only possible solution if the situation were allowed to deteriorate into a full-blown communist revolution.*

*In this edited article by a military expert with long experience in the area, SOF examines the internal situation south of our borders which could lead to a communist take-over in Mexico.*

**T**HE U.S. State Department describes the government of Mexico as a Federal Republic with an executive, legislative and judicial system. In reality, it is a country ruled by the dictatorship of one party. For 56 years Mexico has been ruled by the Insti-

tutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). Simply put, the PRI controls, through the office of the president, the entire political, economic and security systems of the country, including the nominal political opposition. In years past, the PRI has had to either bribe or otherwise pay off leaders of opposition parties to make them run in local and national elections, thus giving the appearance of a democratic electoral process.

The PRI nominates the president and its stamp of approval assures his election. The president serves a single term of six years. The current president, Miguel de la Madrid, was elected in 1982. He is the 16th president to come to power without significant opposition since the party seized control after the Mexican revolutionary period of 1910-1929. Every state governor, federal senator and, until recently, federal deputy or congressman has been a member of the ruling PRI party. In all past state and major municipal government elections, PRI control has been dominant. The party controls the lives of 78 million Mexicans through a two-million-strong government bureaucracy which dispenses federal jobs, influential fiscal positions, financial largesse, favors and other social services to the loyal and faithful. Any serious opposition has been ruthlessly punished by either political or punitive action.

In Mexico, presidential power is the only law. The Mexican president is one of the most powerful elected executives in the Western World. He has the capacity and authority to remove governors and congressional delegates at will. The 31 states and federal districts have little autonomy. The president controls 80 percent of the nationalized economy including all the basic industries: banks, steel, tourism, mining, utilities, commercial fishing, aviation, surface transportation, education, agriculture and social services fall under the control of his bureaucracy. One thing can be said about the system though. Since 1940, no military man has assumed the presidency

— a situation uncommon in Latin America.

Over the past 50 years the PRI-controlled political system has absorbed into its embrace the unions, labor in general, the military, opposition parties, the press and any other element of the society that could provide potential opposition. Opposing party leaders, union chiefs and other dissidents have been paid off, placated, or eliminated.

The massive corruption of the past two regimes, the huge foreign debt, inflation, the general unrest of the populace, declining value of the peso, sinking economy, discontented middle class, hungry peasants, plus a breakdown of public confidence, suggests that PRI control and the current system of government may be facing a terminal phase.

This year the PRI and President de la Madrid face some difficult decisions. In July 1985, governors and other officials for five states will be elected. A democratic, honest election risks surrender of the past government monopoly on political power. On the other hand, massive government vote fraud — not uncommon in the past — and use of the military to put down any legal opposition is an alternative that could lead to an outright dictatorship, bloodshed and possible civil war. Another option would be a military coup. Although the Mexican military has been subservient and loyal to civilian control of the government over the past half-century, the current state of the nation makes a coup a possibility.

The principal legal opposition to continuing government control and to the left wing of the PRI is the resurgent conservative National Action Party (PAN). This party has provided nominal opposition to the dominant PRI organization for many years. Lately, PAN ranks have swollen due to Mexico's deteriorating internal situation. PAN is closely allied with Mexican business interests, the Catholic church and the middle class. Along with a second, smaller conservative party, PAN received some 20 percent of the vote in the 1982 elections. It also won control of nine mayoral elections



**German-made HWK 11 APC makes the parade rounds in Mexico City.**

and gained control of four state capitals. Unless there is massive government intervention in the July 1985 election, the PAN party could gain control of a number of northern governments. A loss of state governorships would not mean that the PRI would lose control of the federal government. But a PAN victory would considerably weaken public perception of PRI's previous dominance and add momentum to the current unrest, a situation that could lead to an upset in the 1986 presidential election.

The real barometer of the success or failure of a government is the state of the economy. Mexico's ongoing fiscal problems are fast approaching crisis stage. Excessive public spending, corruption, a drop in world oil prices, plant shut-downs, increasing unemployment, inflation and a huge foreign debt (\$90 billion) have created the equivalent of an economic meltdown. Mexico will probably be unable to continue paying the interest on the debt making default a possibility.

Although inflation has declined from 150 percent when President de la Madrid took office in 1982, it still rages at 50-60 percent. Drastic government spending cuts have been made. For those lucky enough to have jobs, there has been at least a 25-50 percent decrease in real income and buying power.

In 1976 the value of the peso was 12.5 cents to one U.S. dollar. Currently, the peso is declining in value to the dollar at 21 centavos per day (100 centavos in one peso). In

May 1985, the peso had a value of .004 cents to the U.S. dollar. The Mexican middle class is being wiped out by the decline in their currency. Traditionally, the middle class produces leaders and support for revolutions aimed at solving such problems.

In December 1984 the government raised the minimum wage by 30 percent. Labor and the unions claim that wages must again be increased by 50 percent to match the cost of living. At the bottom of the scale, the formerly stoic peasants are hungry, bored, angry and ripe for any kind of charismatic leader who will promise them an improvement of their meager standard of living. Substantial raises in the cost of government-subsidized beans and tortillas have previously been made; another 52-percent rise in the cost of tortillas was decreed in Dec. 1984. Electricity and gasoline prices have skyrocketed and another 37-percent rise in these basic items has recently been announced. Fidel Castro — the hero of many PRI members, unions, peasants and other dissident elements in Mexican society — has urged Mexico to default on all foreign debts. The Mexican press is increasingly echoing this recommendation. In the case of U.S.-Mexican relations this could entail \$24 billion in U.S. bank loans and the possible loss of a \$6 billion Amer-

ican business investment.

Mexico's only hope in paying the interest on its huge foreign debt depends on its oil-field production and reserves. Mexico ranks fourth among world oil-producing nations. The U.S. depends on Mexico for the greatest part of its imported fuel. America's potential military needs depend on the continuous availability of Mexican oil in times of international crisis. Oil alone could prod the U.S. into intervening in Mexico during times of severe unrest. To make matters worse, Mexican oil fields and installations are vulnerable to sabotage because most extraction and refining activity is done in the coastal states bordering on the Gulf of Mexico.

A threat to the oil fields may prove to be a minor consideration in Mexico's uncertain future. The more likely destabilization will come from within — a fact evidenced by current political trends. Mexico possesses most of the elements and conditions needed for a communist-inspired takeover. The Mexican economy is virtually socialized; only 15 to 20 percent of the economy remains in private hands and the dominant PRI party has a strong left wing.

The power of leftist labor leaders under the PRI umbrella and outside the party has always been great. In the past, through special perks, outright bribery, and other lucrative financial concessions, these leaders have been controlled by the party machine.

Outside the left wing of the ruling PRI party are some vocal, openly Marxist parties. In the 1982 election they wielded a voting block of more than two million. Aided and abetted by the Cubans and Soviets, they are now demanding that the government take drastic steps to prevent any right-wing or military attempt to take control.

In the capital of Mexico City approximately two-thirds of the daily newspapers are leftist-oriented and anti-U.S. in their editorial bias. Communist-oriented dailies carry almost no advertising and need government subsidies to exist. The most prominent general newspaper, *Excelsior*, provides a platform for many anti-American columnists and articles. Currently, the anti-American press is blaming most of Mexico's self-induced ills, such as illegal immigration across the U.S. border, the huge foreign debt, the negative balance of payments, the rise of a right-wing political opposition, loss in value of the peso, the narcotics scandal, the decline in standard of living and most other political, social and economic problems on the U.S.

Last year, General Paul F. Gorman, Chief of the U.S. Southern Command based in Panama, testified before the U.S. Senate concerning the situation in Mexico. He declared that Mexico was a one-party state that pursued a policy of accommodation with its own left and international leftist interests. He was also quoted as saying that "Mexico was the most corrupt government and society in Latin America and was becoming the center for subversion throughout Central America."

Under Mexican president Luis Echeverría (1970-76), U.S. policy was opposed on almost all fronts and closer ties were initiated with Russia and Cuba. Under president Lopez Portillo, all private banks in Mexico were nationalized, putting a virtual end to Mexican capitalism.

Mexico's foreign policy is pro-Cuba and generally in opposition to that of the U.S. when it concerns Third World countries and Central America. These policies, firmly entrenched during the regimes of Echeverría and Portillo, are still largely in place despite the attempts of current president de la Madrid to initiate a more even-handed approach.

An institution that is endemic in many Third World countries also affects Mexico. Governmental corruption at all levels in Mexico runs rampant. The current PRI-dominated political system with its poorly paid civil servants probably could not survive without influence peddling, outright bribery, political favors, and patronage. This form of government has successfully maintained internal stability for more than 50 years despite its negative aspects.

During the regimes of Mexico's two immediate past-presidents, the system of spreading financial booty was drastically changed but not for the better. At the beginning of the oil boom, presidents Echeverría and Portillo were not old PRI party loyalists coming into office. They represented a new breed of technocrats who took advantage of



Long-bed Jeep carries FN-toting troopers through the streets of Mexico City.

the enormous powers bestowed upon them by the Mexican presidency. Under them, power stopped flowing up the PRI-based pyramid — it began to flow from the top of the pyramid down. And a looting of the national treasury unparalleled in Mexican history took place.

An estimated \$20 billion was taken from public funds by the two presidents, their families and designated political cronies. The extravagant corruption during the regimes of Echeverría and Portillo enraged the long-complacent Mexican public and it has been thoroughly covered by the previously government-controlled Mexican media. Coupled with the high inflation and other economic factors lowering the standard of living, this large-scale corruption undermined the prestige of the presidency and the efforts of the current president de la Madrid to contain increasing civil unrest.

President de la Madrid, who owes his election to office to his predecessor Portillo, has taken no strides to eliminate corruption — a goal that was announced with great fanfare when he took office in 1982. Visible government corruption is down, but one highly placed cynic said this is simply because there is "nothing left to steal."

Regardless of President de la Madrid's promise of a clean-up, his slow progress during three years in office and failure to prosecute his predecessor indicates that he is enslaved by a system of government that cannot admit to any wrongdoing by its president or past officials. The increasingly cynical Mexican public has paid a high price. The question is: How much longer will the populace endure such excessive corruption without "throwing the rascals out?" That question — and others concerning the future of Mexico — may be answered by the capabilities and inclinations of the Mexican Armed Forces.

#### The Mexican Armed Forces

The Mexican military operates under a veil of secrecy that is not only self-imposed but a result of deliberate government policy.

Since 1920, Mexico has not had a single military coup. In fact, the military plays only a peripheral role in Mexican politics. There has been no external enemy to fight since the Mexican Revolution so the Army's main challenge has been containing unrest in the countryside and serving as a backup to civil authority in urban areas.

It hasn't always been that way. At the end of the revolution (1910-1930), Mexico had its last three military presidents: Calles, Cárdenas and Avila Camacho. Since 1946 no military man has occupied the presidency and the Army has been deliberately depoliticized and subordinated to the control of the president. The new emphasis was on internal stability and the Army was molded to insure that. In order to reduce the threat of provincial uprisings by a zone commander, Army fuel supplies were limited and rations were put under civilian control. A policy of rotation of zone commanders every three to four years was established to prevent any one general from establishing a local power base.

The Army's share of the budget was slowly decreased over the years. Weapons purchases were limited and the amount of training for draftees was reduced. Most importantly, it became the PRI policy to *corrupt the army*.

Senior officers were given all kinds of opportunities in the civilian sector to enrich themselves through the patronage system. Years ago, a cynical, well-known Mexican politician described the situation aptly. "What Mexican general can fail to succumb to a cannonade of 50,000 pesos?"

The corruption of military officials continues. When files on the criminal activities of several top generals were reportedly presented to President de la Madrid, no action was taken. Early retirement is usually the only penalty for such misdeeds if any action is taken at all.

The Mexican Army is loyal to the president, anti-communist and the stronghold of nationalism. It has not — at this stage — been vulnerable to any outside manipulation or forces. In recent years, the Army has concerned itself with controlling banditry,

peasant upheavals and political agitation, narcotics smuggling and events along the Guatemalan border.

In the past, Mexican officers enjoyed good relations with the American military. Many junior Mexican officers attended U.S. military schools and training centers. However, during the regimes of Echeverría and Portillo, anti-U.S. policies limited fraternization with U.S. defense attachés and other military officials. Fewer officers have been sent to any U.S. schools, including the U.S. Army School of the Americas in Panama where the military of most other Latin nations attend training in counterinsurgency and related subjects.

Decades of simmering xenophobia in Mexican political and military circles has tainted relations with U.S. military associations. The leftist influence in schools and government, plus Mexico's loss of more than 50 percent of her territory to a powerful northern neighbor in the past century, have contributed to the cold shoulder. Only during the last decade has the Mexican Army moved away from the unrealistic belief that the U.S. is a potential enemy. The military now widely regards the threat as coming from within.

Efficiency within the armed forces was clearly not a major concern until recently. In 1974, one source reported that the Mexican Army had 400 generals commanding approximately 60,000 soldiers (by comparison, the U.S. Army had 480 generals in a 784,000-man army). Many of these generals, veterans of the Mexican revolution, were retired during President Echeverría's term when the modernization of the military began.

Events in Mexico prompted military expansion and improvement. Two incidents were particularly important in that evolution. The first took place in 1968 at the Summer Olympic Games in Mexico City. Soldiers fired on marchers protesting economic conditions, killing as many as 32 demonstrators. Thousands were arrested. The second major incident involving the army took place in the state of Guerrero. A rural insurgency movement ended in 1974 with the death of Luciano Cabañas. It took several years, but the Army finally managed to kill the leader of some 500 guerrillas. The Mexican Army devoted about half of its combat strength to track him down.

The local success of such bandits, rural revolutionaries and their apolitical cousins, the narcotic gang-members, indicates the Mexican Army maintains only tenuous control over the hinterlands. After the Cabañas incident, it became evident to the Army and the political leaders that a similar, basic built-in threat to the country's stability existed in many areas of Mexico that the government had long neglected. They perceived that dozens of similar operations might have to take place and the Army was clearly not ready for that. Using funds from the oil boom, the military began to expand and modernize during the regimes of Echeverría and Portillo.

The present armed forces number approximately 120,000 men. As in most Latin American countries, the Army is the dominant service, comprising about 79 percent of the military. The Navy has about 17 percent and the Air Force four percent. The Mexican federal budget for 1985 calls for military spending of only 1.07 percent (\$877 million). This is a lower percentage of spending than in previous years, but that's understandable given the new program of national austerity. Unfortunately, the military currently needs a large infusion of funds to handle increasing responsibilities. It's not likely to come. Mexico's military has typically received a lower percentage of the national budget than that dedicated to the military formations of other Latin American countries.



**New equipment: Mexican soldiers on parade in a Panhard armored car.**

The high command structure consists of a Secretary of Defense (controlling the Army and Air Force) and a Secretary of the Navy. Both have cabinet rank. This separation of military power is intentional. It dilutes the power of the two ministers, preventing either from becoming too influential. The reliance on personal relationships and loyalty is the key factor at all levels of the military command just as it is in Mexican political circles. Personal contacts are often more valuable than professional military competence in considering high-level appointments.

At the start of each presidential term, there is a heavy turnover of the upper echelons of command. The president selects military ministers with whom he is most comfortable, ones who will be loyal and support his policies. The cabinet members then select loyal subordinates within their military hierarchy. The president also appoints military zone and naval district commanders. These commanders work with state officials, but their chain of command is direct to the Secretary of Defense or Navy Secretary. Power within the forces is highly centralized at all levels. Little happens without approval of the commander.

#### **The Mexican Army**

The Army is organized into 36 zones with boundaries closely corresponding to those of the states. Three states, Chiapas, Guerrero and Veracruz, have two military zones each. The Federal District is the largest of the zones, as it is the center of power. There are eight naval districts (four on each coast).

Veracruz is the location of the principal naval installations and training schools. The Army has three types of forces available: the regular Army, the Reserve Forces, and the Rural Defense Corps.

A mechanized brigade, two infantry brigades, an airborne brigade and the troops manning 36 zone garrisons constitute the core of the Mexican Army. The zone garrisons include 64 independent infantry battalions, three artillery regiments and 23 independent cavalry regiments, plus support elements. There is also the Presidential Guard, stationed in Mexico City. This unit, composed primarily of three infantry battalions, is commanded by a two star general who reports directly to the president but through the Secretary of Defense. This elite force provides security for the president, his family and other key political figures. Officers of the Presidential Guard also serve as aides to high-ranking politicians. As would be expected, this unit has priority over all other Army units in equipment and arms.

There is one armored regiment, one reconnaissance regiment and one military police battalion also on the Army rolls. Most of the armored vehicles are assigned to the units that are headquartered in Mexico City. Because it is the seat of government and the location of the major military installations, the armored units are tightly restricted to the Federal District area. The Mexican order of battle is clearly skewed to provide protection for the presidential seat of power over all other considerations.

After World War II, 40 M3 and M5 Stuart light tanks and 70 M3A1 armored vehicles were purchased from the U.S. These assets are still listed in inventory but their capabilities, due to parts and maintenance problems, are questionable. In recent years, they have not appeared in the military parades in any numbers or with any degree of regularity. During the 1960s, 50 German-made HWK 11 track-type armored personnel carriers were purchased. Newest acquisitions include Panhard ERC-90 vehicles and other foreign-manufactured wheeled vehicles and armored personnel carriers. Mexico's Military Industries also produces limited numbers of the DN 111 armored personnel carriers.

A 250,000-man Reserve Force supplements the regular armed forces. National military service is required by law. All Mexican males must register on their 18th birthday. A military identification card is issued that requires revalidation every two years until the bearer reaches age 40. From this pool, a small number are selected by lottery to train with active units on 38 weekends during the year. Those selected receive only the most rudimentary instruction. Training of the reserves is carried out by the military bureaucracy in a haphazard manner. It is possible to avoid this service with political connections in high places or "buy-outs." In reality, the reserve force

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# MIDDLE MAELS

## Our Man in Beirut

by Jim Morris

*Continuing, bloody factional fights in the Middle East drew SOF's attention to the area long before our reporting had become popular reading. Many American combat veterans figured the area was just "another Vietnam with sand." We knew better and wanted to bring our growing number of readers a first-hand account of the realities in the turbulent area. Long before Beirut became a household word synonymous with U.S. Marines we sent SF veteran correspondent Jim Morris into Lebanon and he filed this report for our December 1981 issue.*

I sort of expected my Lebanese contact on Cyprus to be like Sydney Greenstreet, or Peter Lorre in a panama hat. What I got was a slender, clean-cut, collegiate-looking kid in a new Corvette, who grabbed my hand, shook it, and said, "Hi! My name's Masoud," in perfectly accented American English.

Over a plate of shrimp, a salad and a bottle of excellent wine, he told me his story. He had been a junior, majoring in electrical engineering at Oklahoma State, when the war with the Syrians got hot in '78.

He returned to Lebanon to find himself in charge of a squad of what the papers call the Christian Phalangist Militia: "One night one of my boys woke me up; I looked out through a chink in the wall and saw about 6,000 heads. So I called the boys with the mortars and had them fire right on us. We were in very strong houses, and they were in the open, so that drove them away."

We swapped war stories for a while, until he finally said, "You know, the things they do to our people, after a while they drive you crazy. So once, when we captured a Syrian, I tied him to the back of my jeep and



Lebanese Army troopers prepare to move out with their FN FALs.

drove him all over town, on cobblestones, down alleys. When I got through there was no more left of him than this." He held up a plate of shrimp shells and sauce.

"It gives me the creeps to think about it now," he said. "It scares me to think I could ever have been like that. When I go home I ask the boys not even to tell me their stories. They are fanatics."

I thought back on my briefing from the managing editor at SOF. "Look," I had told him, "every combat situation is different. I like to know what I can do and not do, where I can and cannot go. And most important, who are the good guys and the bad guys?"

The ME looked up from his desk and shot me an evil grin. "Well, Jimbo," he said, "that's what we're sending you over there to find out."

The next day Masoud arranged for my passage to Jounieh, a Christian-controlled port, 20 miles south of Beirut. Boat travel was necessary because I had no visa, and

because the airport was in West Beirut, under the control of the enemy. The enemy was apparently anyone who was in favor of anything other than the Christian Phalangists.

Once we were underway I ordered a beer at the bar and thought it over. I had been told they were trying to shake the "Phalangist" tag. The word "phalange" comes from phalanx, which is an ancient Greek military formation. So the Christian Phalangist parties were political organizations formed for the express purpose of organizing a militia to defend these people's homes, shops and towns, when the central government was too weak and indecisive to do so. Unfortunately, the name "falange" is also associated with Franco's fascist party in Spain, not a good tag from a public-relations standpoint.

The next morning we were scheduled to arrive in Jounieh at 0830 hours, so I bounded down the ladder at first light, eager for coffee and breakfast. When we had eaten breakfast I went to the bow to watch slick blue water run under the boat, and a gray

*Continued on page 133*

# E EAST TROM

## Lebanon's Winter Warriors

by Ned Kelly

**W**HAT used to be known as the "Switzerland of the Middle East" has become more like a bloody, battered Stalingrad. Beirut remains under a nerve-racking seige that becomes more violent as Israeli occupation forces gradually withdraw from Lebanon.

Like a vacuum, this strategic city seems to be sucking up soldiers who are killing each other for control. In the middle of the maelstrom, cut off from virtually all outside aid, are Lebanon's Christians. Organized into a militia known as the Lebanese Forces (LF) centered in East Beirut, they are fighting to resist a stranglehold being tightened by Druze Moslems, Shiite Moslems, Syrian troops, PLO gangs and other assorted terrorists. It's a tough spot to be in for the only remaining pro-Western people in Lebanon.

Hunkered in the rubble of a shattered neighborhood we are playing "Beirut Roulette." The LF platoon, with which I have been patrolling near the infamous Green Line that still divides the city, doesn't like the odds. Stakes include our lives and the safety of the civilians still living in the area. The *croupier* is Walid Jumblatt and his Druze artillerymen who are enthusiastically dumping 122mm and 130mm HE on the area from their firing positions in the towering foothills that command Beirut.

It's cool for this part of the world and a light rain is falling to muffle the crump of artillery. Still the reports echo through the

At the controls of a Soviet T-54, an LF tank driver suffers under a snowstorm and waits for word to move out into an attack on a Syrian position.



skeletons of bombed-out buildings. A chilly wind whips down from the snow-covered mountains which ring the city and one of the militiamen says he's glad he's not up there with the LF Mountain Infantry which is moving against the Syrians who control the passes and peaks.

A rapidly darkening sky is lit occasionally by the flash of more incoming. We count until we hear the report of the Druze artillery in an effort to gauge the range. That effort is interrupted by the crash and roar of outgoing rounds. We are in the middle of an artillery duel. Christian militia gun crews have begun counterbattery fire in an effort to silence the Druze. In the next few minutes — while shells roar over our heads — the Lebanese Army joins the fight with their 155mm howitzers. It's heartening to discover the Army is still willing to get involved. Since the final departure of the Multinational Peacekeeping Force in 1984, they have been keeping a low profile.

It appears the artillery training provided by the U.S. Marines when they were here may have done some good. I can see good concentrations blossoming on the hillsides where the Druze are dug in and holding. It will be another sleepless night in East Beirut. West Beirut, scene of the most violent fighting during the PLO occupation and the Israeli drive to oust them, is strangely quiet.

Between the incoming rounds which mark the Druze method of lobbying for control of the Lebanese Parliament, we can hear the crackle of small arms. Green tracers arc into the night sky from some mourning father or brother who is telling the neighbors that he's lost a son or sibling. Tomorrow his gun will be pointed at any Moslem who happens into sight. It's not very Christian but it is the way of the war in Beirut.

There is no chance to sleep under the furious pounding of the artillery but there is time to chuckle at Western journalists who scurry around Beirut and file copy which refers to this bloodbath as a "civil war." That's crap and anyone who has packed a gun in the mean streets of Beirut knows it. This is a war of foreign aggression which has left the Christian community here fighting for survival.

On the pointy end of the bayonet is the LF which faces the combined might of the Syrian Army and PLO units to the north of the city and a confusing mixture of drooling lunatics in Beirut. Directly across the Green Line from us, LF units are searching for PLO assassins, Iranian fanatics and communist terrorists from Western Europe, mostly Italians and Germans. Beirut has become the Parris Island of the Middle East.

**ABOVE RIGHT:** After he was killed in a Druze artillery attack, this young Christian boy was brought to a hospital in East Beirut where his grief-stricken mother identified the body.

**RIGHT:** LF troopers load a dead buddy onto a stretcher after he was killed in PLO shelling of Christian enclave at Iklim Kharroub south of Beirut.



This is where a terrorist can make his bones before going on to spread the revolution elsewhere.

The situation is worst to the south of Beirut where LF units are struggling to protect a Christian enclave at Iklm Kharroub which is under constant artillery and rocket pounding from both PLO units and Druze militia. PLO reinforcements are streaming into the area from larger units holding the strategic Bakaa Valley. Money and munitions are streaming into them from Saudi Arabia, Iran, Libya, Russia and Vietnam. The Lebanese Forces are financed only by what money the Christian community they defend can raise. There's not much I can do to help here. With any luck I may live to make it up into the mountains tomorrow.

#### Lebanon's Winter Warriors

Rain is still falling on Beirut far below our position. The white ribbon of Mediterranean beach beckons us away from the knee-deep snow and blustery wind of the Anti-Lebanon Mountain Range. A small unit of LF Mountain Infantry is covering a pass through which tanks and APCs bearing reinforcements are expected. Above us in the fleecy cloud layer is the "French Room," the highest plateau occupied by the Syrian Special Forces units that roam this area.

A veteran LF mountain trooper passes the time by telling me how the Mountain Infantry would have handled the Syrian redoubt in the good old days before America's abrupt departure and the Israeli pull-back allowed the "Devils of Damascus" to pour troops across the border and into these mountains. Squad- and-platoon size units would snowshoe onto the craggy peaks above the enemy and ski down on them under covering fire from T-54 tanks.

These days, there's no percentage in such tactics. Only a company of Mountain Infantry is available to control the slopes and protect the Christian communities who still recall their rescue by American Marines who drove amphibian tractors over the treacherous passes during a blizzard in 1983. The ski troops are now forced to engage Syrian patrols in mountain ambushes or use their few armored vehicles to attack outposts. In response, the Syrian commanders call up rocket-firing Gazelle helicopters, from bases on the other side of the mountains, to drive off the Christian attackers. Under fire from the gunships, the LF troopers radio for SAM 7s but there is generally a delay of an hour or more before missile gunners can reach the high passes.

That fairly static situation angers and frustrates these unique mountain soldiers who differ from other LF units in that they are regular, full-time soldiers rather than militiamen who only fight when they are needed. Still they launch ski and snowshoe

**Having traversed a high plateau on civilian-style snowshoes, this LF Mountain Infantry trooper takes a break before donning his skis for a quick trip downhill. His M16 is an unusual weapon for LF infantrymen who generally carry AKs.**







**ABOVE:** Along the embattled Green Line which separates East and West Beirut, LF infantrymen wearing IDF helmets and carrying AKMs prepare to clear a building of Druze militia.



**LEFT:** The insignia of the Lebanese Forces symbolizes survival for the beleaguered Christians in Lebanon.

**BELOW:** While ski troops maneuver to assault a Syrian position blocking a mountain pass, an LF T-54 traverses to provide covering fire. The 44-ton MBT is crewed by four men and features a 100mm main gun. This vehicle is likely a T-54C, captured by the Israelis and presented to the LF which fitted a U.S. 1919A4 .30-caliber MG atop the turret.



patrols over the undulating terrain and through the deep powder covered with a treacherously thin veneer of ice. It keeps the Syrian and PLO units from grabbing away the initiative of war in this hostile terrain and such activities are natural among the men of the LF Mountain Infantry.

Most of them were born and raised in these mountains. Some were selected from among the best fighters in other units of the Lebanese Forces but they all have common backgrounds. Practically all Mountain Infantry soldiers were amateur winter sportsmen or international ski competitors. They know how to survive the ravages of winter weather at altitude and they can move quickly across the peaks using modified civilian snowshoes and ski equipment. Hoping to catch the Syrian SF patrols off guard, they keep their AKs, MAG 58s and M16s at the ready while they traverse the slopes on comfortable equipment they used for recreation or competition before the war.

They'd like to develop a formal program to recruit and train more Mountain Infantry troops. The leader of the MI Ski Patrol told me he'd "love to have some retired Royal Marine Mountain Leader Instructor show up ready to help us become more professional and fight this war in the mountains more effectively."

Since the Syrians hold practically all of the high ground in these mountains, the area has become prime sniper country. In many small outposts dotted around strategic villages, LF Mountain Infantry marksmen bundle against the cold and hug Austrian Steyr SSG 69 rifles. They sweep the barren snow with six-power scopes and occasionally get a shot at the leader of a Syrian patrol. It makes the sniper's day.

It also means one less invader to threaten survival of the beleaguered Christians in Lebanon.

#### **Iklm Kharroub**

If the Christian militia fails to hold this

area south of Beirut, the PLO has publically promised wholesale slaughter. The defenders are holding on with teeth, toes and little else. (Editor's note: The LF efforts have not been successful. Earlier this year, nearly all Christian families were forced to flee from Iklim Kharroub as the PLO overran the enclave.)

All land communications have been cut and the only link between Iklim Kharroub and the rest of Christian Lebanon is by sea. Reinforcements and supplies must be brought in by boat through dangerous Mediterranean winter storms. Both men and vital material are frequently lost before they can reach the LF forces holding this enclave. If a boat makes it through the wind and weather, it may be sunk by PLO coastal artillery or rocket attacks.

The Christian residents here live like the Marines lived at Khe Sanh or Con Thien — huddled under constant shelling and wondering if they'll live to see another sunrise. PLO shelling frequently forces closure of the tiny port of Jiye and when that happens the situation gets desperate. There is no food and there is no ammunition to keep the PLO at bay. Why the terrorists don't recognize that and assault under their own shelling remains a mystery to the LF defenders. Perhaps it's because the gunners are more interested in trying to knock out the main power station at Jiye which supplies electricity to East Beirut.

The stubborn civilians who remain in Iklim Kharroub pray for deliverance and shudder when the occasional visitor from Beirut brings horror stories of Moslem atrocities perpetrated against Christians. Listening to one such story it's not hard to understand why they would rather remain here under seige than escape to the capitol.

A young man from a Christian family in East Beirut was abducted by foreign terrorists and sold off to Druze militiamen in West Beirut. The Moslems tortured him for the crime of being an infidel and then made a phone call to his family who were forced to listen to their son's screams and pleas for mercy as he was beaten and burned. The connection stayed open until the Druze had succeeded in torturing their captive to death. Before they hung up on the hysterical family, the Druze indicated they were drinking a toast with his blood.

For the Christians in Beirut and elsewhere in Lebanon — should they survive — it's going to be a long war. In the wake of U.S. withdrawal and preoccupation with other parts of the world, they are convinced no one even cares about that. ✕

**ABOVE RIGHT:** Using their own modified civilian winter equipment, LF Mountain Infantry soldiers snowshoe up a frosty slope to prepare an ambush for Syrian troops who control the mountain passes. **RIGHT:** Although they have been maintaining a low profile in recent months, Lebanese Armed Forces batteries, firing American 155mm howitzers, occasionally join the frequent artillery duels with Druze dug in on the towering foothills which surround Beirut.





# AFRICA

## SOF's Rhodesian Fire Fight

by Joe Tragger

*SOF made quite a reputation in the early years of publication for fearless, firsthand reporting from the bloody battlefields of Rhodesia. Our efforts in that ill-fated African nation and our support of the Rhodesian government in operations against communist insurgents gained us two unfortunate, undeserved labels: racists and mercenaries. We are neither. On the other hand, we have never avoided consorting with genuine mercs to insure readers get the look and feel of Third World battlefields. This abbreviated version of a story from our August 1980 issue is an example.*

**W**HEN you're in the Rhodesian bush, you go to bed shortly after the sun goes down and get up before it breaks the morning sky. The night before an operation you may not sleep well, wondering if you checked everything and what tomorrow will bring.

As the sun comes up, it's time to load the seven-fives (armored vehicles) and ride to the operations area. The 14 members of the stick kid around as all soldiers do before an operation. The machine-gunner on the stick tells us "the Major" has found terts on more than 70 percent of his operations. They say "the Major" is good luck.

He is Darrell Winkler, former Officer Commanding the Rhodesian Armored Regiment, now OC Rhodesian African Rifles.

Other members of the stick are Jerry O'Brian, Great Britain, ex-French Foreign Legionnaire; Michael (Reb) Pierce, American machine-gunner; Yves Devay, veteran of the Belgian Army; "the Mechanic," the only white Rhodesian native on the operation; and SOF staff members, Editor/Publisher Robert K. Brown, Art Director Craig Nunn, Associate Editor N.E. MacDougald and myself, Joe Tragger. The remaining members of the stick are all black troopies of the RAR, a fine unit.



SOF Art Director Craig Nunn poses with his Parkerized, camouflaged Remington 870 pump.

A few kilometers out from the base camp, all kidding stops. Smiles disappear as tension grows; faces tighten. You put a round in the chamber and start watching the bush. You're not too concerned about mines — Rhodesian seven-fives are mine-proof except from the larger Soviet anti-tank mines.

Why worry? Hell, nothing can be done about that.

We're in one of the Tribal Trust Lands (TTLs). Silobela, it is called. There are about 70 or so terts in this area, according to intelligence sources.

About 12 to 14 clicks from the base camp we stop. Security is posted around the

seven-fives and last-minute instructions given. Drivers are given pick-up points, watches are synchronized and we're off.

We are near one of the branches of the Gwelo River. We head southwest, hoping our intel is good. The pace is quick with little noise and everyone is alert. Tomorrow will bring election returns — and maybe peace. No one wants to be the last killed.

In each *kraal* (village) the RAR sergeant questions the locals about the terts in relaxed and easy exchanges. We are given information about where the terts camped overnight. The major decides to split the stick. His section will delay and head straight for the tert camp. We are to cut a big

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# IN FLAMES



## Squeezing SWAPO from Ovamboland

by Stephan Terblanche

SWAPO was no more than a hundred meters ahead of us. Adrenalin was sending jolts of energy into our tired legs. Contact: danger close.

Terr's had been so near last night that we made only a hasty camp with no fires. At daybreak we confirmed their positions and moved to eliminate them from this desolate part of Namibia located hard against the Angolan border. Only the thick bush kept the Soviet-equipped terrs from dying in place. We'd have to hunt them down and kill them at close range. That's the way it's done. There is no better solution in this sort of war.

And there is no unit better at effecting that solution than Special Unit K of the South African Security Forces. The men who call themselves *Koevoet* — Afrikaans for *crowbar* — slithered through the scrub brush with weapons ready for the fire fight they could feel was coming. Grinding relentlessly behind the sweepers were the Casspir APCs mounting machine guns that would serve as base of fire for the maneuver elements.

Suddenly there was a shout. Terr's had been spotted. Forward elements swept into assault line, but the SWAPO Special Unit guerrillas had melted into the bush. The Koevoet commander considered his options and ordered his men to maintain the sweep line. It was a smart move.

In the next few minutes, the terrs decided they couldn't hide any longer. Two of them broke cover and made a run for it in plain sight of the leading Koevoet trackers. The guerrillas turned and fired, ran and turned to fire again. The Koevoet troops dropped into positions on the ground and started to deliver fire on the targets. They were joined quickly by machine-gunners on the Casspirs

A discarded SWAPO pack found during the chase — it would provide valuable information to Koevoet.



Koevoet men close in on insurgents in the thick bush of Namibia.



Early morning parade before the start of another seek-and-destroy mission.



The Koevoet always win. Dead terrors, including a top SWAPO commander of the Special Unit, lie against an ant-heap.

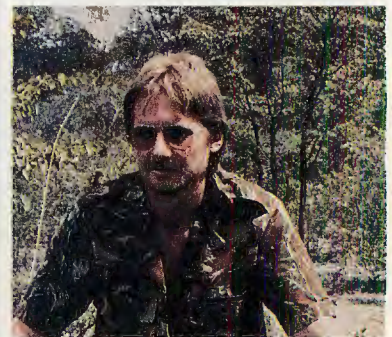
who swept the bush for other SWAPO terrors who might have remained in hiding.

The two who broke cover were lying dead in a clearing. The Koevoet CO ordered his men to cease fire and check the bodies. There had been no friendly casualties in the engagement but there was no sense in taking chances with this troublesome band of SWAPO Special Unit troops that plague Ovamboland. Better to exploit two confirmed kills than chase your way into an ambush.

There would be another grueling sweep tomorrow but I had to leave Rob Brockway and the bush vets of Special Unit K that morning and return to Johannesburg. When my plane touched down I regretted the decision to depart Ovamboland. There was news that Brockway and the Koevoet troopers had nailed six more terrors.

According to the intelligence that had led the Koevoet Unit into the chase, that left only seven members of the highly trained SWAPO Special Unit alive in Namibia. By the end of the week I got news that they had been tracked down and killed also. It doesn't pay to play insurgency games with Koevoet. SWAPO had felt the force of the crowbar designed to pry them out of Ovamboland.

For nearly 20 years now the South African Security Forces (SASF) have been waging war in the northern territory of Namibia against the Marxist Southwest African People's Organization. It's been a tough course, but the school of Ovamboland has



The author atop a Casspir in the Namibian war zone.

### SPRINGBOK VET

Stephan Terblanche last reported for SOF on the war in Angola in May of 1982. Now he gives SOF readers first-hand accounts of the battles within Namibia for the security of southern Africa. Military and war reporter for *The Sunday Times*, Terblanche is based in Johannesburg.

Like most SOF reporters, Terblanche is a military veteran. A corporal in the South African Citizen Force and an honorary major (equivalent rank) in the War Correspondents Corps, he served in Southwest Africa/Namibia combating terrorist infiltration, where he won South Africa's Pro Patria Medal.

made SASF into one of the toughest, most professional fighting forces in the free world.

Their flexibility was demonstrated by formation of an innovative unit known as Special Unit K for Koevoet. Even the name sends chills through SWAPO guerrillas. They have yet to meet a Koevoet unit in the field and stage a winning punch-up.

While it was originally founded as an infiltration and intelligence-gathering outfit, increased terrorist activity in Ovamboland has forced Koevoet into a direct combat role. No one in the unit is complaining and the CO can claim his men account for 75 percent of all kills in the critical area. Since Special Unit K began operations in 1979 they have killed 1,938 terrs, suffering only 79 men KIA — a 25-to-one kill ratio. That's gained the Koevoet unit a nasty reputation in certain circles.

Since SWAPO can't neutralize Koevoet on the battlefield in the guerrillas' most critical — and supposedly most friendly — area of operations, they've initiated a propaganda campaign designed to bring pressure to bear from the rear of this tough combat unit. Liberal politicians, church groups and leftist supporters of SWAPO around the world have been mobilized to change Koevoet's name from a codeword for COIN efficiency to a popular synonym for atrocity. Given a lack of evidence to support allegations of Koevoet oppression of villagers and torture of SWAPO prisoners, I decided to travel to Ovamboland in March and see for myself whether this was an outstanding combat unit or a gang of thugs.

SWAPO's annual rainy-season offensive was in full swing which gave me the opportunity to observe two Koevoet battle groups in their element: counterinsurgency ops against trained SWAPO volunteer units in weather that made travel hard and air support unreliable. I expected to see hardened, slightly irregular border troops. Instead I found a fierce, proud and highly professional fighting unit.

This is exactly what I saw:

In January the annual summer rains turned dusty Ovamboland into a morass of water pans, muddy swamps and almost impenetrable bush and forests. That allowed SWAPO to send the first 49 members of their 170-strong fanatical organization known as the Special Unit across the border into Namibia from Southern Angola. Their mission was to sow terror as well as a staggering amount of Soviet-supplied landmines. They were to avoid contact with the combined South African and South West African Security Forces for as long as possible, but take whatever measures were necessary to infiltrate through Ovamboland into the farm areas south of the war zone bordering the towns of Otavi, Grootfontein and Tsumeb. Once into the area populated mostly by white farmers, they were to maim and kill as many civilians as possible.

By mid-March the terrs had already walked some 300 klicks through Angola carrying rifles, heavy packs, RPGs, mines

and provisions. They had only to make it another 200 klicks through Ovamboland and evade the Koevoet patrols to begin their bloody mission. I wanted to see if Koevoet could prevent that.

It was a sweltering hot morning when my C-130 transport dived out of the sky in a missile-dodging maneuver to touch down at Ondangua Air Base amid the noisy clatter of helicopters heading for the bush and the roar of jets flying combat air patrols. Koevoet's Captain Bernie Ley — a jovial former detective from Port Elizabeth — met me and we drove 30 kilometers to Oshakati, nerve center of the Ovamboland war zone. The trip gave Ley a welcome opportunity to fill



**Koevoet trackers on the trail of SWAPO in the Namutoni Block in the southern war zone of Namibia.**

me in on the history of his unit.

South African Brigadier Hans Dreyer conceived Koevoet after ordinary methods of combating terrorism in Ovambo failed. The immense size of the area, low population density and rough country were too much for conventional units. After consultations with South African Police and the South African Defense Forces, "Strong Hans" — as Dreyer is nicknamed by his troops — was given the green light to form a unit more suited to operations in Ovamboland.

Drawing men initially from Security Branch of the SA Police, Dreyer began training the unit at Oshakati. The SB volunteers formed a leadership nucleus, while troopers were recruited from the people of Ovamboland.

Most Koevoet local recruits come from the Ovambo and Ovahimbo tribes, but some are Angolan refugees and former members of Holden Roberto's FNLA who fled to Namibia after the 1976 Angolan War. A handful are reformed SWAPO guerrillas. All of them grew up in the harsh African bush and had the skills required for survival. Most importantly to Dreyer, they were all volunteers and believed in the efforts to halt communist designs on their native land.

There was some good news to confirm the effectiveness of Dreyer's concept. Captain Ley told me most of the seven-man teams of SWAPO infiltrators had already been tracked down and killed. That's not necessarily policy, Ley indicated. Koevoet operates a prisoner of war camp which held 238 POWs at that point but surrenders are rare in Ovamboland. The Koevoet commanders did not expect *any* among the 17 Special Unit terrs — led by three of SWAPO's top military commanders — who remained at large. Ley said they might get some POWs from among the hundreds of ordinary SWAPO insurgents who infiltrate the war zone but all of Koevoet's attention was focused on eliminating the last of the Special Unit guerrillas who could cause more damage if they were allowed to slip through the net.

If the remaining 17 made it into southern farm areas the agricultural economy could be severely damaged. While they diverted security efforts, the remaining 121 members of the SWAPO Special Unit were supposed to infiltrate Kaokoland in the western war zone and Kavango in the east. Fortunately, Koevoet recon units had seen no sign of the latter force and intelligence indicated they were still holed up in Angola.

Captain Ley told me that fresh Koevoet units were being deployed at first light the next morning. I would accompany Zulu Tango Group which would work its way to the great water pans of the Etosha Reserve on the southern border of the war zone.

That evening I enjoyed my last beer for a long time at the Koevoet base canteen. By 0700 the next morning the Koevoet base was a frantic mob scene. Arsenal of weapons were being checked and the still, muggy air was filled with the roar of engines. Noise from the Casspir armored vehicles was supplemented by the clatter of feed-covers and bolts as gunners readied their .30- and .50-caliber Brownings as well as 20mm guns mounted atop some of the trucks. Men in green camouflage battle dress swarmed through the area. Those who could do no more to get ready for combat squatted beside a truck and rolled dice.

Somewhere in the middle of the chaos I found Sergeant Boesman Pretorius, the man in charge of Zulu Tango Group. He was a sturdy veteran of Namibian War and anxious to have me along to observe the skill of his troops. We moved out at 0800 and left Oshakati behind us.

Our fighting group — like all other Koevoet groups — consisted of about 45 men led by a group commander. When the terrain and situation allows, men ride in the four Casspir vehicles, referred to simply as cars. A fifth vehicle — called a Blesbok — carries spare kit and provisions.

Koevoet unit commanders are mostly South Africans though a number of local recruits also eventually win their spurs. Most of them are long-service veterans of Africa's guerrilla wars with interesting stories to tell, like Warrant Officer Lucas Kilino, who said he had been at war since he

was 14. At that tender age he had been recruited by Holden Roberto's FNLA in his native Angola. That was before the MPLA came to power in Luanda and all three guerrilla movements — MPLA, FNLA and Dr. Jonas Savimbi's UNITA — still fought against the Portuguese colonial rulers of Angola.

During his service with the FNLA, Kilino had been sent to China for military training and became parachute qualified. After the fall of the Portuguese in Angola, South Africa invaded the country in 1976, scoring huge successes against the MPLA, FAPLA and the Cubans who advised them. Kilino joined the South Africans. When they withdrew back to Namibia, he went with them.

In Namibia he signed up with the SA Army's famed 32 Battalion [See SOF, Feb. '82]. Shortly after it was founded in 1979, Kilino heard about Koevoet — or Special Unit K as it is officially known — and decided to transfer. Now his enemies included SWAPO as well as the Cubans and FAPLA troops he encountered in cross-border raids.

"After the atrocities I have seen committed by so-called Marxist freedom fighters over the last 20 years," he said, "I will fight them to the end. Koevoet is the unit where I can do this best. Unlike the other local recruits in Koevoet, I have become a South African Policeman and will go wherever my unit is sent."

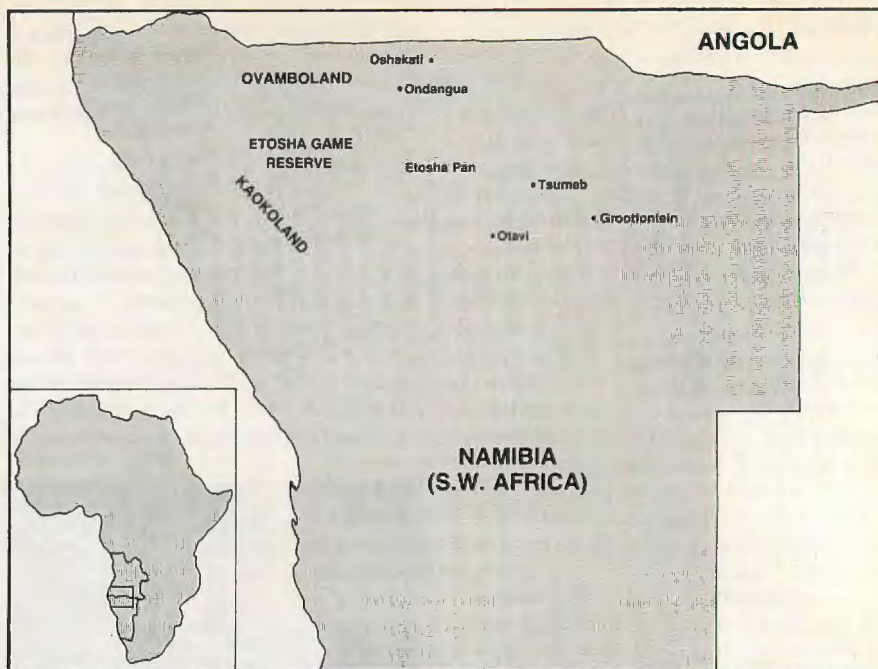
These days, 23 years after he first became a soldier, Kilino feels he has found a home. The other local Koevoet recruits are mostly Special Constables of the SWA Police and will remain in Namibia after the war ends. But that's a long way off and it pays to concentrate on the situation at hand in Ovamboland.

Sergeant Pretorius took his group south, traveling along the only tarred road in Ovambo. We passed Ondangua Air Base by 40 klicks, left the tarred road and entered the dense, silent bush. We were scheduled to sweep south along the eastern edge of the road with units penetrating deep into the parallel bush.

Zulu Echo Group — under command of Warrant Officer Rob Brockway — would be combing the bush on the western side of the road. From atop the Casspirs the men searched the ground for sign of terts. Occasionally we would come into a clearing — generally a cornfield with a kraal situated in the center — and stop to ask the locals about SWAPO movement in the area.

Ovambo tribesmen were friendly but they claimed no knowledge of terts in the area. If they were afraid of rape, robbery or beatings from Koevoet "hooligans," I saw no trace of it.

By the end of the first day, it was becoming increasingly difficult to believe charges levied by men like Archbishop Denis Hurley who spoke for the men of the South African Bishops' Conference and claimed he had compiled extensive documentation and affidavits from the Ovambo people exposing war crimes and atrocities committed



by members of Koevoet. The people I encountered were openly friendly and not at all cowed by the presence of armed troops.

Koevoet CO Dreyer points to the incongruity of such charges. "My men come from the area. They have family and friends in most of the kraals and it is because of this that we are so successful. They know the people in the kraals and receive valuable information from them. Do you think these men would go killing, raping and robbing their own friends and relatives?"

To his credit, the brigadier does admit that a number of his men have been involved in criminal incidents in the past. "There are some in the unit who go astray because we have such a large number of men — close on to two thousand. But where it is brought to our attention, we track down the culprits ourselves, take them to court and summarily discharge them from the unit. In not a single case were these men on duty or under the command of a responsible officer. They were either at home, off-duty, or had deserted from the unit when they had committed their crimes. And in every case they have been punished."

At the kraals where we stopped that day and on other days, people readily came forward to help, engaging in friendly chatter with the Koevoet men. Only in one case did a young Ovambo boy show open hostility but it was hardly surprising considering SWAPO's terror tactics and heavy indoctrination of the youth in this area. SWAPO recruits young fighters most effectively by abducting them at an early age. Indoctrinated in camps in Angola, young captives become converts and return to Ovambo as guerrillas. That explains why there are no young men in the kraals. They have either joined SWAPO or the Security Forces. Some simply leave for a better-paid, peaceful life at the mines in the south.

We had hardly been working the bush for an hour that morning when a radio message

crackled excitement into the air. Another police unit — not Koevoet — had picked up and followed tracks some 50 klicks northeast of our position. They had surprised a number of insurgents who had fired on them before making a run for it. Pretorius instructed the inexperienced police unit to stay put till he and his men arrived to assist them.

Turning the Casspirs around, we left Warrant Officer Brockway and Zulu Echo behind to continue their search along the western side of the highway. We were soon engaged in bundu-bashing through inhospitable terrain, ramming trees with the Casspirs and cutting a path through the bush. Once we reached the vicinity of the other unit, they fired a flare into the clear morning sky to mark their position.

We found the evidence of the shooting and Pretorius' expert trackers were soon onto the trail of the terts. They could not have been more than one or two klicks ahead of us. Knowing they were being pursued, the guerrillas had split up forcing us to follow three sets of tracks. It wasn't difficult for the veterans of Koevoet.

Every member of the unit is a trained tracker, so the patrol was able to maintain a sweep line without having to keep specially skilled soldiers on point as they moved through the bush. It was not Boesman Pretorius' day. Just before sundown it started raining and the tracks washed away. As the SWAPO terts never move in the dark for fear of leaving tracks too easily, and the Security Forces prefer not to move in the dark for fear of ambush, a temporary overnight hiatus was called. The chase would continue the next morning when Pretorius, a man who never gives up, would systematically work his way from kraal to kraal seeking information and looking for guerrilla spoor.

Meanwhile, Rob Brockway's Zulu Echo Group had struck it lucky to the south. They



were in hot pursuit of two terrors who had splintered away from a group headed south to the Etosha Pans. The tracks were estimated to be only a few hours old.

At the same time a radio message had been received from a Security Branch 20-man team which had been ambushed at the Angolan border just 30 kilometers north of us. Four men had been injured by an RPG fired through the cab of their car and a helicopter had evacuated them to Ondangua. Another Koevoet unit had rushed to the area to track down the terrors. This unit had moved fast and now quickly sent word of successful contact. Things were heating up rapidly in Ovamboland.

Pretorius arranged for one of his Casspirs to take me back to Oshakati for a quick ride south to join Brockway and his men. It seemed like the best chance of contact. We roared along the infamous Oom Willie's Road — a muddy, frequently mined highway that runs from the Kavango in the east to Ondangua in central Ovambo. Signs of war whizzed by and I caught only glimpses of mangled civilian vehicles damaged by SWAPO mines and burned-out skeletons of schools and houses hit in mortar attacks.

When I reached Brockway's unit, there was encouraging news. They had closed the gap between them and the terrors from two hours to 20 minutes. The terrain, 15 klicks west of the highway and 15 klicks north of the Etosha Pans, was tough. The ground was hard and no rain had fallen in the area which was thick with thorn trees. The hard ground made tracking almost impossible. My untrained eyes could see nothing on the ground, yet the Koevoet men found what

**Only 100 meters behind the fleeing insurgents, the Koevoet men break into a run as the tracks get hot.**

they were looking for: a bent blade of grass, scuffs in the sand. Visibility was down to almost zero in the bush and the terrors, now a mere 100 to 200 meters ahead of us, could certainly hear the noise of the Casspirs on their trail.

In the afternoon the choppers were called. The air filled with rotor-noise . . . and one terror panicked, broke from cover and ran for his life. It was a fatal mistake. The helicopter directed the men on the ground and the Casspirs came charging along with guns blazing. The terrors tried to shoot back but they were cut down in seconds.

A captured SWAPO terror was brought in to identify his dead buddies. He confirmed that one of the KIAs was a top SWAPO commander known as Sakkie. The other man had been his bodyguard. The POW also indicated both men had been part of a larger group who had been assigned missions in the farmlands to the south. That meant more terrors were still in the area.

With nightfall the Koevoet men halted and made a temporary base camp. It was a peaceful night but before dawn the still air was split by the roar of an Impala jet-fighter that patrols the highway between Oshivelo and Ondangua every morning. The Casspirs were started and the men spread out into the bush. Within half an hour another set of tracks had been found.

Trackers who found the spoor estimated that Brockway and his men were a mere 300 meters behind the fleeing terrors. Apparently

the SWAPO band had also rested for the night rather than risk traveling farther into Ovamboland. In suffocating heat, scratched and ripped by thorns, the men doggedly followed the tracks. At this pace there was danger of stumbling into a well-hidden SWAPO booby trap but Brockway kept his troops humping.

By noon the gap had been reduced to 200 meters and the chase was turning into a footrace. Brockway radioed for choppers on standby at Tsumeb. It was time to get some eyes in the sky. Two Alouette helicopters roared in, touched down briefly to pick up Koevoet spotters, and surged into the air to comb the bush from above.

"These terrors are good. They know their stuff, but sooner or later they must make a mistake," Brockway commented as he watched the choppers orbit the area.

The terrors knew we were close. They tried every device to mislead us. They walked on their toes to leave smaller tracks. They took off their boots and walked on well-trod footpaths and they led us in circles. Once we discovered with some alarm that they had even been walking behind us on our own tracks for 200 meters.

Then came the first signs of our imminent success. The terrors had dumped one of their packs, hiding it under a pile of dried branches. It contained pieces of SWAPO and Angolan FAPLA uniforms, two rifle grenades, canned food bought in Oshakati and a new set of boots. There were no weapons. The SWAPO terrors were still well-armed — and still very dangerous. Then came word from a leading tracker that the terrors had stopped at a hole to drink water. They were tiring.

There was a distraction from the chase when a chopper descending to refuel from one of the Koevoet trucks experienced mechanical trouble and had an extremely hard landing. Fearing an explosion, the Koevoet spotter on board, Sergeant Chris "Moondog" Brits, came tearing out from under the blades and collapsed. He had severely injured his back in the barely controlled crash.

The uninjured pilot calmly signaled that he had the situation under control and switched off the turbines. His co-pilot sat inside the cockpit with a broken leg. Another chopper from the flight was called to evacuate the injured men to Ondangua but that did not interest Brockway and his Koevoet troopers. They were still hot on a terrorist trail.

Brockway had a chance to add to the admirable record of his unit and concerns over air crashes could wait. He got what he wanted the next morning when he hit the two unlucky SWAPO Special Unit terrors. The weapons Koevoet took in the engagement brought the arsenal of ComBloc weapons captured by Unit K since they were formed to a value of more than \$4 million. With materiel losses like that and a 25-to-one kill ratio, SWAPO will continue to tip-toe around land Koevoet protects. ✖





# AFGHA

## More than the Bear Bargained For

by Galen L. Geer

*SOF Correspondents were not the first Westerners to cover the situation in Afghanistan after the Soviet invasion prompted formation of the rugged mujahideen resistance movement but some of the most spectacular — and widely read — reporting appeared in the pages of our magazine. We made friends among the Freedom Fighters and they allowed us to gain close-up looks at the fighting as well as valuable, exclusive reports on Soviet weaponry including the AK-74 assault rifle, the BG-15 and AGS-17 grenade launchers, the RPG-18 and the AKR "Krinkov." But our greatest feat in Afghanistan was bringing the plight of the resistance fighters and the ruthlessness of the Moscow-Kabul tyrants to the attention of the American public as this story from our October 1980 issue illustrates.*

I looked down from my precarious perch on the camel at the lone mujahideen walking beside me. For the past hour the Russians had been bombing the valley across the mountain from us and he shuddered with each new wave of explosions. When we took a break, I pulled the interpreter, Abdul Massai, to one side and asked him why one man seemed to be so affected by the bombing while the others were indifferent to it.

"Because the bombs are falling on his home," Massai said, then walked away. His matter-of-fact tone confused me and I struggled to crawl back onto the camel. When I was finally settled, I lit a cigarette and thought about the visions which must have been going through the Afghan's mind as he heard the bombs fall on the only home he had known since birth.

We spent that night in another one of the



Mujahideen stand atop Soviet T-54 tank on the road to Gardez.

Continued on page 123

# N JIHAD



## Hard-Pressed Massoud Holds Panjsher

by Mike Winchester

*Ahmad Shah Massoud has symbolized resistance in Afghanistan to millions around the world. Since news began to filter out of the desolate, mountainous country that a guerrilla government was functioning within 100 kilometers of Kabul and its Soviet puppets, Ahmad Shah Massoud has been the target of more attention, adulation and disinformation than any other Afghan leader. All that means he's doing an effective job in fighting Soviet aggression.*

*SOF contributor Mike Winchester walked from Pakistan to Massoud's miniature state in the Panjsher last winter, crossing icy 14,000-foot passes on his rugged route deep into the interior. He joined mujahid forces during a battle for a fortified outpost left behind as a symbol of Soviet influence in the Panjsher following their most recent incursion into that area ("Irritating Ivan," SOF, June '85). Finding the charismatic leader in the valley his enemies said he deserted last year, Winchester got Massoud's side of what happened during the controversial cease-fire with the Soviets and the inside story on Massoud's response to subsequent invasion. — The Editors*

**I**T'S easy to see why the Soviets take the Panjsher and Massoud so seriously. The Panjsher is strategically located and quite defensible. Massoud realizes that and has insured there is functioning, centralized command of the resistance organization dedicated to keeping the valley out of Soviet hands. That makes him a painful thorn in the bloody paw of the Russian bear.

In late 1982, after two full-scale offen-

Mujahideen lounge among stone pens thousands of feet above the valley floor, awaiting time for Massoud's coordinated attack.

sives in May and August, the valley's strength and Soviet respect for Massoud were confirmed by the appearance of a Soviet officer with a white flag and a Farsi-speaking Soviet Tadjik interpreter. They came to talk peace. Three months later, after a great deal of bargaining between the guerrilla command and the valley's civilian leaders, an agreement was finally hammered out in March 1983. A shaky ceasefire was declared in the Panjsher.

The Soviet-mujahid pact — the first of its kind — provided for a six-month ceasefire (later extended for a full year) on condition the Soviets pulled out of heavily fortified positions in the town of Ruka to a single garrison post near the village of Anawa at the valley mouth. At the Anawa base the Soviets were permitted to keep a force of 300 men (the condition was later waived), but they were forbidden to have any contact with the civilian population.

The ceasefire proved controversial. For the valley's hard-pressed mujahideen — short of food and ammunition after their toughest year to date — it provided desperately needed breathing room for training and stockpiling supplies. But as Massoud's critics (most of them comfortably established over the border in Peshawar) were quick to point out, it also permitted the Soviet's Tajbeg Palace command in Kabul to redeploy troops from the Panjsher to other regions ("Paktia Recon," SOF, Dec. '84). Some rival mujahid groups hinted darkly that Massoud had finally shown his true colors and sold out to the enemy.

The pact — and the rumors it bred — also fueled doubt among the Panjsher's allies, both in Afghanistan and beyond about the future of the resistance movement. As Mohammad Eshaq, a senior Panjsheri official of the Peshawar-based Jamiat-i-Islami party and a close aide of Massoud put it late last year, "We were under tremendous psychological pressure to end the truce from both friends and critics. In the end we got to wondering which was better — bombardment or the ceasefire."

But for all the mud-slinging, the most crucial result of the truce was the chance it gave Massoud to extend his organization beyond the confines of the Panjsher. He took time to travel north, pulling like-minded commanders into a coordinated guerrilla network. Other key resistance leaders such as Mazar-i-Sharif's Zabiullah Khan trekked to the Panjsher from their own turf for talks and training.

"The results were beyond my wildest expectations," Massoud told SOF. "If I had another year, the Soviets would never have set foot in this valley again."

The generals back in the Tajbeg were evidently drawing similar conclusions. As a divide-and-rule tactic and a means of freeing up thinly spread troops for other duties, the truce had outlived its usefulness. Panjsheri mobile groups were also proving increasingly troublesome on the plains north of Kabul. It was time to bring the war back to Massoud.

## DOUBLE AGENT

*Ahmad Shah Massoud is the most visible resistance leader inside Afghanistan which makes him the most tempting target for assassination. Many stories of the 1984 attempt to kill Massoud have been published, but SOF got the story directly from a double agent who is said to have been the trigger-man sent into the Panjsher to make the hit. Massoud's people introduced Mike Winchester to him in Peshawar.*

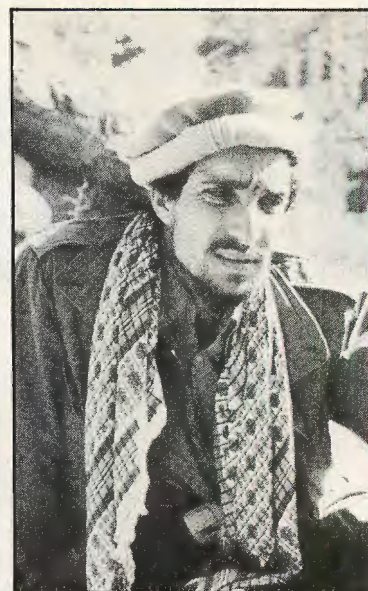
The Soviet assault on the Panjsher valley included a KHAD/KGB attempt to assassinate Ahmad Shah Massoud. It was a plot built on the assumption — often a fair one in Afghanistan — that if you can dispose of the leader, the followers will fall apart. It also turned into a booby-trap that blew up in KHAD's face.

The assassination was timed to precede the opening of the 20 April military onslaught but planning had begun months before. The operation hinged on one man, a KHAD officer and one-time associate of Massoud's, called Kamran.

A burly 40-year-old from Kabul, Kamran had been recruited by the Soviet- and East German-trained Afghan intelligence service on the recommendation of a communist doctor friend who reckoned Kamran would make a far better intelligence operative than mujahideen fodder. Having just returned home after working in Turkey and the Mideast, and faced with the uninviting prospect of being drafted into the army, Kamran was happy to join an organization that offered fast promotion and good money.

He served in KHAD's Department Five, the organization's biggest section, tasked with infiltrating mujahideen groups and general counter-resistance activities. His first assignment in Pakistan proved highly successful. In the dusty frontier city of Peshawar where he worked with a network of KHAD agents already in place, Kamran effectively infiltrated the Jamiat-i-Islami Afghanistan (Islamic League of Afghanistan) a mainly Tadjik and Uzbek resistance party with a wide following across northern, northeastern and western Afghanistan. In one of several intelligence coups the bearded Kabulite succeeded in bugging the office of Jamiat leader Prof. Burhanuddin Rabbani, providing his Kabul control with a series of reports on Jamiat's internal politics and long-term strategic planning.

In 1983 Kamran was pulled out of Pakistan and returned to Kabul. Not long after, on the orders of Department Five's head, Dr. Bahar, he was placed in command of a 10-man squad of KHAD *fedayi* (sacrificers), commandos trained and reportedly effective in counter-



**Public Enemy Number One** — according to the Russians and their Kabuli lackeys — is Ahmad Shah Massoud. As leader of Panjsheri resistance Massoud has weathered war, assassination attempts and political backstabbing to remain the most famous mujahid leader for Westerners.

guerrilla operations in which they often dress and move like mujahideen.

On the basis of Kamran's acquaintance with Massoud years before in Kabul, he and his team were tasked solely with drawing up plans for the liquidation of the Panjsheri commander. As an operative with a record of having successfully infiltrated Massoud's party in Peshawar, and with his own personal connection with Massoud, Kamran was ideal for the job. In late 1983 he was instructed to resume contacts with Massoud through Jamiat confidants in Peshawar, among them Massoud's own brother.

In the early months of 1984, with the Soviet-Panjsher ceasefire still holding, Kamran made several quiet visits to the Panjsher and re-established his old friendship with Massoud according to plan. Coming from Kabul and ostensibly having a job in the government, Kamran was soon accepted as a mujahid agent. He provided Massoud snippets of intelligence given him by KHAD: the sort of intelligence KHAD assumed Massoud would probably be getting from other sources and would serve to establish Kamran as a reliable operative for the Panjsher in Kabul. And the reports did check out.

By March, plans for the next month's assault on the valley were already drawn. Kamran was ordered by Bahar to start the assassination machinery. At this time he was issued two different types of poisons in powder form that could be



Massoud relaxes outside his Panjsher CP.

administered in food, as well as a KGB-designed double-barreled pistol firing poisoned rounds. The least wound inflicted by a round from the weapon — Kamran was told — would be sufficient to cause almost immediate paralysis, and death within half an hour. On his next trip to the valley, the would-be assassin hid the weapon near Massoud's command post to be retrieved just before the hit.

A clear picture of dates is difficult to piece together. But the liquidation apparently was targeted for the second week in April allowing time for back-up squads to move in the event of an abort. On the eve of his final trip into the valley with instructions to carry out the execution of the regime's most troublesome single enemy, Kamran was privileged to be entertained by the Soviets' famed Afghan figurehead, President Babrak Karmal, wheeled back into power in Kabul following the Christmas 1979 invasion.

The meeting was surrounded in secrecy, taking place late at night at a government guest house in the Shahr-i-nac quarter of Kabul. In addition to Babrak, also present were Department Five head, Dr. Bahar, overall KHAD boss, Dr. Najib, and a ranking KGB general called Haidarov, an ethnic Tadjhik from Soviet Tadzhikistan, liaising closely with the upper echelons of the Afghan People's Democratic (communist) party and the intelligence service.

Kamran says the details of the next day's operation were discussed over whiskey, beer and snacks of kebab. Babrak was particularly impressed by a recent photo of Kamran and Massoud together in the Panjsher. That showed the extent to which Kamran had succeeded in gaining the confidence of a man who stood as a continuing affront to communist power in Afghanistan. The way Kamran told it — with a few scotches under his belt — getting the weapon into a meeting with Massoud the next

day would be no problem.

What neither the president nor his intelligence chiefs realized until several days later was that the man drinking with them and guaranteeing Massoud's imminent demise was one of the most successful double agents of the war. Recruited by Massoud several months before his recruitment by KHAD, Kamran had been keeping the Panjsheri leader informed of plans for the impending attack and his own death.

In KHAD, Kamran was *fedayi*, a man not expected to survive the operation. But the rewards promised him that evening would, he was assured, be passed onto his family should he not succeed in escaping after the hit — a cash bonus of one million afghani (U.S. \$100,000), a house in the select Wazi Akbar Khan quarter of Kabul, a new car, and the rank of colonel within KHAD.

"I was going to be a Hero of the Revolution," Kamran told SOF. "But I was just sitting there, listening and thinking, tomorrow I'm going to be free. . . ."

The party broke up after midnight. By the time Kamran was on the road driving north out of Kabul toward Gulbahar and the Panjsher it was already late morning of the same day. With passes issued both by KHAD and the resistance he drove through army checkpoints and then later those of the mujahideen. But once he'd reached the Panjsher the work was not over; in the following days he was to identify KHAD back-up groups attempting to enter the valley and reach Massoud. They were rounded up and executed.

Today Kamran lives in quiet exile across the border in Pakistan, and his family has been smuggled out of Kabul. But the Panjsher and Kabul are short miles apart, and Massoud keeps both pistol and poison. Who knows . . . Drs. Najib and Bahar may get to see them again, one of these nights.

— Mike Winchester

Early in 1984, the communists decided to launch another no-holds-barred blitz on the Panjsher. In typical double-speak, the assault was referred to as a "limited operation." The strike involved 20,000 troops, about two-thirds of them Soviet. Included were the airborne assault brigades based in southern Soviet Central Asia. Ground forces were backed by an estimated 500 armored fighting vehicles (AFVs). In the air, there was Frontal Aviation's usual lineup of Su-17, Su-24 and Su-25 ground attack jets, MiG-21 and MiG-23 fighters, and Mi-8 and Mi-24 helicopter gunships.

In addition — for the first time in Afghanistan — the softening-up process was to involve Soviet-based Tu-16 Badger bombers in a phalanx of carpet-bombing. And on top of that, covert operations by KGB-trained squads of Kabul's secret police (KHAD) were aimed at decapitating the guerrilla command before the assault opened. The Panjsher was going to be "cleaned out" once and for all.

Like a lot of major military operations back by heavy arsenals, it looked great on paper. Unfortunately, the mujahideen had seen the paper.

From the beginning of the war, one of the resistance's key strengths has been an intelligence network that reaches into the upper echelons of the Afghan Army. Prior to the Panjsher assault, Massoud's agents got right up to Babrak Karmal's dining table and into the files of his chief KGB adviser. Those who knew of Massoud's influence before the Soviet invasion were not surprised by such high-level penetration. The resistance leader had developed tight rapport with anti-communist Moslem Afghan Army officers and the contacts continue to yield a continuous stream of high-grade intelligence.

Massoud and his commanders had a detailed picture of the shape of the impending blitz at least one month before the Soviets struck. They also knew that attempting to meet it head-on would be suicide. The strategy — as one aide put it — had to be to "survive and expand." An inability to do battle with the Soviet juggernaut meant the civilian population of the Panjsher would have to be evacuated. "If the Soviets had attacked with people in the valley, their mujahideen would have had to fight to defend them," explained the aide. "And that would have meant very high casualties."

With the massive exodus underway, Massoud refined his strategy. The Soviet sledgehammer would strike an empty valley. The bait luring them to commit was an elaborate and surprisingly successful campaign of deception aimed at making the Soviets believe the guerrillas were cocky enough to stand and fight. As Massoud put it: "The thing was to convince the government we'd be in the valley from beginning to end . . . and that we'd fight."

Success of the plan hinged on double agents operating in the Panjsher. In the weeks leading up to the Soviets' 20 April D-day, mujahid authorities in the liberated valley moved quietly to round up already-

identified KHAD informers, many of them teenagers or older men posing as army deserters. Those willing to cooperate — generally individuals with families in the Panjsher — were then turned around and instructed to pass back carefully doctored information to their Kabul controllers. All the misinformation pointed in one direction: the mujahideen would fight for the valley as they had fought six times before. It wasn't hard for the Soviets to buy given the track record of operations in the Panjsher.

Incredibly, Massoud and his supporters were able to begin the evacuation of civilians undetected. During the nights prior to the scheduled start of the assault, whole villages — with what possessions and animals they could take — began trudging back up the main valley and up into narrow, finger-like side-valleys that lead off across the mountains to the neighboring valleys of Andarab, Khost and Nuristan. Involving an estimated population of 100,000, it marked the biggest single movement of population in a war that had already uprooted millions.

Massoud's plan called for some military units to remain in the valley where they could act as mobile strike force units already deployed for pre-emptive assaults to the south. From each guerrilla garrison inside the valley, a 30-man stay-behind force was drawn from local *zarbati* units. Some civilians remained in the valley to assist in the deception. At Anawa (near the Soviets' sole position in the Panjsher) life went on as normal. Villagers went about their daily chores, and outside the base apparently bored mujahideen stopped and inspected Soviet trucks as permitted under the cease-fire accord.

It appeared business as usual to the Soviets until 16 April — four days before the assault was scheduled to open — when the mujahideen launched their pre-emptive strikes. The Shomali area (north of Kabul along the highway toward the valley) erupted in a wave of diversionary attacks. Four key bridges including the strategic Mattock bridge across the Ghorband River were blown by resistance raiding parties. Along the Salang Highway, south of the famous tunnel, partisans under Panjsheri commanders Pannah and Ghaffur ambushed southbound tanker convoys, closing the road for two weeks and causing a major fuel shortage in the capital.

In the now-deserted valley the stay-behind groups were working flat-out preparing a welcome for the communists. Anti-tank mines, souped up with local additives from unexploded Soviet bombs, were planted along the narrow track up the valley. Anti-personnel devices were set along village paths. And in houses — under tables, behind doors — booby-traps were hidden. With the high-explosive welcome mat prepared, the mujahideen headed for the hills to watch the show.

It began right on time. Early on the morning of 20 April and for three successive days an estimated 60 Badgers, backed by Sukhois, pounded suspected mujahid posi-



**ABOVE:** "Hurry up and wait" is a feature of any army, even a guerrilla army. Mujahideen relax and talk after fast climb to positions overlooking Kabul-regime fort. **BELOW:** Meals are taken when and where they fit. Here mujahideen break their march for tea and food.





tions and villages at the lower end of the Panjsher. Before the dust had settled, waves of Mi-8 Hips and Mi-24 Hind-A transports choppered commando and air-assault units from the Bagram-based 105th Air Assault Division to strategic points along the length of the valley. With engineer units still struggling to repair the blown bridges, more troops had to be choppered into the Panjsher than had been originally planned. Finally came the armored advance up the valley floor from the bridgehead at Anaw, now massively reinforced by regiments from the Kunduz-based 201st Motor Rifle Division (MRD) and the Bagram-based 360th MRD.

The assault units met with three surprises as they established a presence in the guerrilla stronghold. First, and most strikingly, the valley appeared to be empty. Then, as the ground advance gathered momentum, communist troops blundered into a nightmare of mines and booby-traps that sent casualties soaring. Finally, as large infantry columns fanned out up seemingly deserted side-valleys, they fell into murderous ambushes laid by the stay-behind units.

According to accounts from guerrilla sources, the highest Soviet casualties occurred in the Darrah side-valley, the largest valley branching off from the Panjsher that itself subdivides into smaller valleys. In one ambush near the village of Sakh, the mujahideen claimed to have wiped out a complete column of over 200 men, catching them in a hail of automatic fire as they advanced up a narrow ravine toward the village. "They were taking no precautions at all," one fighter told me. So numerous were losses, said the guerrillas, that a rescue party was later obliged to float the corpses back down to the main valley in the river since there is no passable vehicle track.

By Massoud's count, between the opening of the offensive and the end of May, Soviet and Afghan forces lost more than 2,500 men KIA and WIA. The mujahideen destroyed 500 to 600 vehicles of all types (including trucks and tankers) inside and outside the valley. A measure of independent confirmation came from western diplo-

**Dashika and mortar teams wait for their cue in Massoud's orchestrated assault on Kabul-regime fort.**

**Broken rock can mean good cover from air observation and a rare breather for mujahideen and journalists crossing the Hundu Kush.**



matic sources based in Pakistan, who told the press that their sources in Kabul indicated between 5 May and 15 May some 500 Soviet dead and wounded arrived in the capital while others were treated at Bagram or flown directly back to the Soviet Union.

"Soviet losses were caused by two of our tactics," Massoud told me, "anti-personnel mines, and mujahid ambushes after the Soviets thought they could move freely." The guerrillas, he said, lost 50 men KIA during the offensive.

By the end of May, Soviet and Afghan troops were halted and digging in at four garrisons upstream from Anawa: Ruka (where they had kept a base until the cease-fire), Bazarak, Bahrak (the Afghan Army Operational HQ for the Panjsher), and finally Puzhgur (50 clicks from the valley

mouth). Beyond, Dasht-i-Rewat lay in ruins. It was about this time that the Kabul regime began announcing that the resistance forces had been defeated and — as Babrak Karmal put it in an interview with *Newsweek* (11 June 1984) — there was a "return of normalcy" to the Panjsher. For good measure, the *Newsweek* correspondent was treated to a surprise chopper ride into the valley and a chat with some Afghan Army brass. The "bandits" had been crushed. . . .

The public-relations tours were a little premature. In the first week of June, Panjsher's guerrillas, along with Massoud and his staff, began filtering back into the devastated valley. And at that point a kind of "normalcy" did return. The war was on again.

"The first thing we did was to hold a conference of all our commanders," Massoud later explained. "Especially important were those who had remained fighting against the Soviets." The 3 June conference, held at the village of Sefid Chir, upstream from Puzhgur, faced a new situation. This had been no routine sweep. It was clear the Soviets were determined to maintain a presence in the valley that would deny it to the resistance.

The result was a reorganization of a structure built up over four years of war. Large *zarbati* units previously operating within clear-cut areas of the Panjsher were broken down into lightly armed formations of 30 men without fixed bases. Heavy weapons — mortars, recoilless rifles and 12.7mm HMGs — were buried or hidden in mountain caches to be retrieved if and when required.

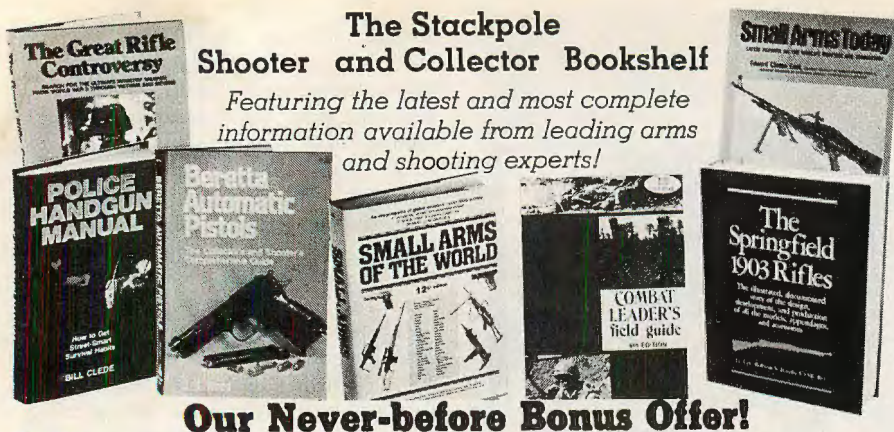
That's when the *real* battle for the Panjsher began. Playing an extended cat-and-mouse game with occupation forces, lightly armed guerrilla units — often no more than three to five men — found themselves pitted against Soviet airborne assault troops able to launch sudden airborne hops from bases on the valley floor up to the heights for operations of up to three days. They rarely remained overnight but Commandos pursued mujahideen relentlessly across the mountains and up narrow side-valleys. The guerrillas fought rearguard actions as long as the pressure was not too great. When it was, they pulled back fast, sometimes escaping beyond the Panjsher's jagged mountain ramps.

On the valley floor, resistance units struck back, raiding outposts, ambushing convoys and planting mines. "The fighting was going on day and night, the length of the valley," one mujahid later told me. "It was hit-and-run with no fixed positions."

In August there was a lull before the storm that broke on 6 September with Panjsher VIII, an offensive aimed at breaking the impasse. According to Massoud's intelligence sources, it was preceded by a bout of high-level wrangling among Soviet commanders, some of whom strongly opposed the plan. It went ahead in a pattern broadly similar to Panjsher VII: sustained aerial

*Continued on page 127*

Continued from page 65



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Although it would have been a simple task to spring load the actuator cam roller in the same manner as on the FN MAG 58, it wasn't done. Thus, the top cover should be closed only after the bolt has been retracted to prevent damage to the feed arm and/or actuator roller. That's mentioned in training but troops in the field constantly slam the top cover down with the bolt forward. It would have been much more effective to engineer the flaw out of the gun.

The top cover's latch-lever assembly is rather fragile. While it looks professional to smash down the cover with your fist, it should be closed by pushing down with one hand and pivoting the latch lever back with the other.

There are four small holes on the left side of the receiver just above the trigger group — remnants of the old bandoleer holder which was riveted to the receiver which accommodated two types of large, but sturdy, 100-rd. pouches. One was fabricated from rubberized oilcloth, the other of canvas with a heavy metal zipper on one side. Unfortunately, the pouches were too large to permit the gun to left traverse on the M122 tripod. Additionally, the four alignment tabs on the holder would all too often catch belts fired without the pouch and momentarily shut down the weapon. The tabs also broke off with alarming frequency.

The modified bandoleer holder is attached to the feed tray at the place previously occupied by two anti-friction rollers. It will not accept the older pouches. They have been replaced by a cloth bandoleer into which fits a cardboard box containing 100 linked rounds. Two of these bandoleers are packed in the standard U.S. .30-cal.-size ammo can. A cloth carrying strap is sewn to each bandoleer and a web strap is sewn to the top of the bandoleer for attachment to the gun — difficult to do anytime and next to impossible under stress. The flimsy cotton bandoleer itself will rot and rip to shreds in just a few days in the tropical bush. Yet, M60 belts should never be carried "Pancho Villa" style across the chest as was the custom in Vietnam and now in El Salvador. The M13 links rust quickly and cartridges often slip out of the link's extractor-groove tab resulting in stoppages. Very macho, but very stupid.

To load the M60, place the selector on 'F' and then retract the bolt. Slide the cocking handle forward and set the selector to 'S'. Raise the top cover. Place the ammo belt (links up) on the feed tray with the first round in the feed-tray groove. Close the cover and move the selector back to 'F' to fire.

I have logged thousands of rounds through M60s of every configuration (except the new M60E3) — including some "chopped" versions. When you can keep the gun in repair, ergonomic characteristics are excellent. Coupled with a cyclic rate of only 550 rpm and low felt recoil, the basic design can be fired comfortably in all positions: prone, kneeling, hip assault and standing. Whenever possible, the M60 should be fired behind cover and concealment from the prone position off the bipod or tripod. The sling should be employed with the hip-assault position, which should be reserved for the final close with the enemy when the gunner is a member of the assaulting group. The standing position should be used for emergencies only. Gunners must exercise fire discipline and bursts should normally be limited to 3 or 4 rounds at 4- to 5-second intervals, with target reacquisition between each burst group. The barrel should be changed every 15

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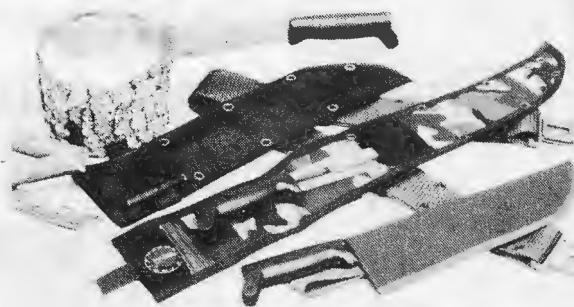
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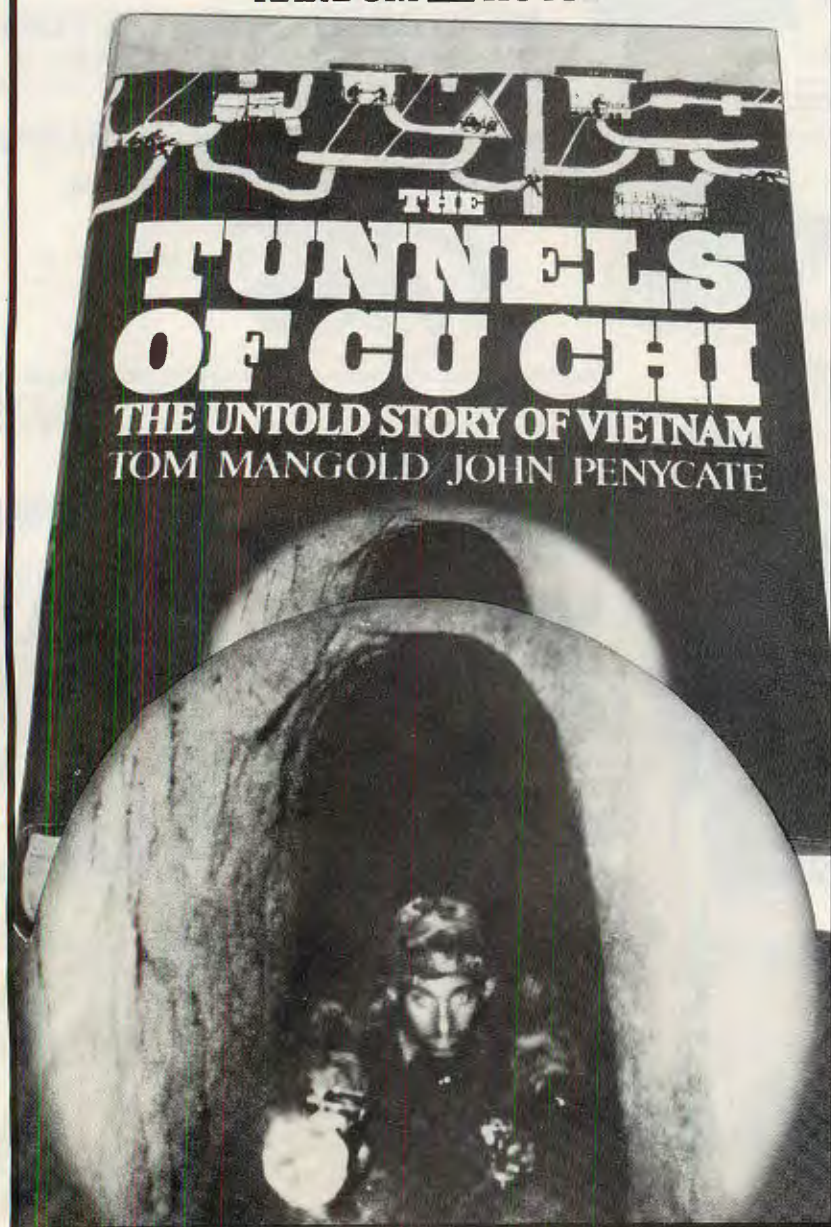
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minutes. To prevent the enemy from returning fire or to establish initial fire superiority, the interval between bursts can be shortened to 2-3 seconds. The barrel should then be changed every five minutes. The cyclic rate of fire should be employed only to win the fire fight in the final moments of the assault. It can be maintained for no more than 60 seconds before changing the barrel. But, if the shit is really flying, forget about changing the barrel and worry about damage due to overheating back in the barracks.

It may seem incredible given what I've said so far, but the M60's accuracy potential is high. It cannot be faulted in this area. Although the sights are deficient, trained operators can expect superior hit probability.

There are a couple of unique feed systems for the M60 besides the standard belt. Interestingly, they were not designed by Americans. Using the old-style feed tray and bandoleer holder, the Australians developed two ammunition containers. A nylon-coated, aluminum belt box holds 40 rounds and can be left mounted on the side of the gun. The weapon can be fed by loose belts with the assault pack still in place. Holes in the rear of the box enable the gunner to see how many rounds remain. The box's lid also serves as a belt-stop pawl to retain the exposed rounds on the magazine's platform. The exposed rounds can be clipped to those on an external belt already in the feed mechanism.

A waterproof PVC-coated nylon bandoleer was also designed. It holds 50 rounds and several can be joined together. These bandoleers are packed three to a can and can be re-used by feeding the belt from the bandoleer's mouth or torn open along a seam to instantly expose the entire belt.

To disassemble the feed system, raise the cover assembly and, using the nose of a bullet, unhook the hinge-pin latch from the right side of the cover's hinge pin and pull the latch out from the left. Pull the hinge pin out from the right side and pull the cover off the receiver. Pull out the torsion helical spring and remove the feed tray. For thorough cleaning, depress the feed-arm (called the cam) retainer plunger with the tip of the recoil-spring guide rod and lift the feed-arm assembly away from the cover. To remove the feed-lever assembly, push the clip away from its pivot post and lift the lever, clip and single-coil spring out of the cover assembly. No further disassembly is required for normal cleaning. Reassemble in the reverse sequence but do not snap the single-coil spring into the cover cutout until you have placed all three lever-assembly components on the pivot post.

That brings us to the M60 trigger mechanism and one of the most devilish problems with the gun's design. The trigger mechanism was loosely patterned after that of the MG 42. But alterations from the original concept have resulted in some serious difficulties. The MG 42 trigger mechanism incorporated a unique spring-loaded sear trip attached to the top of the trigger. When the trigger is pulled, the sear trip descends, allowing the front of the sear to rise while the rear end is lowered to release the bolt group. When the trigger is released, the sear trip rises up and the rear end of the sear is lowered even farther. The sear trip now projects into the bolt body's path of travel. The bolt then shoves the sear trip rearward. That frees the front end of the sear and permits the sear spring to drive the rear end of the sear upward to engage the bolt's bent. Full-face engagement is achieved in one sudden, sharp movement as the bolt starts forward after its overrun. This system reduces wear and chipping of the mating surfaces to a minimum. Unfortunately, the sear-trip mechanism was not used on the

M60 and both the sear and the sear notch cut into the operating rod can wear quickly. Armorers are constantly ordering and installing replacements for these parts.

The pistol-grip trigger housing is covered with rubber which provides a comfortable non-slip surface at a vital area. The selector has only two positions. There is no provision for semiautomatic fire, but with a cyclic rate of only 550 rpm, gunners can be easily trained to fire single shots. The selector is a rotated cross-pin type. When the selector lever is moved up to "F" (fire), a cutout in the cross-pin rotates into position under the sear extension. When the selector is moved down to "S" (safe), an uncut portion of the pin is rotated into position to block the sear extension's downward movement. It's reliable. Early change levers were difficult to manipulate and their surface area was increased to afford a larger purchase for the thumb of the firing hand. Unfortunately, they stopped short of other needed improvements in the trigger mechanism.

The trigger-housing group is held to the receiver by a rear holding notch which rests in recess at the bottom of the receiver and a front trigger-housing pin (interchangeable with the sear pin). These two pins are retained by a leaf spring on the right side. Originally these leaf springs were inserted from the bottom, but they fell off too often, eventually leaving the gunner without a trigger group. As it is most difficult to fire the M60 without its trigger mechanism, these leaf springs were redesigned and they are now inserted from the top. It wasn't enough.

These leaf springs are troublesome to remove when you want to disassemble the gun and they are also prone to breakage. To disassemble the trigger-housing group, first remove it from the receiver by pressing inward on the front of the leaf spring and rotate the front end down to clear it from the trigger-housing pin. Pull forward to disengage it from the sear pin's notch. Remove the trigger-housing pin by pushing it to the left. Slide the trigger housing forward and rotate down away from the receiver.

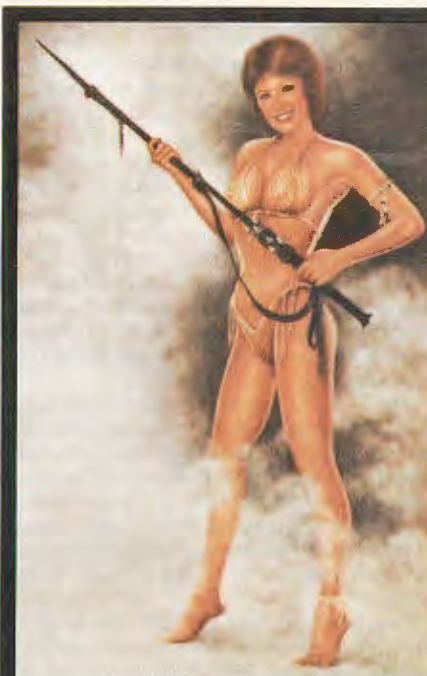
Detailed disassembly of the trigger-housing group is as follows. Depress the sear and remove the sear pin by pushing it to the left. Remove the sear, sear plunger and spring. Remove the trigger pin by pulling it from the right. Remove the trigger through the top of the trigger housing.

When replacing the trigger, make certain its spring is hooked under the channel surface in the housing. Reinsert the trigger pin from the right. Drop in the sear-plunger spring and then the sear plunger. If you reverse this sequence, the sear-plunger spring will be exposed. The gun will fire, but very shortly the spring will bend and the sear may no longer engage the op rod's bent resulting in a runaway.

I've seen this a number of times including once when I had a runaway gun during a demonstration of the kneeling position for the Atlacatl Battalion gunners. It caused me to fall backward flat on my ass. To shut down the gun, grab the belt and twist it. That's not easy from the kneeling position but it works.

You're heading for the next potential problem with reassembly of the M60. You should replace the sear with the shoulder up and to the rear. Unfortunately, the sear can be reassembled backward which will not permit the bolt to remain retracted. Murphy's Law applies. Remember that the sear pin and trigger-housing pin must be reinserted from the left side so the leaf spring can be properly reinstalled.

Despite problems such as those I've described, the M60 has found its way off the ground and into the air. A commonly encountered variant is the M60D. This version is seen in El Salvador



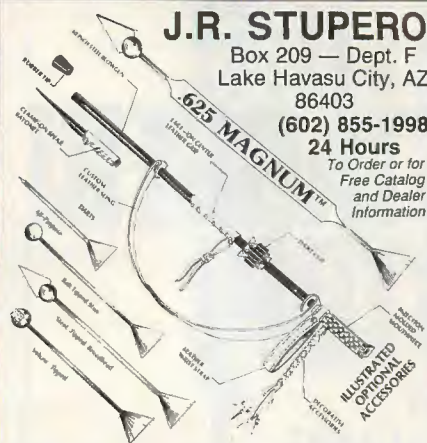
We have commissioned internationally famous glamour artist Terry Twigg to create this beautiful portrait. We offer 18 x 24 inch full color prints at the following prices:

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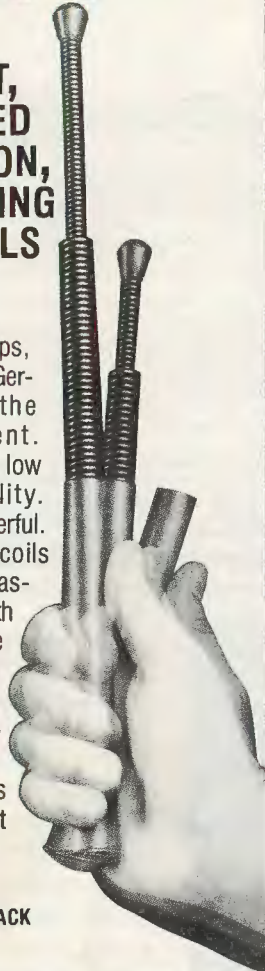
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mounted in the doors of the UH-1H helicopters. The buttstock has been replaced by spade grips with triggers. This is connected to a sear-activator assembly (which replaces the normal trigger housing) by a steel rod. The selector remains a cross-pin type, but it is pushed to the right for "safe" and to the left for "fire," rather than rotated. The sear, plunger and spring remain the same. A rubber boot protects the rear end of the receiver body. The bipod and carrying handle are sometimes removed. An aerial ring sight usually replaces the folding-leaf rear sight. The Salvadoran Air Force has recently installed some twin mounts of indigenous design on the UH-1H to increase its firepower. In my opinion, the M60's cyclic rate is too low for this role.

All this doesn't mean the M60 machine gun should be scrapped. If America could afford to eat such military mistakes, we'd have gotten rid of this gun long ago. There is some solution on the horizon for our fighting men — and our allies — who may carry an M60 into future fights. Many of the M60's more glaring deficiencies have been redressed by its latest version — the M60E3.

Designed by George F. Curtis, Maremont's Manager of Advanced Development Engineering, the Lightweight M60 weighs only 18 lbs. A light bipod has been mounted to the receiver. The forearm has been redesigned and now ends in a pistol grip. Forearm, trigger housing and buttstock are now fabricated from high-impact, glass-reinforced nylon. There is a heat shield between the forearm and barrel. The barrel has been lightened (a 15 1/8-inch assault barrel is also available) and incorporates an M16-style flash suppressor.

The carrying handle has been moved to the barrel. The trigger assembly has a winter trigger guard for use in arctic environments. The sear has a double notch to prevent runaway fire. The selector is ambidextrous. The rear sight is available with an optional peep aperture and the front sight is adjustable for both windage and elevation zero. The hinged shoulder rest has been removed from the butt plate. The feed system can be charged with a starter tab-type belt after the top cover has been closed. The cam activator roller is now spring-loaded — the top can be closed with the bolt either forward or retracted.

Most important of all, the gas system has been revamped which means the piston can no longer be placed in backward and interlocking cylinder nuts eliminate the requirement for safety wire. All these improvements are multiplied in value by a 60-percent parts commonality with the older M60.

The M60E3 has been adopted by the USMC. They have ordered 1,600 units to date. One thousand of their old M60s will be shipped to Maremont for retrofitting to the new M60E3 specifications. The Marines plan to retrofit another 4,000 older M60s themselves with conversion kits obtained from Maremont.

Fifty M60E3s have been purchased by the U.S. Navy SEALs and another 300 by the Navy itself. The Navy also plans to convert M60s into the M60E3 configuration by use of the Maremont kits. Various other U.S. government agencies have purchased the M60E3. Officials at Ft. Benning have fired the M60E3 and Maremont says they were impressed — especially when it was employed in conjunction with the 7.62X51mm NATO SLAP round.

The M60E3 has recently been demonstrated in Central America. El Salvador could easily retrofit to the M60E3 through their facilities at the *Maestranza* (Central Ordnance Depot).

It's a nice scramble but it's a day late and a dollar short. The U.S. Army and Marine Corps are totally committed to the M249 SAW at the

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squad level. At 18 lbs., the M60E3 is certainly targeted for the squad automatic role. It will never make it.

Now that we have adopted the fine M249 SAW and the infantry once more has a true lightweight squad weapon, it's time to reconsider the machine gun's sustained-fire-support role. There are some attractive options.

Maremont has developed a new lightweight .50-cal. M2 Browning machine gun that offers a quick-change barrel and fixed headspace. The venerable M1917A1 Browning water-cooled medium machine gun, rechambered for the 7.62X51mm NATO cartridge, is another proven alternative. Both have greater merit than our most likely course of action: shuffling the M60 upstairs to the company or battalion heavy weapons' section.

The M60's performance in Vietnam was a disaster of almost major proportions. Those who ranted and raved about the M16's failings may have served their country better by focusing some of their rage on this ill-conceived machine gun. At least now it's time for a change and it looks like that change is coming. ✕

## AMITLAN ABAJO

*Continued from page 78*

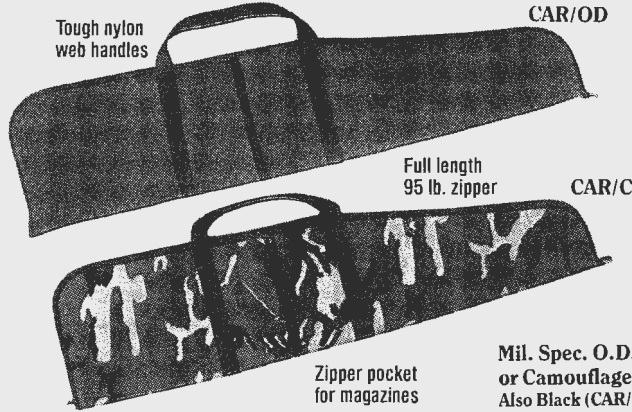
Alpha Company, First Battalion, Fifth Brigade. The lead elements had been busily employed in taking Amitlán Abajo at a cost of one killed and three wounded.

It is unpleasant to be a badly wounded soldier in this nasty little war, because the country has only 10 D-model Hueys for use as Medevac slicks. Sometimes they pull double duty as gunships. In El Salvador a "gunship" is a Huey



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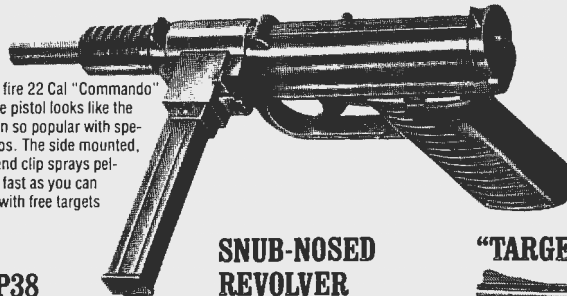
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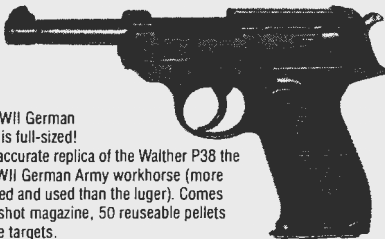
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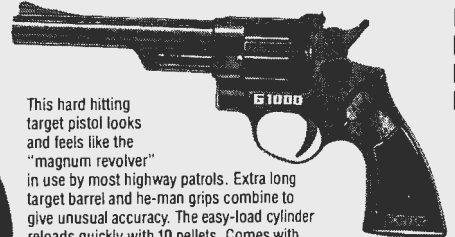
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On the slope of *Cerro El Inglés* — English Mountain — I found A Co. troopers busily cleaning their HK G-3 rifles, shiny with age, the bluing long since worn away, and plucking chickens for dinner.

One hour and 46 minutes later Alpha Co. came under a storm of guerrilla fire — FALs supplied by Castro and leftist Nicaragua.

I quickly learned that this is no comic-opera Latin American war, where everyone runs around shouting excitedly and firing his rifle into the air. This is serious business here. I have not been under such heavy, determined fire since Vietnam.

When the firing started, coming initially from the east, I was perched on a stone wall. Being familiar with the proper procedures in such a situation, I dropped to the wall's west side and groped for my camera. That was fine for a while. But then firing burst from the west, as it did from the north and south.

Surrounded.

The tough little Salvadoran soldiers very professionally established a tight perimeter and coolly — almost joyfully — returned fire. FAL rounds began chipping away at my stone wall and the side of an ancient stone farmhouse which adjoined it. They were about 2½ feet above my prone body, which couldn't get any lower because of my jacket buttons.

After about 10 minutes of this, I low-crawled over to the perimeter and sidled up to a soldier busily cranking with his G-3. He rolled over, in the process of dropping one magazine and jamming in another, grinned and said: "*Es muy bueno, sí, señor?*"

*Muy bueno* is not exactly the way I would have described the situation, but the soldier recharged



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his piece and returned to work with a wide grin. I sincerely hoped this man wouldn't get killed, but if he did, I intended to pick up his rifle and help maintain the thin perimeter.

Then I saw something I almost couldn't believe. A soldier left one position and dashed to another for a better field of fire. His weapon was a Danish Madsen light machine gun. The gun belongs in a war museum, but it turned out to be the only LMG Alpha Co. had.

The guerrillas, who had been firing just a trifle high, corrected their aim, and I found myself lying in a beaten zone. I let discretion become the better part of valor and crawled hastily back to my wall and oozed over it. I made for the front porch of the farmhouse and noticed a soldier, blazing away with his G-3 from a doorway. He paused to beckon me inside but I had a job to do — and a camera full of film.

This fire fight had lasted about half an hour and showed no signs of decreasing in intensity. Forgetting I wasn't in 'Nam with the Marines or the First Cav, I wondered: "Where's the air and the arty?" But air support and artillery fire are luxuries the Salvadoran Army can seldom afford.

Despite being clearly outnumbered, the Alpha soldiers were gaining fire superiority. After 45 minutes, troopers began shouting taunts at their enemy: "The guerrillas eat shit. The guerrillas make love to their mothers. The guerrillas are all queers. Come on in, guerrillas, and fight." It was like something out of *Beau Geste*.

And then Alpha Co. decided that the static situation was getting them nowhere. Although no officer uttered a command, squads began moving into the bush. They dashed off in classic small-unit tactics: squads in echelon, each man about four meters from the other, shouting and firing from the hip.

The guerrillas decided that was too much. Pulling back in good order and maintaining covering fire, they retreated to new positions farther up the mountain. That made the hill our objective for the next day.

I talked with the Alpha skipper, Capt. David Navas, and he told me our opposition at the moment was 200 well-armed, well-trained guerrilla regulars who had been operating out of the area for about a year. They could be joined by another 500 irregulars, mostly armed with Mausser 98 rifles, some M16s courtesy of Vietnam, and 12-gauge shotguns. Navas mustered 150 men.

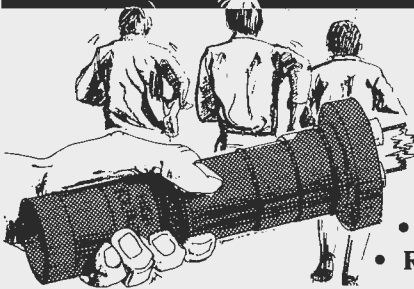
His soldiers began sweeping the area and discovered why the guerrillas yielded it so reluctantly. The farm building had been a combination base hospital and guerrilla battalion headquarters. They confiscated a ton of medical supplies. Much of it was labeled: "Not to be sold. For charitable purposes only."

Capt. Navas mentioned that I was one of the first gringo war correspondents ever to visit A Co. I asked him how he felt about us. He replied: "I think you are very brave — and very foolish — because it is dangerous out here. But my soldiers and I very much appreciate your coming here to tell our story to the people in your country."

Miraculously, A Co. suffered no casualties in this fire fight, although uniforms were pierced by bullets and one man took an FAL round smack through the top of his steel pot. Our estimate of guerrilla casualties — based on fresh graves and blood trails — was 20 to 25 enemy killed or wounded. As in Vietnam, the guerrillas carry away their dead or bury them on the spot.

At 2100 Capt. Navas decreed that it was time for sleep. We reclined either on stretchers or thin blankets the troops carried. An hour later, the guerrillas launched their first night probe. After firing a few shots, they decided a particular part of the line could not be penetrated and retreated.

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They probed about once an hour after that while the off-duty troopers ignored the noise.

Reveille came with the first pale light of false dawn. Soon the search-and-clear mission resumed. Alpha's next score was a munitions factory with some 40 homemade Claymores in it. The material for making more included some 200 pounds of ammonium nitrate. They also took some guerrilla weapons including a FAL, a Mauser 98, a couple of U.S. M1 carbines, a Webley .38, a Japanese Nambu pistol — God knows where they got that — and a brand-new Savage 12-gauge pump-action riot gun.

The entire village was honeycombed with tunnels and deep underground bomb shelters. Obviously the guerrillas had had a long time to work on it, and they knew exactly what they were doing.

Then a fierce fire fight erupted about two or three clicks away from the command group. Capt. Navas monitored the radio and discovered that a relief column, dispatched to help his outfit with the larger guerrilla force, ran into an ambush and was not likely to reach us soon.

In one of those battlefield ironies, the situation actually helped maintain contact. As the guerrillas pulled away gradually from the ambush site, they ran square into Alpha's patrols. The company inadvertently became a blocking force and fought through some short, sharp clashes around the village.

During one of them, Alpha suffered the first casualty of the day: Private Ricardo. His squad, searching for the enemy, stumbled into an ambush and Pvt. Ricardo took an FAL round right through the belly, holed from right to left.

Salvadoran Army medics do not have morphine. The Army can't afford the luxury when it scrimps to buy ammo. Pvt. Ricardo suffered with

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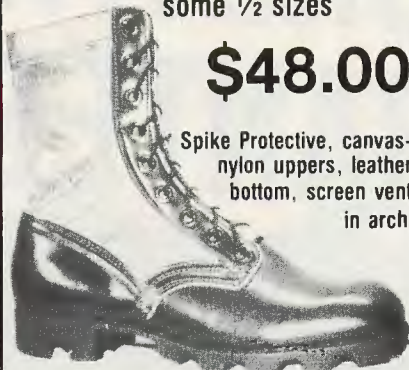
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only some intravenous Valium to fight the pain of his gut wound. His only complaint was an occasional low moan.

It took six hours for the one available Huey slick in San Vicente Province to get to us, and Pvt. Ricardo faced a long ride to the hospital. I didn't think he would make it but he did.

In the farmhouse courtyard a guerrilla sniper on a hill about 100 meters away elected to make me his target. He put two rounds about a foot away from my head. Close, but no cigar.

When I heard the chop of rotor blades I decided to leave while I could still write a story. Flying with the Medevac from Amitlán Abajo to San Vicente and observing the beautiful, lush-green countryside below, several thoughts passed through my mind.

In my two years of working for SOF, I had been looking for a real shooting war with little success. I hadn't really found it in the Caprivi Strip of South West Africa, nor in Rhodesia, nor in covering the western front on Korea's DMZ.

But I sure as hell found it in El Salvador. I was very happy to be alive. Thanks, Alpha Company, First Battalion, Fifth Brigade, for your indomitable courage. If you weren't such dedicated soldiers, I wouldn't be sitting here writing this story. ☒

## CHALATENANGO

*Continued from page 85*

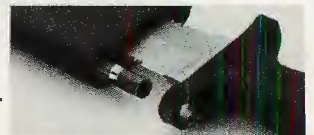
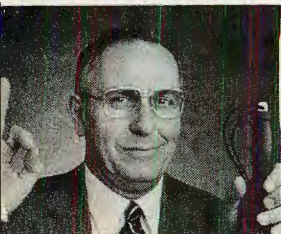
told me. "Now the subversives are going to escape to Honduras. The GOE is going to go north to cut them off."

The rest of Cobra Battalion would head south. If SOG stepped in the shit, there would be no

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quick reinforcement. Chan's men took the assignment stoically. "They want to see if we have balls," said a SOG rifleman.

At that point, I was sure about everyone but myself. After humping about three clicks we climbed a small hill and stumbled into another abandoned guerrilla camp. This one was large and sophisticated with zigzag trenchlines circling the military crest of the hill. Given the bunkers and tunnels, the position was probably home for at least 150 Gs. Chan collared a local villager who told him the Gs had left in a hurry headed for an area along the border which he pointed to on the map.

We tried to call an arty mission but Cobra Battalion refused to clear it because some of the rounds might have landed inside Honduras. Chan grumped about politics and ordered us to dig in around the guerrilla camp for the night.

On the morning of 14 March we began to hit strings of abandoned guerrilla camps. I was particularly amused at some of the personal stuff they'd left behind when they headed for Honduras. We found a love letter and passed it around.

"Dearest Mercedes: I always think of you." It was full of misspellings and featured a drawing of a stick man screwing a stick woman at the bottom of the page.

Pushing on through positions large enough to hold as many as 700 troops, we torched abandoned huts and searched for arms caches. Chan spotted a hole and crawled in to have a look. In a split second, he was back on the surface shaking his head and bitching.

"There's a stinking corpse in there. I got stuck

*Continued on page 123*

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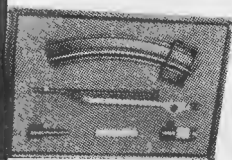
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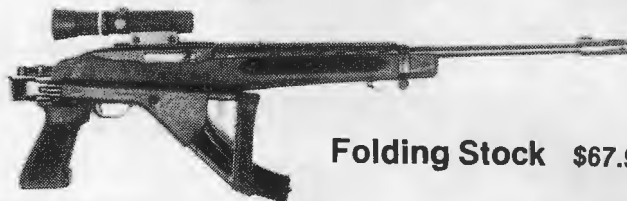
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# ROGUE'S GALLERY

Continued from page 57



Peter G. Kokalis



Jack Thompson



Peder Lund



Alexander M.S. McColl



Jim Morris

## Peter G. Kokalis

SOF's military small arms editor served in the U.S. Army with the technical intelligence branch. Writer and consultant to foreign governments on military automatic weapons. Automatic weapons trainer and armorer in Central America.

## Jack Thompson

USMC in Vietnam, diplomatic bodyguard, enlisted soldier and ranch security adviser in Africa. Served in Rhodesia with Special Air Service and Selous Scouts. Personal Safety Inc. instructor, championship IPSC competitor, private security adviser in Central America.

## Peder Lund

Publisher of Paladin Press. Served in Vietnam for one year as company commander in 9th Infantry Division and as Special Forces A team CO.

## Col. Alexander M.S. McColl (USAR)

SOF's military affairs editor and director of Special Projects. Eleven years active duty, including Special Forces and two tours in Vietnam. Graduate of the Army War College and Harvard Law School.

## Jim Morris

Special Forces, Vietnam. Bronze Star, Purple Heart, the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry, Combat Infantryman's Badge and Master Parachutist Badge. Author of *War Story*.

## Craig Nunn

Soldier of Fortune art director, U.S. Army 12th Special Forces group, airborne, SCUBA qualified. Rhodesian fire fight veteran and military jumps in Guatemala and El Salvador.

## John Padgett

Certified physician's assistant, Special Forces medic in Vietnam and Thailand. Service with rural health clinics in Nicaragua, Micronesia and Alaska.

## Dr. John Peters

SOF's paramedic operations editor and medical director of Parachute Medical Rescue Service. Instructor in combat and survival medicine, and expert in disaster-relief medicine. Medical missions in Central America, Afghanistan and Peru.

## Tom Reisinger

President, Refugee Relief International, Inc., Director, Parachute Medical Rescue Service, Special Forces medic, Vietnam. SOF medical missions in Laos, Afghanistan, Central America.

## Fred Zabitoski

Medal of Honor for heroism in Vietnam and numerous other personal decorations. Former SOG team leader, Special Forces. Testified before the United States Mission to the United Nations at the POW/MIA petition presentation. Liberty City project director and military trainer in Southeast Asia. ✕



Fred Zabitoski



Craig Nunn



John Padgett



Dr. John Peters



Tom Reisinger

# CHALATENANGO

Continued from page 120

in its feet." The troops dug around to find a shallow grave containing several decomposing corpses. There were no weapons but we had clearly hurt a few before they escaped.

We passed the info to Cobra command and received orders to sweep 14 clicks south to the town of Dulce Nombre de María. When we reached the ville, we could begin the return leg of the op.

Around 1100 we reached the village of El Común. There had been some heavy fighting here. Most of the buildings were destroyed and the surrounding hills were still smoking. They were also still crawling with Gs.

Incoming blew into our patrol formation from a hillside about 250 meters from the village. This was beginning to get old. While we dodged small arms to reach cover, they added M79 fire to the ambush. A half-dozen rounds smacked into the bush around us but we managed to get our heads up enough to return fire.

Our blooper-man began cranking and Panameño kept his M60 barrel hot firing short bursts into the bush. We traded lead for about 30 minutes with no visible effect on either side before the Gs decided they'd made their point and disengaged. We didn't know it then but the last shot of Colonel Ochoa's Operation Cobra had been fired.

Three hours later we arrived at Dulce Nombre de María, sweaty and exhausted. We rode a 4th Brigade truck back to the garrison in El Paraíso. SOG had been the first unit out and the last to return.

Operation Cobra was a smashing success. "Chan's Special Operations Group was a key factor in our triumph," said a smiling Colonel Carranza. I was delighted *Soldier of Fortune* could take some small credit in Operation Cobra. And I was delighted that it was over for a while.

Colonel Ochoa now had the elbow-room in the 4th Brigade AO to concentrate on hearts and minds. La Troncal Highway, an important artery for trade with Honduras that had been blocked by guerrilla activity since 1981, was now secure. That would help the 43-year-old officer do something tangible about the poverty of the country people and hinder the guerrilla-recruiting potential. ✕

## MORE THAN THE BEAR BARGAINED FOR

Continued from page 102

countless mud huts the mujahideen use as "safe houses" throughout Afghanistan. After a skimpy meal of rice, tea and bread we settled on the floor to sleep. In the distance the firing continued. Artillery had taken over from Soviet air. Iván was going all out for something. I wondered if he was successful.

Around 0700 the pounding started again. We moved off and as we covered the desert valleys and rocky hills I kept thinking that MiGs and choppers make for a hell of a one-sided battle. Still the mujahideen seemed to be holding their own in the jihad — the Afghan holy war.

The jihad is a confusing mixture of historical and current Afghan problems. The war's general purpose — both tribal and political factions in Pakistan agree — is to rid Afghanistan of Russians. But each resistance group seems to be going in a different direction and Western observers are left confused and frustrated.

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the Afghans would be happy to fight them on a hit-or-miss basis because it is good sport. The basis for fighting is centuries old, not a sudden outpouring of national pride. Seeds of this jihad were first spread a decade ago when many of today's political leaders in the mujahideen began to denounce the communists then active in Afghanistan. Since many of them were also spiritual leaders they were able to whip up an anti-communist fever among the people shortly after the coup which led to the first communist regime. That led to the first phase of the present Afghan war.

Another important point to understand about the Afghan war is that there is no death for the mujahideen in battle. Because they have become mujahideen, holy warriors, they have already had their Islamic last rites and believe they are dead. When they do die in battle they are accepted in heaven by Mohammed. They become *shaheed* and live forever and their graves become shrines.

The spiritual leaders point out that the Russians cannot defeat the mujahideen, because for every one who is killed in battle, 10 more will rise in his place. It sounds crazy to Westerners until they see the fever pitch of Afghans leaving Pakistan's tribal areas for Afghanistan, and listen to the tales of glory when mujahideen are killed. New recruits swarm from refugee camps around Peshawar to join the resistance when they hear such tales.

Because Afghan people have spent generations fighting in holy wars, local brush wars and national wars, each family, each generation, has its own history of glory. The present jihad, for many of the Afghan men, is a chance to expand that glory. By appealing to their religious devotion, their sense of injustice over the destruction of mosques, the murder of women and children, the bombing of villages, the groups in Peshawar have a bottomless well of manpower. Their only real shortage is weapons.

To most of us who love a good fight and are willing to jump at nearly any chance to get in a few licks on Ivan, Afghanistan would appear to be the place to do it — until the holy war begins to come into focus. There are not a lot of mercs around who want to get mixed up in a war where last rites are handed out before the battle.

As the war continues, Ivan will tighten his hold on most of the major roads in Afghanistan and force the mujahideen further back into the mountains. It won't make much difference. There is no end to a holy war. It will, most likely, become a PLO-type operation in the next few months unless Western aid begins to filter into the mujahideen camps. Even with the lack of arms, Afghans can keep the Russians from controlling the rugged desert or the lush pine forests of the mountains. Nothing short of a Berlin-type wall is going to seal the border with Pakistan and Iran.

One of my guides on my trip through Paktia Province explained the Jihad and the differences between the resistance groups. "First, we kill the Russians in the holy war — then we start the real war to find our own government."

It is going to be a very long war for Ivan and the Afghan people. There was plenty of time to dwell on that as we panted up the rugged, rocky slopes of this area. My legs felt like lumps of lead. Below, the valley stretched out in an endless sea of brown. A narrow ribbon of blue water and green vegetation along the river's edge were the only signs of life in the Afghan desert. I looked around at the lush pine forest we had climbed to and the half-dozen smiling Afghan mujahideen who seemed unaffected by the past four hours of climbing.

"Shit!" I said, when my breathing had finally slowed enough so I could talk. "How in the hell

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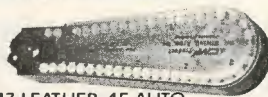
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do those guys do it? They can't be human."

For 10 days I had been walking through Afghanistan with the mujahideen and had decided they were among the world's best — although weirdest — fighting men. At times they live off little more than dry bread and tea. They wear nothing more than old worn-out sandals, whether climbing mountains or walking through the desert, and don't give a damn about how far it is to the next water hole or if they will get a decent meal. Since one of my assignments for SOF had been to find out how the individual mujahideen lived so we could present readers with a profile of these famous warriors, I observed them closely on our trek. One of the most interesting aspects I found while with the mujahideen was their ability to withstand the demanding nomadic life required by combat in this unforgiving land. They do not carry rations or canteens. They get their water where they find it and meals are often little more than a little rice, *nan* — their dry wheat bread, a staple in the Mideast — and tea. Although they offer to pay for every meal, most are given freely by the mountain people to support the holy war.

A full day's march for the mujahideen begins before dawn. As soon as the morning's prayers are over, they drink a few cups of tea, tear off a few hunks of bread, then gather together their weapons and what little equipment might be carried on camels or donkeys. Then they go and go hard.

Each man carries his own weapon — anything from a World War II Russian pistol to a modern AK-74 captured in recent fighting. Their range of weapons includes shotguns, ancient Chinese machine guns and Enfields.

The most ammunition I found carried by a single man was 50 rounds. One 20-year-old carried a Colt .38 Gold Cup National Match pistol and wore his rounds in a bandoleer across his chest. Most Afghans have from 20 to 30 rounds at any one time. Misfires are saved and put back in the belt to have new primers put in them. Their other standard weapon is an Afghan dagger, a wicked-looking knife with a T-shaped blade and camel-bone handle that is curled at the end.

One mujahideen irony is their childlike love for bright colors and flowers. All weapons are decorated with colorful beads and leather strips over the stocks and barrels. When walking past a field of flowers, they cannot resist stopping to pick a few to stuff in their weapons, hats or clothing. Their ferocity and gentleness are a paradox. A family whose donkey had sprained a leg was struggling with the animal's load when our group walked past. The mujahideen picked up the family's load and carried it down to the river. They waited for the man and his wife to bring the limping animal along before leaving.

Before going into Afghanistan I heard tales of the man-killing pace of the mujahideen. I discovered their "killer pace" would be a crawl to military types who think of cross-country travel as a route step or march. The mujahideen take small, slow steps in an unchanging rhythm both up and down hills. Where most of us tend to pick up our pace as we go down a trail, the Afghans maintain the same pace, the same distance with each step to conserve energy and moisture in the blazing desert sun. Until I learned to match my steps to theirs I was always either way behind or way in front of the group. Once I figured out what they were doing, I was able to stay with them and live off the meager rations as well as they did.

I found the mujahideen more interesting and determined than any other fighting men I've spent time with in the field. In their simple, unassuming way, with their determination to throw the Russians out, the mujahideen are capturing the

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world's attention and holding the Russian bear at bay. It might not be a bad idea to send a few of our own NCOs and officers over to take lessons from them. ✂

## HARD-PRESSED MASSOUD

*Continued from page 107*

bombardment of suspected guerrilla hideouts and widespread use of heliborne assault troops. But on this occasion initial efforts focused on sealing mujahideen escape routes by landing troops in valleys surrounding the Panjsher. Then airborne units struck inside the valley with brigade-sized landings at Dasht-i-Rewat, Sefid Chir and Darrah that triggered 10 days of intense fighting.

The guerrillas quickly realized they were not dealing with run-of-the-mill, dope-smoking conscript material. According to Western sources, Soviet airborne assault units practiced using full-scale mock-ups of Afghan villages built in the mountains of Uzbekistan for realistic training. And the men that were choppered into the Panjsher in September had clearly been through a few courses. "In the first few days they had far better morale than soldiers we'd been used to," conceded Massoud, "and they were using new and better tactics."

That meant a readiness to move at night and employ guerrilla tricks against the guerrillas. One favorite ploy was feigning retreat and leaving behind small ambush parties. Another was to move into a village before dark and, in typical Soviet style, put on all the lights. Then under cover of darkness the commandos would exfiltrate leaving the guerrillas to attack a brightly lit but empty village.

The Soviets were clearly learning the nuts and bolts of the game. But it was the bigger miscalculations that cost them lives. Most disastrous in the eighth offensive was the presumption that most of the action would take place high above the valley floor. In fact, most heavy engagements occurred in the villages down by the river. Large-scale, bloody ambushes of Soviet troops erupted in Sefid Chir and Khenj villages. In Khenj, according to the mujahid commanders, the Soviets took casualties amounting to more than 500 men, with helicopters landing on the valley floor coming under heavy HMG and recoilless-rifle fire from guerrilla positions on the mountain sides. The mujahideen took total casualties of 13 KIA and an unspecified number of wounded, according to Massoud.

The Soviets got the worst of the battle for the Panjsher. Casualties ran high, relatively little damage was inflicted, and as I saw, the Soviets still do not control the valley. Neither the Soviets nor Kabul-regime troops attempted another major invasion in 1984, and it seems the bloody and innovative mujahid defense taught the Soviets lessons they will not soon forget. ✂

## VIETNAM RELICS

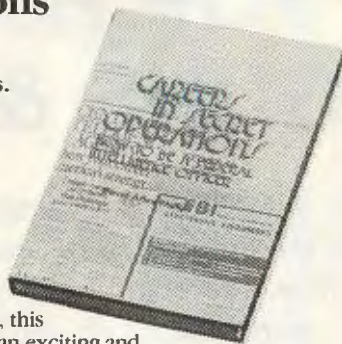
*Continued from page 52*

worked wonders with REMFs of all varieties was the infamous "VC Death Squad Assassin's Knife." During our search-and-destroy sojourns in the bush, we made a point of liberating every homemade rice knife we could find in a farmer's hootch. These simple, innocuous farm tools were brought to the rear where we painted a red star on the handle and brushed the crud off the blade. One or two were always hidden under the seat of

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Another five kilometers or so and we take a break about 50 meters from the banks of the Totololo River. A couple of minutes for water, biscuits and jam, shift your load and cross the river. About a hundred meters on the far bank we spot a leopard, stalking a large bird. I feel better about our movement, as we haven't disturbed the big cat. We're moving quick and easy now — and then we hear it.

Reb and his Mag 58, a short burst, then rifle grenades, AK-47s and the 870 shotgun Craig is carrying. The contact is about one kilometer north of us. We cover about 700 meters in a dead run and halt to duck rounds coming through the foliage. Devay wants to charge into the contact, but we have no radio and the major won't know from which direction we're "coming in." We hear sporadic firing — then movement — they're chasing the terts. We move into a blocking position and wait. Just like any other war, there's a lot of waiting in Rhodesia.

When no terts show up, we move off to our RP (rendezvous point) at the Do Me Good Store. When the rest of the stick joins us, Bob Brown is clearly elated. In all his trips to Rhodesia, this is his first operation leading to a fire fight.

His story is typical of a Rhodesian bush contact:

"As the first AK rounds cracked over our heads I came to the conclusion that corn stubble makes lousy cover. Reb was on my right and he triggered some short bursts from the MAG. I wondered whether the bastards would fight or shoot and run as usual.

"Blam! Blam! Two terr rifle grenades exploded on line about 10 meters away from the MAG position. They had the range but were off-target. Major Winkler yelled for cover and ordered me with him around the flank. We blasted the bush with our Mini-14s and made for a position where we could cover Reb. He advanced the MAG another 30 meters under our fire. Then the gun jammed. We couldn't clear it so I broke out the camera to take a few pictures.

"We continued the sweep looking for spoor, movement or reflection from an AK. Then they tossed another rifle grenade about 10 meters to my rear. It was close as hell."

It was also inconclusive like so many terr contacts in this brutal bush war. We returned to our RAR base camp to await the election results.

We slept well but awoke to bad news for Rhodesia. It's official. Mugabe has won. Bishop Muzerewa against Mugabe, God vs. the AK-47. Take heed, Jimmy Carter, the AK won. The AK is a decisive campaign manager.

In Salisbury, we hear rumors of plans to burn the city, of a hit list Mugabe's people have that includes all SOF staff members. Back at the RAR base camp, Rhodesia's bush-weary professional soldiers cannot believe the army will no longer fight. We hear of PF plans to remove all members of the Rhodesian military who are not Rhodesian citizens. What I did not realize before coming to Rhodesia is how many Brits, Aussies, Yanks, Irish, Belgians, Kiwis and many others are in the Rhodesian army. If they leave, the security gap cannot be filled.

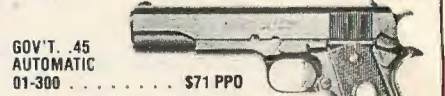
We get a message that it's time for us to get back to America, England, Belgium — anywhere but here. Nobody knows what Mugabe will do. Very few trust him. Communist or not, he was the enemy. I wish Zimbabwe-Rhodesia well. I wish Mugabe well. But my best wishes are all he will get — not me. Hell, it was a Washington/London/Moscow war anyway. They are all politician's wars, but no one imagined there were so many politicians in Salisbury. ✂

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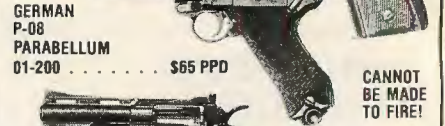
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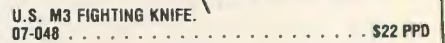
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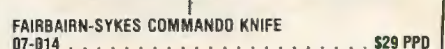
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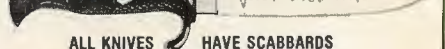
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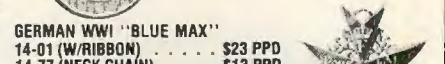
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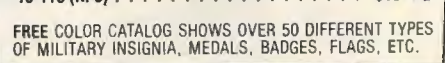
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## T-SHIRTS

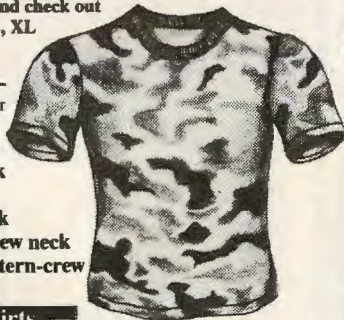
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■ **Short Sleeved; Perfect Quality—** each shirt is 50% cotton/50% polyester \$7.00/each; any 3 shirts for \$18.00

Choose from:

- Green Leaf Crew (round) neck
- Green Leaf V-neck
- Brown Leaf Crew (round) neck
- Desert Camouflage Pattern-crew neck
- Tiger Stripe Camouflage Pattern-crew neck



### Olive Drab (OD) Green T-Shirts —

these shirts are 100% cotton in that famous, exciting (?) color.

■ **Short Sleeve—Crew Neck—**(note—some of our purchase lots may be 50% cotton/50% polyester. Please advise us if this is not acceptable) \$4.75/each; 3 for \$13.00

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**Urban Camouflage T-Shirt —** The pattern consists of black and various shades of grey in a woodland camo configuration. A striking design!! 50% cotton/50% polyester. Sizes: S, M, L, XL \$8.00/each; 3 for \$23.25

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### **NEW For '85!** Fishnet Mesh Camouflage Shirts —

A runaway best seller: Camouflage T-Shirts and Tank tops in a fishnet mesh material! The T-Shirt is short sleeved and the Tank Tops are designed like our standard tank tops. The big difference is in the look of the material. The small mesh design is guaranteed to keep the wearer super cool (and looking super cool!!). 50% cotton/50% polyester. Sizes: S, M, L, XL. Choose:  T-Shirt \$12.00/each; 2 for \$22.75

Tank Top \$10.50/each; 2 for \$19.75

### **Athletic Bundeswehr Tank Top—** West German Army

These lightweight 100% cotton white tank tops are genuine issue to the West German Military troops to wear during physical training exercises. "Bundeswehr" (the name of the West German Army) is proudly embroidered above their crest on the front of the shirt. Both are sewn in black and uniquely contrast the stark white tank top. This comfortable, cool, European tank top is stylish, avant-garde, and perfect to wear while working out or relaxing in the summer sun. Sizes: XS, S, M, L, XL. Brand New \$9.75/each

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Designed the same as our camouflaged tank top but in a fishnet, mesh material. This shirt promises to be a runaway best seller! S, M, L, XL. \$10.50/each; 2 for \$19.75

### Tank Tops —

Designed in the old "athletic" t-shirt style with a 2 1/2" wide strap over the shoulder, these are extremely cool and comfortable for summer wear. Cut low under the arms and neck, the tank top allows free movement and comfort in every activity. Great fashion look for men and women. Choose: Olive Drab (OD) Green or Camouflage Sizes: S, M, L, XL \$6.00/each; 3 for \$16.50

## Muscle Shirts—

These sleeveless crew neck shirts are now a fashion statement, worn by men and women. A comfortable blend of cotton and polyester make these excellent summer shirt.

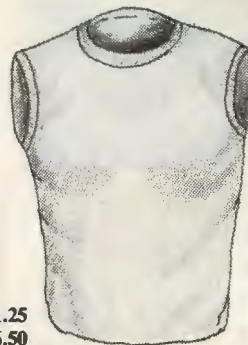
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Choose:

- Oxford Grey
- Black
- Lavender
- Fuschia
- Camouflage, of course
- Olive Drab (OD)

Colors: \$4.00/each; 3 for \$11.25

Camo and OD \$6.00/each; 3 for \$16.50



## TRAIL SHORTS

These are our most popular shorts. They are cut full and provide a very comfortable yet stylish fit. They feature 6 pockets (four in front and 2 in the back) which makes them a favorite for hikers, backpackers, birdwatchers, accountants, and people with mustaches.

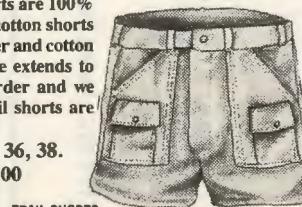
The content of the khaki and olive drab shorts are a comfort, easy care blend of cotton and polyester. The camouflage shorts are 100% cotton. (However, there may be some 100% cotton shorts available in khaki and O.D. and some polyester and cotton shorts in the camouflage. If your preference extends to these alternatives, please specify in your order and we will try to comply as supplies last). All trail shorts are made in the USA.

Sizes: 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 36, 38.

Prices: \$14.00/each; any 2 pair for \$27.00

Select from:

- Khaki (tan)
- Olive Drab (OD) green
- Camouflage (leaf/woodland pattern)



TRAIL SHORTS



DRILL SHORTS



BUNDESWEHR TANK TOP



US WALKING SHORTS

## JOGGING SHORTS

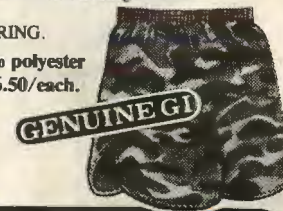
Ours are stylish shorts made in the USA that feature a trim fit and fashionable good looks. Perfect whether worn for a hard workout or as trend setting fashion.

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The following shorts are 50% cotton, 50% polyester \$6.50/each.

- Woodland Camouflage Pattern
- Desert Camouflage Pattern
- Olive Drab (OD) Green
- Khaki (tan)



## MISCELLANEOUS SHORTS

**Gerka Shorts—**One of our most popular shorts. The Gerka short features a pleated front for a stylish, comfortable fit. These shorts offer 3 pockets and a button fly.

Select: Khaki (tan) in 100% cotton; Olive Drab (OD) in 100% cotton or Woodland Camouflage Pattern in 50% cotton/50% nylon.

Sizes: 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 36, 38 \$15.75 each.



## Drill Shorts —

Named after British Army Military Drill trousers, these 100% cotton knee length shorts are one of our most popular sellers.

The cotton material is durable yet lightweight and very comfortable. Worn long for added sun protection or rolled up during more active times these drill shorts are versatile and great looking. The buckled waist belt simultaneously provides a slightly adjustable fit and a fashionable avant-garde look. Two huge front pockets and two buttoned back pockets hold anything you may need. These military style shorts with pleated front add a dash of style and flair to any summer wardrobe.

Please specify waist size in inches when ordering.

Choose: Khaki, White, Olive Drab Green or Black.

Sizes: 24-26/26-28/28-30/30-32/32-34 \$21.75/each; 2 pair for \$42.00.

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These are the familiar military style walking shorts of Great Britain and the USA. They are made right here in the USA of the finest quality durable twilled material. The khaki shorts are constructed of 100% cotton and tiger stripe are a blend of 65% polyester and 35% cotton. They are cut long (the leg is approximately 16", inseam about 7-8" on average) so they go almost to the knee. These should last many seasons and get more comfortable with each washing.

Choose: Khaki or Tiger Stripe

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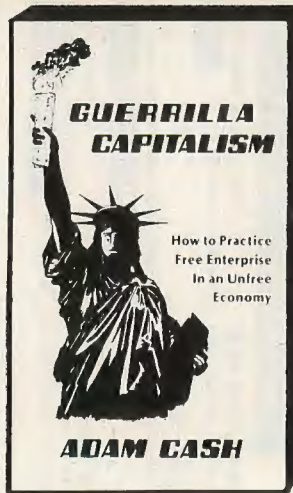
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## LIBERTY CITY

Continued from page 69

We set about purchasing building supplies for the camp, clearing ground, digging trenches and building bunkers.

Fred and I shuttled back and forth to Chiang Rai while Mingo remained on-site to supervise construction. All the while, our anxiety was building over the fact that no word had been received from "K" and his friend, the governor. After assurances from "T" that he would be coming after innumerable delays, we resigned ourselves to the possibility that bullshit artists abound in every country and that we may have been, as they say, *had*.

Meanwhile, in the states Brown sought additional support. He flew to meet a prominent businessman who had indicated interest in the SOF POW/MIA effort. However, upon arrival, said businessman shunted Brown off to his number two, who after the briefing stated since there was no 100-percent proof of existing POWs there would be no help. Why the son of a bitch didn't make that prerequisite prior to Brown's trip and save time and money may never be known. May all his children have syphilis.

Brown then flew to Washington, D.C. where he and the other SOF team members briefed a high government official on the SOF team's research and buy-out plan. Though no USG support was forthcoming, as Brown expected, the official did promise to provide questions to ask the POWs to vet them once we had a list of names.

During the weeks that followed, many conferences were held at the Chiang Rai safehouse among various Lao tribal leaders, many of whom had previously refused to work together. Zabitoss



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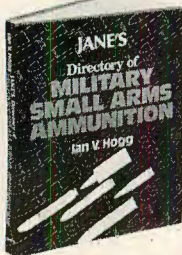
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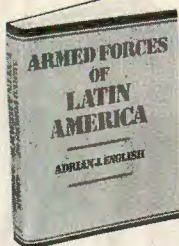
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ky eventually cemented together a tight coalition of tribes including the H'mong, Lao, Lao Tseung and Yao.

So much activity was noted by locals around the safehouse, which after leasing we found had been used by the DEA, that it was rumored that Zab and I were actually DEA agents arranging a bust on a well-known narcotics kingpin. After "T" reported rumors that both of us were on the drug-syndicate hit list, we decided to put out the word to the locals that drug busts were not on our list of priorities. "T" was successful in his efforts and the hit contract was lifted.

Nothing was heard from the engineer "K" until 21 August when he arrived armed with word that the governor was in fact not interested in a buy-out. And SOF was out \$500. Had we been conned from the beginning? We still don't know.

Since we had tens of thousands of dollars invested in Liberty City, we decided to research the feasibility of having the LULF conduct recon patrols of likely POW sites inside Laos.

In October, we heard rumors of a large number of Vietnamese troops moving into locations across the Mekong from Liberty City, which now contained more than 200 LULF freedom fighters.

In November 1981, high-ranking Thai officials pressured us to close the camp. We had no choice but to follow their directives as our only source of supply was across the Thai border.

Questions still remained unanswered. Were "T" and "B" conning us with POW reports simply to fund their dream of returning to Laos? Were POWs in Muong Sai? Did "K" actually know the Pathet Lao governor?

We knew from the beginning we were throwing the dice — but we have no regrets. We tried.

SOF continued its POW/MIA project until May 1984 and in the course of so doing, expended well over \$250,000 — all out of SOF coffers. Some of the intriguing information is contained in SOF's POW/MIA special (SOF Back Issues, P.O. Box 693, Boulder, CO 80303; \$3.00 plus \$1.50 postage and handling) published in Spring 1983. The other adventures remain to be told. ☞

## OUR MAN IN BEIRUT

Continued from page 90

line of mountains appear on the horizon. The first Lebanese boat I saw in the water was an ancient fishing sailboat that looked like the *Flying Dutchman*, and which reinforced all my prejudices. But the second was a low, sleek outboard, pulling a skier. Oh, Lord, I thought, they told me this was going to be different, but this is different from the different I had in mind.

The 10 or 11 Lebanese men, who had joined us on the bow, began singing a folksong in a rhythmic Middle Eastern chant, and one began beating his right fist into his left palm, muttering along with the music: "Syrians — kill fuckin' Syrians."

Shortly after that, a motor launch with two open rows of hardbacked wooden benches came out to our ship. Standing up in the boat was another overweight official in a slick shirt. He carried a handy-talkie in one hand and wore a snub-nosed revolver on his right hip. As soon as the launch pulled alongside, two highly bronzed young men in standard-obsene Mediterranean bathing suits came aboard and began transferring our baggage.

But the thing which held my attention was the shore in front of us, crowded with swimmers, its little amusement park going full-blast — complete with two gaily colored ferris wheels, a merry-go-round and some bumper cars.

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The guy with the pistol on his hip and the bureaucrat from the boat engaged in animated conversation over my passport. A moment later a sweaty guy who had made contact with me on the boat came back to where I sat and whispered in my ear, "As soon as we dock, take your bag and go across the street. Stand by the BMW."

The guys in the nasty swimsuits lobbed a couple of lines onto the dock as we coasted in. I grabbed my black B-4 bag with its 20 pounds of Second Chance armored vest, three sniper manuals and 16 copies of SOF and lurched onto the Lebanese shore.

It's easy to forget, but there is a legal government in Lebanon. Its representative stood on the dock in rumpled khakis, with some sort of off-the-wall black epaulets on his shirt. I got across the street okay and stood admiring the palms and the handsome people on the beach. Rather than being characters from a backward Third World

country, these people seemed to be thoroughly into the 20th century, and enjoying it — but I didn't see a BMW anywhere.

Just as the official from the ship approached me, an old blue Plymouth sedan, with two red lights exactly like the ones on U.S. cop cars, drove up. "Get in that car," said my sweaty friend. I was not eager to do it.

Two young guys got out. They wore green fatigues and black berets and carried folding-stock AKs slung over their shoulders. One of them opened the trunk for my suitcase and camera bag. These lads were not part of any mariachi band. They handled their weapons with the familiarity with which most people handle their wallets.

One of them shot me a quizzical look. He didn't know whether he was picking up a prisoner or a VIP. I didn't either.

We drove through a nice seaport and resort town, with signs advertising seafood, SCUBA

gear and discos in French, English and Arabic. After a drive of about three miles, the car turned into a walled compound with a small guardhouse at the entrance. Inside were civilian villas, surrounded by spiny tropical vegetation and flowers.

We went inside the first building. I had been informed that this was a militia without rank but, rank or no rank, one sweep of the eyes sorted out the chief clerk, sergeant major and adjutant, and tabbed this as an MP outfit, since the adjutant, a small, bespectacled, finicky-looking man, had handcuffs on his belt. If they decided they didn't like me, or my magazine, I was in a world of hurt. Even if by some feat of *James Bondismo* I bashed and battered my way out of this compound, I'd be conspicuous, ignorant and illegal.

Finally, I was officially welcomed and told the Lebanese Forces G-5 had been informed I was coming.

We drove back to Jounieh in silence which gave me a chance to wonder if the war in Lebanon was a real joke or just a comic-opera game. As we came into East Beirut I found out it was neither. The closer we got to the center of town the greater the destruction: apartment houses with great shell-hole gouges and collapsed buildings. But the streets were filled with European and American cars, some of them also pockmarked with shrapnel holes, and the sidewalks were thronged with people, dressed no differently than those in Little Rock, Ark.

What really amazed me was that everywhere I looked there were construction cranes and new high-rise buildings going up. Some buildings under construction were already pockmarked with shell holes, and others bore patched holes — but they just went right on slapping them up.

Doorways were barricaded with 55-gallon drums filled with dirt and topped with sandbags and the street was full of young men wearing fatigues and carrying slung weapons — mostly

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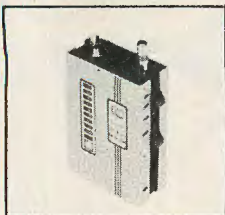
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AKs but a few M16s. Very few of these people wore caps with their fatigues, but a semi-military haircut was in style: short, but no crewcuts, no sidewalls. I saw no rank or unit insignia of any kind. They looked pretty sharp, but casual about it; no spittines. Their uniforms fit well, and that lost, hand-dog look often found in a Third World militia unit was totally absent.

We stopped in front of an apartment building, and my driver led me around the barricade and up the steps to a second-floor apartment. Inside was a tall, skinny, bearded Lebanese with a crewcut. He wore a genuine Vietnam-issue Special Forces tiger suit and a .45 in a spring-clip shoulder holster. He had on the last pair of WWII wrap-around combat boots I have ever seen or expect to see. I set my bag down and looked around.

The guy in the tiger suit got up. He and my driver exchanged a few words in Lebanese. After a few seconds' conversation we shook hands. "My name is Samir," he said. I asked him where he had gotten his tiger suit.

"A friend in your Special Forces got me six pairs," he said. "This is the last."

From what sounded like two blocks over I heard a burst of AK fire, followed by another farther away, and then a muffled *crump*... *crump*.

I looked up, startled. "We are 200 meters from the front," Samir said. I watched Samir closely, trying to take his measure. He was highly intelligent, but I never saw a man slide into and out of a thousand-yard stare as quickly as he did. He had the spaced-out mystical-militant quality of an El Greco monk, trapped by the inquisition. The feeling I had about Samir was that somehow he had been burned clean.

Combat in Lebanon has its compensations, like great food and the high incidence of truly lovely women, but when it got hot, it got very, very hot, and none of the parties was a signatory of the Geneva convention. Samir had lived through seven years of this stuff. I could only guess at his weariness.

He was of the warrior breed. Once when I saw him slide into that long-gone stare I asked him what he would have done if this war hadn't interrupted his life. He replied, "Oh, I'd have found one someplace."

I asked him about the atrocities Masoud had described on Cyprus. "Yes," he replied. "The Palestinians excel at that sort of thing. But our boys decided if those were the rules, we would play too. They backed away pretty fast."

Raised in Cairo, Sam had spent a year and a half in an Egyptian Commando unit as an 18- and 19-year-old kid. He was under no illusions about the general quality of Egyptian forces, but claimed his unit had been exceptional. The quality of their desert training, specifically, had been excellent.

He told one story about his Egyptian training. "There was a group of us sitting crosslegged around the instructor by the grenade range. He pulled the pin on a Russian grenade and threw it in my lap. 'Get rid of it,' he said. I knew it was either a dud, or had a long fuse, so I threw it back at him and said, 'Get rid of it yourself.' It had a long fuse, but wasn't a dud. He left me alone after that."

He was quite frank about the fact that he had gone into G-5 work because his nerves were shot. "It's quite amusing, really," he said. "I get shot at twice as much as before, because I'm always taking journalists to where the action is. Before, I stayed with my unit, and it was only hot when it was hot."

For the first time since leaving the 5th Special Forces Group in Vietnam, I felt completely at home with my environment, at ease and happy.

These were my kind of folks.

Looking for some action to photograph, I asked for an escort to the Sodeco area of West Beirut. I got the guide but he would not let me take my camera bag. "Don't take that!" he commanded when I slung the bag over my shoulder and headed for the door.

"That's just my camera bag."

"I know, but our people cross over into West Beirut all the time: some of us work over there. We have relatives over there. We can't afford to have our faces shown. We can't let our positions be revealed either."

Great, I thought. No photos. Brown's going to love that. My guide was teaching me rule number one for this war. Just as the rule number one for Vietnam had been never set a pattern, rule number one for Lebanon was never let them know who you, personally, are. Because if you do they will definitely send someone to do a number on you.

My guide eased an old VW bug past the quiet block of apartments and the pinball arcade going full-blast at the end of the block. But the instant we hit a major traffic artery, two blocks down, he floored it and we roared through empty, shattered streets. We blasted through a red light, entering a major intersection at about 85 kph. "Stop at that light and you'll draw mortar fire almost every time," he muttered.

He twisted down three or four more streets, slewed sideways into the entrance of a parking garage and parked. "Okay, this is it."

A handsome, well-built young man, with curly brown hair and an engaging smile, walked toward us. He wore a pair of fatigue pants and an OD T-shirt. He looked to be about 20 or 21, and carried himself with an unselfconscious air of command.

"This is Rocky, the Sodeco commander," my guide said. Rocky took me on a walking tour of his section of town. A couple of his boys went along with us. One of them had a pistol on his hip, but nobody carried a rifle. It was all concrete, close in, and shot straight up for many stories. Holes, pockmarks and rubble were everywhere. We walked easily until we approached a little open area in front of a church. "Stay on the right here," Rocky said. "On the left side of the street a sniper can hit you."

I remembered Nha Trang during Tet, downtown, where a foot either way made the difference between complete exposure and absolute safety.

I think Rocky wanted mostly to show me the church. It was shot all to hell. But I was interested in why they weren't armed, and were unconcerned, if this was such a hot area.

We went on back downstairs to the parking garage. This was a frontline position but there were a couple of nice-looking girls downstairs. From the way they were jiving the young militiamen, I began to understand that I had come to a place where being a first-rate resistance fighter was the best way to get girls. I smiled. I had finally come to a place where people had their priorities straight.

Just at that point, my initial guide came screaming back down the ramp in his bug and screeched to a stop beside me. "I came to pick you up. Headquarters wants you back at G-5."

We backed up the ramp and screamed once more through the blasted streets. "Why did they pull me out?" I asked.

"They expect a heavy attack on Sodeco, and they don't want you caught in it."

We pulled in at the G-5 apartment house, skipped around the sandbags and went upstairs where I cornered Samir.

"Look, if I'm going to get a story for a combat

magazine I gotta see some combat. I'm no good to anybody dead, but the more action I can see, and get away to write about, the better story for all of us."

"We'll see what we can do," Samir said wearily.

When working entirely at the sufferance of somebody else's army it is best not to throw a tantrum. "I'm not the reporter from *Women's Wear Daily*," I muttered. "Next time gimme an AK and let me stay."

They both grinned. "We buy our own," Rick said. "I doubt anybody is going to want to give you his and do without."

"You buy your own guns, your own ammo, your own uniforms, and there's no rank in your army?"

"That's right," Samir said.

"I don't see how you can fight a war that way."

Rick grinned. "We can do it because our fighters are very good."

I shook my head. "How do you know who's in charge?"

"Well, we don't have rank, but we have job titles. When the war is hot, everybody takes orders. When it's not, we talk it over. When it dies down for a while, we go back to our regular jobs."

That didn't answer my question about why some militiamen didn't wear uniforms.

"I don't like them," my guide said. "Besides, you see those boots?" He nodded toward Samir's vintage combat boots. "Those are boondockers." He wiggled his sneakers at me. "These are better for city fighting. I have a friend who fights in flip-flops. He's not any good in boots."

What are they going to do? They can't bust him; he has no rank. They can't fine him; he doesn't get paid. They can't fire him; he's too valuable.

I sat on the balcony for a long time, watching the sun go down and the streets clear. Only one thing was becoming clear in this weird part of the world. Lebanon is a weird war. ✂

## MEXICO UPDATE

*Continued from page 89*

represents a source of manpower that can only be utilized under extreme emergency situations.

The third force at military disposal is the Rural Defense Corps (*Rurales*). It is comprised almost entirely of peasants who work on federally-owned lands, where they have individual or collective cultivation rights. The *Rurales* take orders from the zone commander and serve as his eyes and ears in outlying areas. Sometimes they assist in maintaining public order and participate in operations against rustlers and drug smugglers. The cost to the government is minimal as they receive no financial compensation. They are issued an old military-model 7mm rifle and that seems to be the principal incentive for most who join.

Enlistment of regular personnel is voluntary. A recruit is required to have only a few modest qualifications: citizenship, a primary education and no criminal record. Recruiting is carried out at local levels. Zone garrisons and the separate battalions and regiments recruit within their geographical boundaries. Most recruits come from lower-class backgrounds and view the military as a means of improving their lot via upward mobility. An enlisted soldier with a good record can become an NCO if he re-enlists for a second tour of duty. The Mexican NCO corps is much smaller than those of armies defending more-

developed nations. The principal NCO role is training recruits.

The Mexican officer corps is a different story. It is too large at practically all levels and Mexican officers do not delegate much responsibility to their NCOs. Potential officers enroll in one of the three military academies (Army, Navy, Air Force). They are generally from middle-class backgrounds, between 16 and 21 years of age, able to meet certain physical requirements, be high school graduates, be unmarried and Mexican citizens.

The small size of the armed forces has created a scarcity of active command positions and that has led to an overloaded administrative military bureaucracy. The need to utilize the excess officer corps more efficiently has been partially answered by increased schooling possibilities. Keeping the officers busy in school also prevents them from becoming involved in political activities — a situation very satisfying to the ruling political elite who are constantly looking over their shoulders for any signs of a military coup.

After graduation from one of the academies, officers can attend numerous special service schools plus the Superior War College and the National Defense College, which was created in 1981. This provides a higher-quality officer education, but the lack of an opportunity for prolonged command experience is still a basic problem that remains unsolved.

The loyalty of the Mexican armed forces to the current president seems to be firm. The viewpoint among senior military officers is that political ambition is not compatible with their careers. Generous salary increases, quicker promotions, bonuses, modernization and acquisition of new weapons all have had a definite effect on morale. Privately, a number of officers have expressed strong disapproval of Mexican foreign policy, blatant presidential and official corruption, and communist influences in the government, but

these are only rumblings. The military has kept its cool.

Still Mexico's political leaders may have a misleading impression of the country's military capabilities. Over the past 50 years, the military has encountered few situations where the opposition has shot back. The officer corps is untested in combat and is an uncertain element in time of crisis. History tells us that the Mexican soldier, when well-led, is a formidable and brave adversary. The basic problem with the Mexican Army may be an excess of chair-bound officers who will have to be field-tested in combat on a trial-and-error basis. That's a dangerous way to harden troops.

### The Air Force

The 5,500-man Air Force consists of nine operational groups: Three groups with 50 Swiss PC7 Pilatus aircraft; one group designated for counterinsurgency operations and flying IAI Arava, Bell, Alouette and Puma helicopters; one communication and photo-recon group; one jet-aircraft combat group of F-5E and AT-33A aircraft; and four groups flying transport aircraft including C47, DC7, C54, C118A.

In addition, the Air Force maintains a Presidential Squadron consisting of nine Boeing 727 aircraft, and one each of 737, H5125, Jet Star, Islander and Bell 212 aircraft. Training aircraft (75) include: Stearman PT-17 Biplanes, Mudry CAP-10BS, Beech Musketeers, Bonanzas and PC7 Turbo Trainers. Most pilots have received U.S. training.

Serious parts availability and maintenance problems make extended air operations tenuous at best. Generally, a large percentage of the Mexican Air Force is grounded at any given time. The multitude of makes and models of planes involved complicates the problem.

### The Mexican Navy

The Mexican Navy boasts approximately 24,000 men and 4,000 Marines. Its task is formidable and, in many ways, beyond its capabilities.



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ties. The Mexican coast is more than 5,000 miles long and the size of the force plus the small amount of craft available, make it impossible for the Navy to entirely control the coastline.

The Navy is structured around about 15 U.S.-made destroyers, frigates and corvettes (most of WWII vintage), along with the necessary support craft. Mexican construction facilities are limited. The Mexican government has purchased two Gearing Class destroyers and seven amphibious craft and a sailing ship for training from the U.S. as well as six Halcon Class frigates from Spain. At the present time, Olmecca Class 40-foot patrol boats are being manufactured inside the country.

#### Military Hardware

During the past decade, the Mexican Department of Military Industry has been completely modernized. It produces small arms and ammunition for the wide variety of weapons in service. There is limited production of grenades, 81mm and 120mm mortar rounds and 105mm howitzer shells. Small rockets for mounting on vehicles are in the initial production phase. Generally, the ammunition manufactured is of much better quality than that previously produced with the antiquated equipment of years past.

*Industria Militar* is now manufacturing, under license, the German HK G3 7.62mm rifle. In 1986, production is expected to begin on the MP5 9mm submachine gun. The FN FAL rifle has also been assembled. The army will eventually replace all other small arms with the G3 and MP5 weapons.

The Mexican Army has imported a wide assortment of arms, many of which are still in use by smaller units. The logistical and maintenance problems have been astronomical. Forty-five caliber M1911A1 pistol, M3A1 SMGs, MP5

9mm SMGs, UZI 9mm SMGs, M16A1 rifles, .30 M1 and M2 carbines, BARs and Mexican-made 7.62mm Mauser rifles may all be found in the ranks. Machine guns in inventory include Belgian FN MAG, U.S. M1919A4 LMG, U.S. M2 HB HMG and U.S. BARs. A few French 20mm Model M693 automatic cannons are also listed in inventory.

The army has purchased quantities of Mexican-manufactured jeeps, trucks and other vehicles. This has permitted all but one of the 26 cavalry regiments to be converted from horse to motorized units. The decision converting the horse cavalry to more "road-bound" mechanized units, may prove to have been a mistake. The rugged terrain and lack of roads in Mexico could present serious mobility and transport problems if extensive insurgencies arise in the countryside.

Mexican military planners face a number of planning problems. In case of country-wide insurgency, the military does not have the numbers, transport, mobility or armament to control Mexico City concurrently with handling prolonged revolutionary outbreaks throughout the countryside. The bulk of the regular Army's strategic reserves would have to be committed to protecting the capital from sabotage of government and military installations.

A sudden expansion of the Army or call-up of reserves to handle an insurgency would be difficult. Shortages of equipment and armament would keep the military from concentrating its efforts on the business at hand. Reserves of arms, ammunition and other equipment are probably not sufficient for any prolonged action — either in the zones or Federal District.

Since Mexico's oil fields and gas lines are the key to economic survival, they would have to be

protected from internal or external attack. But in the face of Mexican manpower and equipment shortages, it would be almost impossible to do while still protecting Mexico City. If the oil fields were destroyed, garrisons in cities such as Guadalajara, Puebla and Monterey could be immobilized by the rapid decrease in reinforcements and supplies.

Some of those considerations may be academic. The real questions concern the Mexican military's ability to handle an insurgency. Training in counterinsurgency at troop levels, zone levels and in the military schools has not been thorough. Officers at the higher command level are adopting an "it can't happen here" attitude. In relation to its size, population, terrain and shoreline, Mexico would probably need a force of 500,000 soldiers to handle a full-fledged revolution. The current military forces are by any standards — other than Mexico's — insufficient to carry out their national security commitment.

The U.S. intelligence presence in Mexico is extensive and contingency plans to handle the possibility of revolution in Mexico have undoubtedly been made. However, success in such an endeavor depends largely on the Mexican leaders' attitude and the time that passes before they finally admit that the military cannot control its own problems and ask for assistance. Changing the perceptions within the Mexican government may be the key to keeping those problems from arising. Moscow would dearly love to see the U.S. become so preoccupied with chaos south of the border that it would be forced to shift its military forces away from problems elsewhere in the world. That would open up new possibilities for Soviet aggression in several strategic areas of the globe. ☒

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# COUNTER-INSURGENCY

Continued from page 51

tary would have learned some valuable lessons about unconventional warfare.

Military commanders continued to miss the mark in defining the true nature of the war in Vietnam and they failed to communicate it to the field troops and the American public. In the face of public pressure for a decisive end to the war, field commanders who came up against small bands of VC in villages opted to expend ammo rather than risk lives. They frequently backed off and poured massive supporting fire on the area. It saved American lives but drastically complicated the situation in Vietnam. An innocent civilian population — the hearts and minds we had started out to win — were at considerable risk.

The standard practice of the VC to "clutch the people to their breast" made it difficult to protect the civilian population. The enemy purposefully turned villages and hamlets into battlefields because they provided cover for operations in the coastal lowlands and open valleys. Hamlets and villages also gave the VC a source of labor for fortifications and underground tunnels. Most importantly, the communists knew that the Americans were usually unwilling to fire on population centers. If they chose to open fire, the VC won important psychological victories among the people even if guerrilla fighters were killed in the engagement.

When they should have turned to Special Forces units operating among the people to prevent VC infiltration, the American command opted for employment of massive firepower in

hopes of destroying the enemy before he could reach the villages and hamlets. Massive bombing campaigns with colorful names like "Menu," "Rolling Thunder" and "Linebacker" took the place of a coherent COIN strategy. American planes pounded North Vietnam with more bomb tonnage than had ever been employed in U.S. military history. COIN advocates lost ground rapidly to believers in strategic bombing who maintained that heavy punishment from the sky would bring Hanoi to its knees.

North Vietnam was a poor target for a sustained air campaign but public opinion and a growing dissatisfaction with the war effort demanded strikes which would yield readily apparent results. It was an easy way out of the quagmire that Vietnam had become but the slow escalation of the bombing allowed the communists to weather the storm.

The military and the American public could no longer afford to outwait the enemy. It was too costly in both lives and money to allow the war to drag on. Despite the best efforts of true believers, American Special Forces had been thwarted in their attempts to apply unconventional warfare principles and techniques in Vietnam.

Speculation about what caused the failure of American efforts in Vietnam has become a popular pastime in and out of the military. Did Watergate divert attention from a concerted effort that could have won the war? No. Did Congress kill the effort and betray South Vietnam with the Fulbright-Aiken Amendment? Maybe. The most prevalent and reasonable argument lays the blame on political constraint. That's sound but it misses the point.

The United States failed to achieve its main objective — the creation of a free and independ-

ent South Vietnam — and we need to understand why in terms of tactics that may be applied to other Third World conflicts in the future. If soldiers and their civilian leaders do not understand the mistakes made in COIN operations in Vietnam then the expenditure of nearly 60,000 lives and \$112 billion will have been truly in vain.

What's needed — and hopefully what's happening right now — is a full-scale reassessment of our special operations and unconventional warfare plans and capabilities. The war in Vietnam should mark a watershed in COIN thinking. It should shape the planning of future low-intensity conflicts and shake the military to its very foundations.

## Post-Vietnam Counterinsurgency

After Vietnam both our military leaders and the American public vowed that we would never fall into a similar trap. No more Vietnams. Congress looked high and low for a scapegoat and found one in the Central Intelligence Agency. In the wake of the galling experiences of the war, the whole range of military and paramilitary operations that fell under the heading of UW became dirty words. Much of what was learned in Vietnam about the nature of UW was shredded and discarded by the men at Langley and the Pentagon.

Nobody in the military wanted to be accused of clinging to worn-out doctrines. The prevailing attitude held that Vietnam was a closed book and we ought to get on with other things. No one likes to concentrate on failure and America's UW capability was the first to suffer.

Officers commanding Special Forces or other UW elements of the post-Vietnam military found themselves in unpopular billets. Because of all the early hype and high expectations for Special Forces success in Vietnam, they became tainted

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as losers. Promotion opportunities were reduced and many of the UW specialists left the service or treaded water until retirement by keeping a low profile. Warriors were replaced by military managers and the bureaucratic ticket-punchers began to shape the future of the Army. Throughout the military establishment UW was going out of style and the less said about it the better.

Ironically, the U.S. cutback in UW capabilities came just as the Soviets were displaying a new interest in the subject. In the 1970s, the last spasms of decolonization shook the Third World and the one-time revolutionary movements came to power in most of black Africa and the Middle East. Soviet influence in these areas was waning from strong to symbolic because the new leaders of the Third World had found their aid more valuable in seizing power than in maintaining it. To compensate, the Kremlin adopted a global strategy of support for terrorist, separatist and revolutionary movements seeking to upset Western equilibrium.

The strategy was designed to nibble away at the peripheries of the developed world and erect a new Iron Curtain around America and her allies. Using the Third World as a battleground, it was relatively cheap for the Soviets. They stood to score huge gains with little risk and if the pressure got too heavy, the Kremlin UW experts simply pulled out and started up again elsewhere.

The new Soviet emphasis on UW is also borne out by the increasing importance being placed on *Spetsnaz* troops within their military. Designed for deep penetration of NATO lines, *Spetsnaz* forces have been used regularly in covert missions to eliminate Soviet opponents in the Third World.

Despite such evidence of a need for effective COIN assets in the U.S. military, the Special Forces were viewed as a pariah after Vietnam. Washington ordered the soldiers, sailors and airmen back to preparing for a nuclear exchange or a conventional conflict in Europe.

These days there is a growing realization — in the face of a communist insurgency in Central America — that America needs more UW assets in the arsenal. As a result, special warfare units are receiving a welcome shot in the arm. New command and control reforms and increased force levels have been authorized but much more needs to be done before we are ready to effectively counter a communist insurgency in the Third World. It won't be easy.

A decade has passed since the war and it's difficult to understand why even the most disgruntled survivors would refuse to confront the threat posed by low-intensity conflict around the world. That requires an analysis involving both military psychology and sociology.

There remains a Vietnam hangover in the military that prompts some leaders to believe guerrilla wars are unwinnable. That view is clearly prevalent among influential members of Congress and the public sector. The situation is complicated by a spate of military officers engrossed in the ticket-punching, careerist routine who are fighting the resurgence of UW forces because they fear being shunted into the backwaters by a "new elite."

There is also a more impersonal aversion within the military for elite units which continues to haunt Special Forces, Navy SEALs and airmen involved in UW with the USAF's Special Operations Wing. Uniformed critics claim the high visibility and glamor of such units serves to skim the cream of the enlisted crop and robs other units of talent.

Other problems are caused by lack of an effective lobby to support UW units during Congressional budget deliberations. Special operations require mobility and superior training with little emphasis on exotic, expensive hardware. That

makes them less than popular with lobbyists representing high-tech military manufacturers. And there is a prevalent attitude among some influential legislators that too much emphasis on UW units may prompt military leaders to urge their commitment in order to justify their existence.

None of these concerns over massive expenditure of either money or manpower are really valid. The U.S. spends only 26 cents out of every 100 defense dollars on UW and COIN. Despite Administration commitment to UW capabilities, the FY 1985 budget will show a decrease of .01 percent — down to only .25 percent of the defense stipend. This decrease comes from a cutback of funds earmarked for UW by the Army. Only the Navy will continue to spend the same on UW — .13 percent of their budget allocation.

Out of more than 2.2 million men and women under arms, a mere 14,081 are in UW units. The Army has 8,331 people committed, the Navy 1,550 and the Air Force 4,200. The total amounts to less than .7 percent of the combined U.S. Army, Navy and Air Force strength. An additional 17,526 troops can be counted on the reserve rosters. That means a grand total of less than 1 percent of active duty military personnel are regularly trained to fight the kind of war in which the U.S. is most likely to become embroiled in the future.

The situation at the top of the military heap does not seem conducive to reform in the UW community. The U.S. was entangled in Southeast Asia for more than 10 years but relatively few influential senior officers have practical UW experience. Only four Air Force generals and 10 Army generals have been involved in COIN ops. There are no Navy admirals with UW experience. What experience is available in these rarefied levels of command is not being applied to UW resources. The highest-ranking Air Force officer in charge of a UW unit is a colonel, in the Navy a captain and in the Army a major general.

Fortunately, such dismal statistics don't extend to current U.S. allies. Six British generals in a military approximately one-sixth the size of America's have UW backgrounds from time spent with the Special Air Service or the Royal Marines. The Israelis have an even better record. Between one-half and two-thirds of all Israeli general officers in all branches of the military have experience in UW operations.

In the American military, this disparity can be blamed on the nature of the unconventional warrior. He is generally a strange breed of cat who does not function well in the bureaucratic atmosphere of the U.S. military command structure. These men can rarely make an effective transition from field soldier to Pentagon paper-shuffler. Faced with that potential as a prerequisite for advanced rank, many UW officers either retire or content themselves with duty that keeps them out of the fast track.

There is little visible effort to bridge the gap between conventional military leaders of the future and their UW brethren. Instruction in UW or COIN ops at senior military schools is sadly lacking. The Air Force leads the services in hours of UW study required at command and staff schools while the Army, Navy and Marine Corps require less of officers more likely to be closely involved in the prosecution of unconventional warfare.

It's been said many times in the past, but the U.S. military needs a major revision in both strategic thinking and organization for unconventional warfare. An effective military capability for the future demands that we avoid both the tempting feast of preparing for conventional conflict and the famine being suffered by our unconventional warfare units.

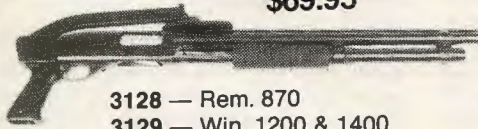
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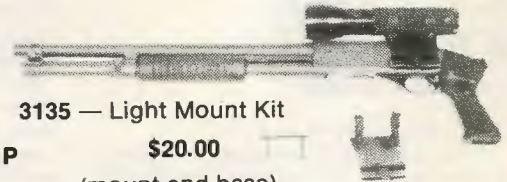


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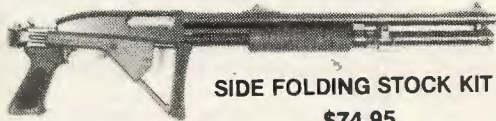


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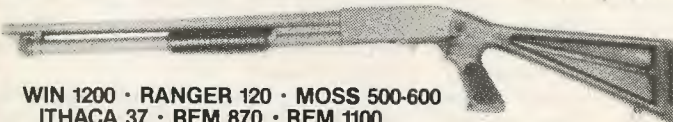


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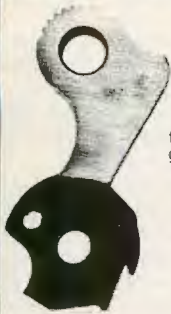
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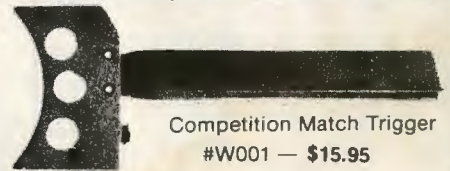
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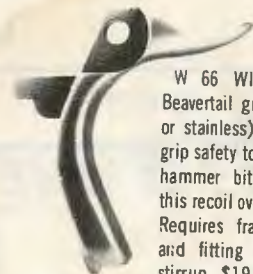
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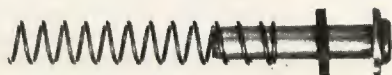


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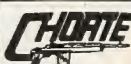


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have to face the realities revealed in Vietnam. They will have to realize that American setbacks in the Third World are not likely to undermine the security of the Western world but a series of losses in such situations might do just that. The ability of either superpower to win a series of protracted brush-fire wars may mark a shift in the global balance.

Unless there is a shift in our military toward effectively and realistically handling such confrontations, we may find ourselves forced into much larger — and more disastrous — conflicts. ✕

## BLACK JACK SCHRAMME

Continued from page 77

with his glad-handing of the mercs.

"I realized that such 'replacement' meant a certain death to myself, my white men and my black Katangese," Schramme says. "I knew that shortly before our meeting in Kinshasa, 31 European mercenaries, recruited by Belgian staff officers in Brussels on orders by Mobutu, were murdered on his command shortly after their arrival in Kinshasa."

Katangans in Schramme's old command particularly despised many of the ANC troops with which they had been merged. They were generally dissatisfied since Tshombe's second fall from power and eventually hatched a plot to overthrow Mobutu. It was led by René Clemens, a sociology professor, and Mario Spandre, who helped Clemens draft a constitution for an independent Katanga in 1960. Led by several foreign mercs who had received ANC commissions, the Katangans mutinied in 1966. Among the foreigners killed in subsequent fighting was Commandante Wauth-

ier, a reputed member of the Belgian secret service who had acted as a liaison between Tshombe in exile and Schramme's forces.

Schramme returned to his headquarters in the forests of Yumbi and claimed neutrality in the revolt that involved so many old compatriots on both sides. Other accounts of Schramme's activities during this period say he was also planning to attack the ANC and Mobutu. Whatever the case, Schramme's fears for his Katangan followers were realized shortly after scores of them accepted an offer of amnesty made by Mobutu. Those who surrendered were executed. Some reports indicate the killings were carried out by ANC troops under the command of Denard, the mercenary who had remained loyal to Mobutu in this particular coup attempt.

Mobutu quickly abolished parliament and assumed all power in the Congo. The number of provinces was reduced from 21 to 12 and the cities with European names were rechristened. In 1967, Mobutu outlawed all political parties except his own and that prompted yet another plot involving mercenaries.

Denard and other ANC officers devised "Plan Kerille" to overthrow Mobutu. Schramme indicates the plan "had approval of the Belgian government at the highest levels." In fact, says Schramme, Belgians designed the scheme.

"Belgian staff officers of the highest rank drew up the plan for this *coup d'état*. I can prove this. According to this plan, Denard and myself should attack the ANC on 1 July 1967."

The American CIA — most likely through agents active in the mercenary forces — learned of the plot and decided to help foil it since the U.S. continued to back Mobutu. The Agency informed him about details of the Plan Kerille and the plot mysteriously began to unravel. The conspirators — including Schramme — grew understandably nervous.

Six weeks before the scheduled start of Plan Kerille, Maurice Quintin, a Belgian, visited Schramme's headquarters at Yumbi. He told Schramme that he had been sent by Tshombe in Madrid with orders to initiate the attack against the ANC earlier than planned. Quintin indicated Schramme's unit was to take the town of Goma at the beginning of June, a month earlier than planned.

Schramme did not trust Quintin. Following a violent argument in the officers' mess at Yumbi, Schramme shot Quintin with a rifle. He ordered a subordinate, Roger Rodrigue, to administer the *coup de grace* with his pistol and Quintin's body was thrown into the nearby Lowe River. Schramme held off and prepared his unit for the 1 July D-Day.

Tshombe had planned to secretly return to his country just before Plan Kerille began but he was kidnaped — probably by CIA operatives — on 30 June 1967 and flown to Algiers where he was jailed. He died in prison on 30 June 1969 without ever returning to the Congo.

Schramme, unaware of Tshombe's kidnaping, kicked off his part in Plan Kerille on schedule. His Leopard Battalion pushed through to Bukavu, where he made Colonel Leonhard Mongo declare a counter-government. Bukavu came under heavy siege from the ANC. Schramme first caused heavy losses to Mobutu's army, which outnumbered him greatly, and then fell back taking nearly 2,000 men — white and black soldiers as well as refugees — with him. He led the group into safety in neighboring Rwanda on 5 November 1967.

Although Schramme's forces did very well in this coup attempt, which became known as "the Mercenaries' Revolt," the action ultimately failed and all the mercs were forced to flee the

Congo. The whites were repatriated to Europe, the blacks to Angola. All mercenaries had to sign a statement for representatives of the Organization of African Unity indicating that they would never again set foot on African soil. Schramme returned to his family mansion near Brussels in 1968.

"On arrival in Belgium, I had three black children with me whose fathers died in the ultimate battle against the ANC. I would not leave them behind in the Congo. One Belgian official intended to return them immediately into Mobutu's hands — a certain death — because they did not have one single official document on them. Therefore I adopted them . . . officially as my sons.

"Back in Belgium, Rodrigue tried to extort money from me," Jean Schramme says. "He argued that I still owed him a couple of months' pay, which was absolute nonsense. I refused, and then he went to Quintin's widow with the story of the execution. In court, I immediately admitted the execution, for which I had my reasons. Quintin was a spy for Mobutu. Attacking Goma would have meant straight suicide for us. For we knew that the ANC was waiting for us there in ambush. The execution of Quintin was the execution of a traitor."

Schramme remains convinced he has done nothing wrong. "What I've done was right. And I was even fully authorized to do so. Mobutu himself had given me absolute powers in the Maniema district. And I was, at that particular moment, officially an active colonel in the regular *Armée Nationale Congolaise*.

"My release from jail in Belgium and the handing back of my passport was a sort of a compromise between the Belgian Ministry of Exterior and myself. I was given permission to leave the country after I had promised to keep my mouth shut about the Congo business. Many high-ranking people in Brussels knew very, very well how many incriminating documents I had in my possession about Belgium's secret role in the Congo offensives.

"I still have those documents nowadays. They are safely locked away somewhere, together with the manuscript of a book, in which I expose the behind-the-scenes actions of Belgium fully. I still wait to get it published.

"The head of the Belgian State Security, Mr. Caeymaex, wanted my head in 1968. My release was finally due to top officers, who pushed their influence through in my favor. Especially the military judge advocate in those days, Mr. Samuel, criticized Caeymaex heavily."

When Schramme was released from jail, he went with his three adopted children to Portugal. There, at Oliveira do Sul, he started a chicken farm. "While living and working in Portugal, I could read in the papers how I was involved in several coups in several African countries," Schramme says with a bitter laugh. "If there was trouble somewhere in Africa, my name was linked up with it."

The former mercenary leader had trouble getting his roots into Portuguese soil and yearned for the tropics. "I went to Brazil for the first time in 1972," Schramme says, "a sort of reconnaissance tour, if you want, to see whether I might find a good place for farming. From Brazil, I traveled to Paraguay, where I worked as an employee on a plantation not far from the Brazilian border. I finally returned to Portugal, sold my chicken farm and with the money I'd inherited from my deceased father I decided to emigrate to Brazil in 1974."

Schramme arrived in Rio de Janeiro on 19 February 1974. He traveled to the Mato Grosso and settled near the town of Rondonopolis, where

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he began to farm cattle. After marrying a Brazilian woman who bore him three children, Schramme became entangled in a legal battle to obtain permanent resident status and legalize his marriage and family in Brazil. He was granted the privileges of a permanent resident in 1981 but Black Jack Schramme's troubles were far from over. His role in the Congo continued to haunt him.

His name was continually linked with all sorts of obscure activities in different South African countries and Schramme blames the Belgian government for the harassment. "The Belgian State Security, for example, leaked reports to the Belgian press in which they said I was thrown out of Brazil in 1976. According to their reports, I had then moved to Bolivia, where I was leading a paramilitary security organization, the *Servicio Especial de Seguridad*. My name was coupled with former SS members, even with Klaus Barbie! The same reports stipulated that in Bolivia, I was nicknamed *El Tigre*, because of my reputation in torture techniques. And this while I stayed and lived all the time with wife and children at my farm near Rondonopolis. From 1974 till now, I have not even set one single foot outside Brazil."

Fighting to keep Schramme in Brasilia is his lawyer Francisco Backx van Buggenhout, 72, also a Belgian native. "The extradition agreements between Belgium and Brazil are only in force when civil crimes are concerned," he says. "In Schramme's case, political and military matters are concerned. So my client simply cannot be extradited by Brazil, the fact that he is legally married with a Brazilian and has children with her not even taken into account." Meanwhile, if anyone expects Schramme to apologize for his activities in the Congo and throw himself on the mercy of a court, they will be disappointed.

"No, I do not have any regrets" Schramme says. "What I've done was right, and I should do exactly the same again under the same circumstances. We have saved thousands of black and white lives. I could have been naturalized automatically and taken up the Brazilian nationality through my marriage in 1980. But I didn't. I stayed Belgian. I knew that an extradition request was on its way. I could have fled the country. But I didn't. I stayed.

"Anyhow, it's becoming time that they set me free. Since October I've not been in fresh, open air. The food in prison is not too bad, the guards are correct, and I can even watch television in my cell. But at home, an enormous amount of work is waiting for me. Last year I lost all my cattle in an epidemic. I am completely broke. The debts with my lawyer have mounted to some \$40,000. I hope I can settle them later. My lawyer is busy translating one of my books in Portuguese. He will get the earnings."

Black Jack Schramme suddenly speaks softly, looking at some family pictures above his prison bed. "Yes, I miss my wife and children terribly. But I have no regrets." ✕

## CHAPTER ONE: THE MODERN MERC

"Mercenary" was a seldom-used, almost forgotten word in 1960 when the Belgian Congo's simmering socio-political caldron boiled over into bloody violence. Names like "Black Jack" Schramme and "Mad Mike" Hoare — now among the most famous of the profession since Xenophon led troops out of ancient Greece — prompted public indignation when they surfaced in the popular press as "soldiers of fortune."

As the war in the Belgian Congo grew more



'Mad Mike' Hoare, like Schramme, is a small, precise man who has spent a lot of recent time in jail. Hoare was released from prison in May and Schramme hopes for the same fate.

cruel and grisly, mercs came to be viewed at worst as an archaic but necessary evil defending Western civilization and at best as a colorful, romantic lot who made a case for old-fashioned freebooting in a modern, constrained world.

The three most famous mercenary-led formations in the Congo were 5 Commando under Hoare, 6 Commando under Bob Denard and 10 Commando under Schramme. At various stages in a confusing string of violent insurrections between 1960 and 1967, these three units fought against the new Congolese government, then as formations of its army (ANC) and finally as opposition forces in an abortive coup.

Schramme was the only merc leader of the period who was actually a resident of the Belgian Congo when independence was declared in 1960. Hoare is an Irishman who served in the British Army during World War II and then moved to South Africa, where he was an accountant, silent partner in a used-car business and safari guide. Trips in this last pursuit brought him on his first visits to future battlegrounds in the Congo and Rhodesia.

Denard had served as a Marine in France and later worked as a policeman in colonial Algeria and Morocco where he was active in extreme right-wing political organizations. He was among the first mercenaries recruited when Moise Tshombe tried unsuccessfully to establish an independent Katanga. The French, probably seeking to usurp the weakened Belgian influence in the area, permitted 20 officers and several NCOs — including Denard — to resign and enter service with Tshombe. Such tacit support was nervously withdrawn after Patrice Lumumba was murdered in Katanga, but Denard and others remained as mercs under the command of Roger Faulques, a former French Foreign Legionnaire.

Schramme, Hoare and Denard played relatively minor roles in the Katangan affair compared to the fame they gained after the insurrection died in 1962. Prior to that time there was a mutual distrust between English, French and Belgian mercenaries and Faulques sent Schramme into the hinterlands of Katanga. Schramme's mission was to recruit and train young tribesmen as the nucleus of his famed Leopard Group. Denard — Faulques' countryman — was chosen as the senior merc's executive officer and took command of Katangan forces when Faulques left the Congo in 1962.

Hoare's most notable feat during the Katangan secession period was a 1961 expedition of six mercs he led into the bush under private contract to a South African businessman whose son had disappeared on a camping trip. Learning that the

young man and a companion had been executed by Baluba tribesmen, Hoare's group sacked and burned the village of Kalamatadi in retribution. Schramme's Leopard Battalion fought the most significant action involving mercenaries in the secession during the Second Battle of Katanga at the end of 1962. After that he was forced to lead his troops to safety in Angola.

By early 1963, the Katangan secession effort was dead. Schramme linked his merc command with Denard's and they led the command to refuge in Angola. Bored with waiting for progress in the Congo, Denard opted out and joined his friend and former CO in Yemen where Faulques had secured a merc contract.

By mid-1964, Tshombe had returned from exile to become the Congo's prime minister. When the Belgian-backed ANC was unable to put down what is now known as the Simba Revolt, Tshombe recalled some of the mercs that had supported him in Katanga.

Hoare was summoned from South Africa and commissioned to form a battalion of white mercenaries that officially became 5 Commando in July 1964. Schramme marched his Leopard Battalion back into the Congo from Angola and it was officially commissioned as 10 Commando, comprised mainly of Belgian merc officers and Katangan troops. Denard soon returned from the Mideast and joined 6 Commando, under the command of a Colonel Lamouline, a Belgian regular who was assisted by a merc known as Commandant Protin.

Belgium's military presence in the Congo was clearly restored. That was most obvious in the person of Belgian Colonel Vanderwalle, who commanded the ANC's 5th Mechanized Brigade containing Hoare's 5 Commando mercs. It was Vanderwalle's strategy — carried out primarily



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Bob Denard fought for and against the Mobutu government in the Congo, but when a victorious Schramme needed help at a crucial moment the Frenchman failed. This led to ultimate defeat in the Mercenaries' Revolt.

by mercenary troops — that eventually led to a Congolese victory over the Simbas.

After a temporary peace was restored in 1965, Vanderwalle was replaced by a General Delperdange. Tshombe's power base began to unravel and that led to his second exile from the Congo. There was also a significant shake-up in the Congo's mercenary formations.

Before he was replaced, Vanderwalle had raped Schramme's unit by removing about half of 10 Commando's 8,000 Katangans and organizing them into one ANC regiment of four battalions, each commanded by a white merc. These units were designated 11, 12, 13 and 14 Commando.

Lamouline and Protin in 6 Commando were ousted and replaced by Denard. Hoare resigned and was replaced as head of 5 Commando by John Peters, a former British regular who had served as a merc sergeant under Hoare and was noted for his bravery.

In 1966 when General Joseph Mobutu, commander of the ANC, abolished parliament and made himself the sole authority in the Congo, plots began hatching immediately. Conspirators tried to recruit Hoare to lead a coup but he refused. Peters refused a 15,000-pound-sterling offer to lead 5 Commando in mutiny and told Mobutu of the plot. Only the disgruntled Katangans of 11, 12, 13 and 14 Commando were successfully recruited into the conspiracy.

The revolt broke out 23 June 1966 when the Katangans seized about half of Stanleyville. They had expected mercenary support but Denard and his 6 Commando which was based around the city remained loyal to Mobutu. Schramme and 10 Commando remained neutral at their post in Maniema, although some accounts say he was preparing to join the revolt.

Unable to conclude the take-over attempt and under pressure from Denard's 6 Commando, the Katangans withdrew toward Maniema. Peters led 5 Commando into blocking position but did not attack the retreating rebels. They sought shelter with Schramme who advised them to ignore Mobutu's offer of amnesty. Those who did not take his advice and surrendered were killed. Some sources indicate Denard's 6 Commando troops carried out the executions.

Suspecting Peters of double-dealing because he failed to attack the retreating rebels, Mobutu disbanded 5 Commando in May 1967 and began to reduce the mercenary presence in his country. It proved to be a rash move. He counted on the proven loyalty of Denard. He *did not* count on his favorite merc joining what became known as the Mercenary Revolt, led by Schramme and his 10 Commando.

Confusion and fierce fighting plagued the Congo during the summer of 1967. The revolt was brought to a head on 9 August when Schramme's 10 Commando surprised an ANC unit and captured Bukavu. The world got a ludicrous look at the situation in the Congo when TV crews broadcast film of routed ANC troops dropping their weapons as they poured over the border into Rwanda. It looked like the mercs had the upper hand in the Congo.

Unfortunately, 6 Commando was unable to complete its part in the revolt when Denard was wounded and forced to flee to Rhodesia in a stolen DC-3. Schramme, minus reinforcements he expected from Denard's unit, could only hold Bukavu in a tactical stalemate. Denard was able to reorganize and did open a second front, recruiting 13 mercs in France to lead a campaign from Angola in mid-September. But Denard's men, many mounted on bicycles, turned the effort into a farce.

When it became apparent that Schramme would receive no outside help, the ANC launched a bloody attack on Bukavu and overran the city on 5 November. Schramme's 10 Commando — 130 white mercs, about 800 Katangan troops and about 1,500 women and children — retreated into Rwanda where they surrendered their weapons and were briefly imprisoned.

The white mercs mostly returned to Europe and the Katangans became refugees in Angola, which in later years would see a similar bloodbath. Denard's scraggly group fled to Angola also and promptly disappeared. The infamous mercs of the bloody Congo melted into obscurity leaving only the outline of the first chapter in the history of modern mercenary soldiers.

— James L. Pate

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## BULLETIN BOARD

Continued from page 14

required by a battalion's machine-gun crews. Patches, bore cleaner and LSA oil are now in their pipeline. I hope this information will help some of you assemble your own repair facility and give others some ideas about the items we need donated to set up other small-arms repair stations. If a Salvadoran Army unit can demonstrate they have an armorer's shed complete with tools and will send someone to the *Maestranza* for training, spare parts will be allocated to them.

Send me the goods and I'll deliver them in person.

Peter G. Kokalis  
Military Small Arms Editor  
c/o SOF Magazine

### USING THEIR HEADS...

The Irish Army is trying something new. Instead of the old British M1944 helmet which has been in use for the past 18 years, the Irish are adopting a new ballistic helmet of Israeli design.

The new headgear weighs 1.46kg and will stop an object with an impact velocity of 473 meters per second. The precise quantity of helmets ordered has not been released, but it will probably not be enough to equip the entire Irish Army. The helmet has been issued to the new Irish 57th Infantry Battalion which is preparing to relieve the 56th Battalion as part of the UN peace-keeping force in Lebanon. Hopefully, the Moslems won't get confused and start shooting at what they think is a new Israeli invasion.

### GOLDEN BREW...

If you're a fan of foamy Singha Beer from your service in Thailand, don't expect to guzzle a gallon or so for old time's sake on your next trip to Cambodia. The continuing Vietnamese occupation has put the beer that made Bangkok famous out of reach for all but the filthy rich.

SOFer Alan Dawson tells us that a Western correspondent recently discovered that Thai Singha beer can't be had for love nor money in Cambodia. The journalist didn't offer love for a cold brew, but he did break out his wallet. It did no good.

Stopping to quench his thirst in a

town near the Khmer Rouge haunt of Battambang, he offered everything up to, and including, real U.S. dollars for a Singha.

"It isn't for sale for money." The publican was adamant. "No *riels*, no *piasters*, no *baht*, no dollars. I sell Singha only for gold."

### OPEN MOUTH, INSERT FOOT...

Politicians who shoot from the lip can get in trouble over the most unlikely topics. A recent example is New York Governor Mario Cuomo, who drew fire from gun owners everywhere when he was discussing — of all things — a mandatory seat belt law. After Cuomo signed a bill requiring the use of seat belts on New York roads, his office received about 5,000 letters, 99 percent of them criticizing the governor for breaching personal freedom in the Empire State. In a follow-up interview on the controversial seat belt law, Gov. Cuomo acknowledged to a *Los Angeles Times* reporter that most writers "were offended." Not knowing enough to quit while he was ahead, the reporter said Cuomo then smiled and remarked that the most defiant opponents to the new law were "NRA hunters who drink beer, don't vote and lie to their wives about where they were all weekend."

Not a shrewd political statement, Mario. The Coalition of New York State Sportsmen and the National Rifle Association's Institute for Legislative Action immediately called a press conference at the Big Apple's World Trade Center. Cuomo was denounced for his "most unforgivable and callous prejudice against those who choose to own guns and to hunt," while his remark was characterized as "unjustified and intolerable."

In a personal letter to Cuomo, J. Warren Cassidy, Executive Director for the NRA's Institute for Legal Action, said the governor's *faux pas* "was a grave insult to NRA members everywhere, particularly to the more than 200,000 strong who reside in your own state. . . . Your scurrilous remarks about these decent, law-abiding citizens displays a gross ignorance of your constituents. . . . Our memories are long . . . much longer than yours appear to be. We will remember your words . . . You will see for yourself whether or not NRA members vote." ❖

# FULL AUTO

Continued from page 20

General Purpose Machine Gun on 30 January 1957. The vast majority of the total number of M60s produced (775,000 to 800,000) were manufactured by the Maremont Corporation, Saco, Maine. To their credit, Maremont always provided what the MilSpecs demanded and could never be faulted for lack of quality control.

The gun is bad enough but the tripod is worse. With assistance from the Ballistic Research Laboratories at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Bridge Tool & Die Works developed a tripod mount for the M60 designated as the T178E2. Fabricated mostly from aluminum, it was, at 25 lbs., relatively lightweight.

A "soft-recoil" type, the tripod was designed to allow the gun to recoil against springs to reduce shock and upsetting momentum transmitted to the platform during firing. The Germans used soft-mounts when the MG 34/42 series guns were employed in the sustained-fire role. Their mounts were heavy and bulky, but incorporated telescopic sights. But the command height (distance from the ground to the center line of the barrel) was so great that the gunner was dangerously exposed when firing the weapon, unless located behind fairly high cover. The M60 tripod addressed this problem by providing an adjustable command height with a minimum of 12 inches. The gun was retained only at the pintle position and all traversing and elevation controls were located at this point.

It was type-classified as the M91 tripod mount. U.S. Army TM9-1005-224-12, dated March 1959 is entitled, "OPERATION AND ORGANIZATIONAL MAINTENANCE 7.62-MM MACHINE GUN M60 AND 7.62-MM MACHINE GUN MOUNT M91." Page 3 carries a large illustration of the M60 mounted on the M91 tripod. However, the M91 tripod was never issued.

A small article in the January 1959 issue of The Army Reservist stated that when development of the M60 and M91 commenced there had been a requirement "for a general purpose machine gun and mount that would satisfy the needs of both the Heavy Weapons Company and the Rifle Platoon." The article goes on to say that this resulted in a tripod which was "heavier than the gun, was difficult to place in position, operate and maintain. Reorganization under ROCID [Reorganization of the Current Infantry Division] eliminated the requirement for the M91 Mount."

Since a requirement still existed at the platoon level for a tripod to serve for both offensive and defensive operations, the United States Army Infantry School recommended that the M2 tripod (used with the Browning M1919A4/6 light machine guns) be adopted as an interim mount for the M60. Adapters were added to the pintle and T&E mechanism which increased the total weight to 17.7 lbs. A new pintle was eventually designed and the tripod type-classified as the M122.

What does all this bureaucratic bunkum mean? What really happened? During endurance testing at Aberdeen Proving Ground, the M91 tripod literally self-destructed. The M2 tripod is not adjustable for command height (14 inches with the M60), requires the gun to be attached in two places, is not a soft-mount and necessitated a change from the excellent canvas and rubberized 100-rd. belt pouches to the insubstantial T4 cotton bandoleer. It was only selected in desperation at the last moment as a

temporary solution. No other tripod was ever designed for the M60.

It's just as well. There's not much use for a general purpose machine gun to fire either from defilade or lay continuous fire down fixed lines on an MLR (main line of resistance) or infiltration point. You need a water-cooled gun for that. As long as there was ammunition and coolant the Browning M1917A1 could consume 36,000 rounds and 7.5 gallons of water per hour. No GPMG is capable of that kind of firepower.

The M60 was 10 long years and millions of dollars in the making. It's too bad we didn't get a weapon worth all that time and money. It went with us to Vietnam where its many serious deficiencies became apparent. Unfortunately, it is still used in combat by many of our allies, including El Salvador. For want of a quarter-inch, we might have had something on a par with the MG 42. ☒

## DE-BRIEF

Continued from page 2

tion efforts, the magazine picks up the costs of shipping and distribution.

Nicaragua's Freedom Fighters — whose need is greater than El Salvador's military because of the cutoff of U.S. government funding — have received slightly more of the used military gear donated to SOF's special fund, about 16,000 pounds. In addition, SOF training teams have visited the northern and southern fronts in Nicaragua's civil war, providing instruction on indirect-fire weapons and field-expedient methods for anti-helo operations. One course included the donation and delivery of specialized equipment by staffers along with an SOF-produced and published training manual aimed specifically at bringing down an Mi-24 Hind helicopter, supplied to Nicaragua by the Soviets.

Probably one of *Soldier of Fortune's* most well-known — and controversial — acts to help Nicaraguan Freedom Fighters was my decision to reprint and deliver to anti-Sandinista rebels copies of the CIA's manual on guerrilla warfare. And then SOF offered its reward of \$100,000 for a Hind pilot, trainer or crew member to defect with a working model of the helicopter. I've increased that reward to \$1 million.

### POWs/MIAs

Since March 1981, and continuing indefinitely into the future until all questions are resolved, *Soldier of Fortune* has infiltrated staffers across communist borders and spent over \$300,000 to investigate reported sightings of U.S. military personnel captured or MIA in Southeast Asia (See "Liberty

City," page 66.) An indirect benefit of these efforts was one of the first confirmed samples of the Soviet chemical warfare agent "Yellow Rain" brought out of Laos by SOF.

### REFUGEE ASSISTANCE PROJECTS

Medical personnel sponsored by *Soldier of Fortune* have treated thousands of civilian refugees and military personnel who might otherwise have received inadequate care — or none at all — in war-ravaged Southeast Asia, Central America and Afghanistan. The magazine and its ancillary services have assisted in the procurement, shipping and distribution of medical supplies and equipment conservatively valued at \$4.5 million.

### MISCELLANEOUS PSY OPS

The \$1 million reward for a defecting Hind helo pilot/crew from Nicaragua to defect is not SOF's only effort of this kind. A reward of \$10,000 in gold still stands for any person offering information leading to the live return of Idi Amin to Uganda to stand trial for numerous crimes against his own people. Another outstanding reward is for \$100,000 U.S. to the first ComBloc pilot who defects with a working aircraft armed with chemical or biological weapons.

### THANKS, READERS

In celebrating our 10th anniversary, *Soldier of Fortune* and I thank our readers and advertisers. It would be impossible for the staff to "go and do" without your loyal support, which has helped the causes of freedom in far, forgotten corners of the earth.

SOF would like to have done more: More to help the Karens fight for independence from the oppressive Marxist regime in Burma. More training and assistance is desperately needed by the Freedom Fighters of Afghanistan and Central America, by the anti-communist movements of Angola, Mozambique and Ethiopia, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. The need was great when SOF printed its first issue and the need is greater now. Our 10th anniversary observance — inasmuch as it should be shared by all of you who made it possible — should be an occasion for all of us who believe in freedom and believe it is worth the fight to rededicate ourselves to the many causes and redouble our efforts. With such a common resolve, who but God knows what good can be done in the next decade.

— Robert K. Brown

## SOF PROFILES RKB

Continued from page 73

tial profit-makers. Through his acquaintance with Gen. Alberto Bayo, he became familiar with Bayo's primer on guerrilla warfare. In 1960, he

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obtained a copy. Over the next couple of years, Brown had it translated into English and wrote an introduction for "150 Questions for a Guerrilla." He couldn't find a publisher to accept it, although he was convinced of its marketing potential. Typical of Brown, he decided that if someone else wouldn't do what he wanted, he'd do it himself.

So Brown and a friend named Bill Jones got together to form Panther Publications in 1963. Brown had the company's first book to publish and Jones had \$400. One of its first headquarters was in a drafty mining cabin rented for \$15 a month in Wall Street, an old ghost town west of Boulder. Brown remembers many days at work when it was well into the afternoon before it was warm enough to take off his gloves.

After an initial success with Bayo's book — sans any royalty payments to the author ("Screw that old commie bastard and his royalties.") — Panther began reprinting and selling Army field manuals and other available military publications about guerrilla warfare and other lurid subjects. While his company struggled on the brink of bankruptcy for 10 years, Brown used meager profits to commute and keep himself on the edge of the action.

Reserve training interrupted his post-graduate studies in 1964 and Brown found himself back in uniform. After completing the Infantry Advanced Course and Airborne School at Fort Benning, Brown returned to Miami to keep tabs on the soldier of fortune set. He decided to link up with an operation aimed at spiting refugees out of Cuba. South Florida at that time abounded in conspiracies for a Bay-of-Pigs-style invasion of Cuba.

The Coast Guard routinely stopped and detained boats cruising off the coast and carrying enough fuel to reach Cuba. Brown and two *gringo* friends thought they could avoid the situation by taking a beat-up cabin cruiser to Key Largo, where they would rendezvous with Cubans who were bringing a cargo of fuel and weapons down from Miami in a car.

Hanging out and drinking in a Key Largo bar which served as the set for many scenes in the Humphrey Bogart film of the same name, Brown and his friends waited for the Cuban connection. Finally Brown took a walk and spotted a parked car occupied by a Cuban he supposed might be their contact. Brown walked up, jerked open the car door and asked, "Do you have the guns?" The guy inside the car was interrupted in feverish jerking of something besides a car door. Brown slammed the door and walked away in disgust.

"I took it as a sign," he says. "I backed out right then. The Cubans finally showed up and they all took off for Havana. Their boat broke down and if it hadn't been for two ponchos I gave them, which they jury-rigged as sails, they might never have gotten back."

By 1965, Vietnam was beginning to look like a lucrative endeavor for adventurers, even if most of them were wearing uniforms. Brown decided that Southeast Asia should be his next AO. He got a lead on a job with the U.S. Agency for International Development while he was at Fort Bragg for reserve training in the Special Forces Officer Course. His USAID contact in Washington put him in touch with Sam Simpson, the USAID recruiter for Vietnam. Their discussions led to a State Department-paid trip from Denver to D.C., where Brown sat still long enough for interviews and tests in January 1966.

After he returned to Boulder, Brown got a call from Simpson saying the chances were good for a job. They discussed a three-year contract at \$15,000 per year, with an additional 25-percent hardship duty allowance. Brown was notified on



7 April 1966 that he had the job pending approval of his security clearance. A week later he was advised that "too many applicants with superior qualifications preclude your selection." Brown remains certain that his Cuba activities were to blame for his failure to get the USAID position.

Still determined to go to Vietnam, Brown requested Army active-duty status. He was still struggling to keep the ailing Panther Publications afloat while researching and writing a book documenting some 30 separate covert CIA operations in southern Florida aimed at toppling Castro. In his yet-unpublished manuscript, Brown applauds the CIA's goals but voices outrage over CIA ineptitude in achieving them.

While waiting for word on his request to get back into uniform, he returned to Miami in November 1966 and joined up as a "peripheral observer" with a group of Haitians, Cubans and Americans attempting to overthrow the right-wing dictatorship in Haiti. It was a failure and some of his merc buddies wound up in legal trouble, but

In early 1967, Brown and other Miami buddies planned to hijack a Cuban fishing boat in order to exchange the boat and crewmen for two anti-Castro Cubans who had been jailed in Havana. The mission was subsequently aborted but that didn't bother Brown. He'd been accepted for active service.

The Army officially recalled Brown as a captain on 9 December 1967. He was issued orders for Fort Bragg, where he entered training for the 5th Special Forces Group. Upon graduation, he was assigned to the 5th Group's G-2 staff with orders pending for Vietnam.

"I had planned on saying nothing about my suspected problem with my security clearance," Brown recalls. "I knew it took six months to complete an investigation and figured if they wanted to send me home after six months, then screw 'em. But I did feel like I should inform my CO of my controversial background since I was assigned to such a sensitive position. When they yanked my file, I was told I could not remain in SF."

**Brown, standing third from left with Ruger Mini-14 and Craig Nunn, standing far right with Remington 870 after Rhodesian fire fight, March 1980. SOF had linked up with unit of RAR with U.S., Belgian and British foreign volunteers.**

Another element of mystery was added when Brown — who presumed he was being punished for some past indiscretion — was offered any school or post he wished.

"I told them that all I wanted was to go to Vietnam," he recalls. Instead, he was assigned to the G-3 staff of Bragg's XVIII Airborne Corps and given command of the Advanced Marksmanship Training Unit.

By 7 May 1968, bad-boy Brown had managed to win a letter of commendation from Lieutenant General Robert H. York, then commanding general of the XVIII Airborne Corps. "It was most gratifying to learn that [Brown's] team won 33 of a possible 56 awards during competition at Camp Blanding, Fla., on 30-31 March 1968," the citation said.

Brown arrived in Vietnam before 1968 ended and was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 18th Regiment of the 1st Infantry Division. Despite the problems with his security clearance that got him kicked out of Special Forces only months before, the unit decided he should serve as their new battalion intelligence officer. Out of curiosity, Capt. Robert K. Brown, S-2, periodically checked with the Brigade Two-Shop regarding his clearance. He was repeatedly told he had an "interim clearance." A more permanent clearance remained in limbo throughout Brown's 14 months in-country.

Following the 1968 Tet Offensive, many regular U.S. Army battalions were positioned in a static defensive AO on the tactical avenues of approach around Saigon. In this tactical scenario, Brown's task of providing his CO with advice on weather, terrain and the enemy wasn't exactly exciting. He worked his bolt to make contact with the district

CIA Phoenix Program and offered whatever help he could provide. This help was in the simple form of getting his battalion CO to provide a company of troops to assist the local Phoenix agents in ambushing large columns of Viet Cong.

Once again Brown had emerged from a fall into the latrine smelling like a rose. He won kudos for doing work that his assignment indicated he officially should not be doing.

On 16 January 1969, James K. Damron, the CIA's province coordinator for the project, wrote Brown a letter of appreciation which cited "outstanding contribution to the Phoenix Program in Gia Dinh Province." That citation lauded Brown for "planning and executing many successful operations against the Viet Cong in Thu Duc" and an attitude and performance which "has gained you respect and admiration from personnel associated with the Phoenix Program."

That was nice, but Brown still wanted to serve with Special Forces. He used the CIA commendation as a lever to gain an interview with an old acquaintance and fellow Coloradan, Lieutenant Colonel John Paul Vann, a retiree who was then in Vietnam working for the State Department. Brown told Vann he was "tired of being a leg" and wanted to get back in SF. Vann wrote a friend of his, Colonel Harold R. Aaron, who happened to be CO of the 5th SFG, and within a week Brown had orders to take over as CO of team A-334 at Tong Le Chon. Vann wrote Aaron that Brown "is of particular interest. . . . He is one of our leading experts on counterinsurgency. . . . Not covered in [Brown's] resumé was a period of activity related to the Cuban affair which was rather interesting."

Bob still gets angry when he talks about his six months as an A-Team leader. He is convinced that his ARVN counterpart in the camp, a Captain Long, and the ARVN B-Team CO, Major Long (no relation) were conspiring with the Viet Cong and American soldiers to profiteer on the black market. Brown determined that his regular ration shipments for Montagnard Strikers were 10 percent short of specifications. And Capt. Long was selling the supplemental rations at highly inflated prices. But Brown stopped the supplemental shipments, thereby "breaking Long's rice bowl," or derailing the Vietnamese officer's scam.

Refusing to stand still for the rip-off, Brown complained to everyone in the chain of command who would listen. It reflected on his officer's efficiency reports, but Brown credits the experience as valuable in later life when he was struggling against similar odds to keep SOF going.

"Capt. Brown had trouble establishing rapport and an effective working relationship with his [ARVN] counterpart, the Vietnamese Special Forces Camp Commander," wrote Lieutenant Colonel Charles B. Cox. "As he explained to me, he did not trust the camp commander and was convinced that he was disloyal and involved in graft. Capt. Brown was counseled on the necessity for maintaining good working relations with his counterpart, but not much progress was made."

That's not the way Brown sees it. He considers it progress that Capt. Long was later identified as a Viet Cong collaborator and shot. Before that happened the turncoat ARVN officer managed to involve Brown in an errand that led to an ambush and 14 frag wounds from an exploding 82mm mortar round. Brown recalls that he woke from surgery and hobbled into his C-Team leader's office yelling about his in-country counterpart being a VC. Nothing was done until Capt. Long tipped his hand.

Completing his Vietnam tour as a political warfare officer in Nha Trang, Brown returned to the U.S. to find himself ejected a second time from

Continued on page 155

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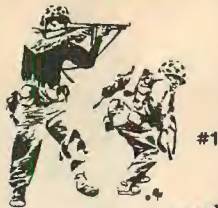
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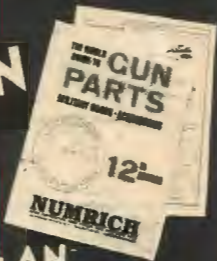
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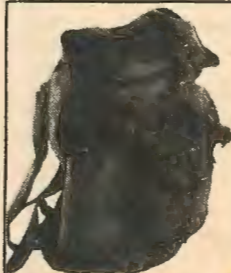
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## SOF PROFILES RKB

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Special Forces. He was assigned as CO of an Army Reserve Basic Training Company at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., and that led to his eventual release from active duty on 30 April 1970, exactly five years to the day before Saigon and all of South Vietnam fell to the communists. He remained active in the Army Reserve and eventually retired as a lieutenant colonel in January 1985.

Brown returned to Boulder and found his pet Panther Publications in trouble. Brown bought out Bill Jones' interest in Panther Publications for \$1,000. He then sold half-interest in the fledgling publishing company for \$5,000 to an old Florida buddy, Peder Lund, who had also been a Special Forces team leader in Vietnam. Brown and Lund renamed the company Paladin Press and continued to reprint hard-to-get military manuals.

For the next four years Brown supplemented his income with odd jobs, including construction laborer, private investigator and instructor at the Boulder Athletic Club, where he spent some nights sleeping on the massage table. Paladin Press, like Brown, was scraping by on a thin margin. He had completed his Master's degree, done more work on his CIA-Cuba book and even contemplated an academic career. His application for a Ph.D. program in Boulder was voted down 3-2 by the CU staff. Brown says one professor later told him the rejection was based on his outspoken, anti-communist, conservative political views.

The man who'd spray-painted "Viva Castro" on the chemistry building had come full circle. It was time to strike off in a new direction.

In 1974, Brown made Lund a buy-or-sell offer for Paladin Press. Lund bought Brown's interest for \$15,000. Hoping to finish his book on the CIA and make a side-trip to an interesting little hassle in a place called Rhodesia, Brown accepted the cash and hit the road, headed for Spain.

In Madrid, Brown hooked up with Mike Acoca, a former *LIFE* magazine writer then reporting for *Newsweek*. Acoca and Brown were friends from Cuba days and they planned to collaborate on Brown's book. True to what was becoming fate for Brown, Lisbon erupted into civil violence on 24 April 1974, and Acoca had to go cover it. Brown tagged along for a couple of weeks, but grew tired of the street marches and random shooting. He took off for Rhodesia and a more intriguing situation.

Prior to leaving the U.S., Brown had tried to sell the idea for a story on mercenaries in Rhodesia to America's three most prominent men's adventure magazines: *True*, *Argosy* and *Saga*. Two turned him down and the other never answered Brown's query. He decided he could free-lance the story when it was complete. While in Rhodesia, an American merc told Brown of several compatriots who were joining the Sultan of Oman to suppress a leftist insurgency. Brown declined an invitation to join them, but kept the information on the Sultan of Oman's recruitment for future reference.

Once back in Colorado, Brown immediately set out to do two things. One, he wanted to defray expenses from his trip, so he again tried to sell his piece on U.S. soldiers of fortune in Rhodesia. One editor told Brown "we're trying to get away from that hairy-chested stuff."

"Hell," said Brown, recalling the incident on the 10th Anniversary of *Soldier of Fortune*, "I thought hairy-chested was the name of the game for this type of magazine." *True* reconsidered and paid Brown \$750 for his article, but the

magazine went bankrupt before his story was published.

Brown's other priority on returning to Boulder was to capitalize on the recruiting of mercs for service to the Sultan of Oman. Bob wrote the Omani Defense Minister and soon received a 40-page information packet that included terms of employment. He mimeographed the information and began advertising the recruitment packet in *Shotgun News* and similar publications. Brown got a respectable response, he said, until *Newsweek* reprinted his ad as part of a report on the recruiting of mercs in the U.S. The postal floodgates opened and Brown eventually made a tidy \$5,000 profit.

Scores of rumors circulate every year that Bob Brown is in charge of this or that for recruiting mercenaries. Some of this wild speculation even gets into print. But the Sultan of Oman ad was one of only two times in his career when he has ever been investigated for violation of the Neutrality Act. Joel Lisker, now staff director for the Senate Subcommittee on Security and Terrorism, conducted an investigation of Brown after the Oman ads were published. He concluded that all Brown was doing was selling information. "It just looked like a way to make a quick buck to me," Lisker said.

The response to that advertisement and the financial collapse of the leading men's adventure magazines in the early 1970s convinced Brown there was a void in the publishing marketplace that needed to be filled. He was also convinced there was a crying need for someone to herald the sacrifice and professionalism of America's returning Vietnam Veterans.

A linchpin in the survival of *Soldier of Fortune* was that Brown knew the Vietnam Veterans never received due recognition upon their return. Brown's unbending position remains that Vietnam provided just as many heroes as did both world wars and Korea. "But how many Sergeant York or Audie Murphy stories did the news media give the U.S. public from Vietnam?" asked Brown. "None. My magazine has corrected that."

In late 1974, using his \$5,000 from the Oman ad and the \$750 from *True*, Brown began putting together a promotional brochure touting the concept of a magazine about mercenaries and professional adventurers to be called *Soldier of Fortune*. He obtained additional funds from Colonel Alex McColl, another Army reservist who is SOF's Director of Special Projects, and Don McLean. Brown bought out their interests after a year.

He bought a mailing list from a gun magazine, sent out the promotional brochures in February 1975 and waited. He had already decided he needed a \$36,000 budget to keep the magazine afloat for one year and that he'd have to make that on the first issue. More than 4,000 Americans — mostly Vietnam Veterans — sent him \$8 for a one-year subscription to Brown's startling new magazine. Ad revenues put Brown over the top of his bottom budget line, but he was taking no chances on the possibility of a last-minute fold. For two months he rode around with subscription checks in a cigar box under the front seat of his GTO. He figured it would just be easier to simply mail the uncashed checks back if his heretical venture went belly-up.

The first issue of SOF — which carried Brown's story on U.S. mercs in Rhodesia and a now-famous, grisly photograph of a terrorist victim with the top of his head shot off — was mailed to subscribers in July 1975.

Brown looked up at me from the couch in his office, his eyes weary and looking as tired as I've ever seen him. "What else do you want to know? All the rest is history." ✖

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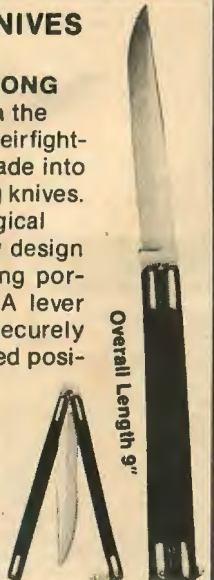
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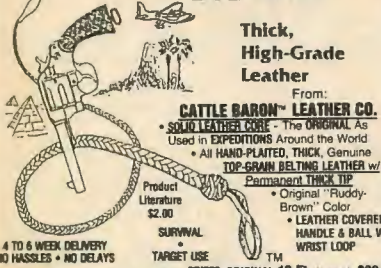
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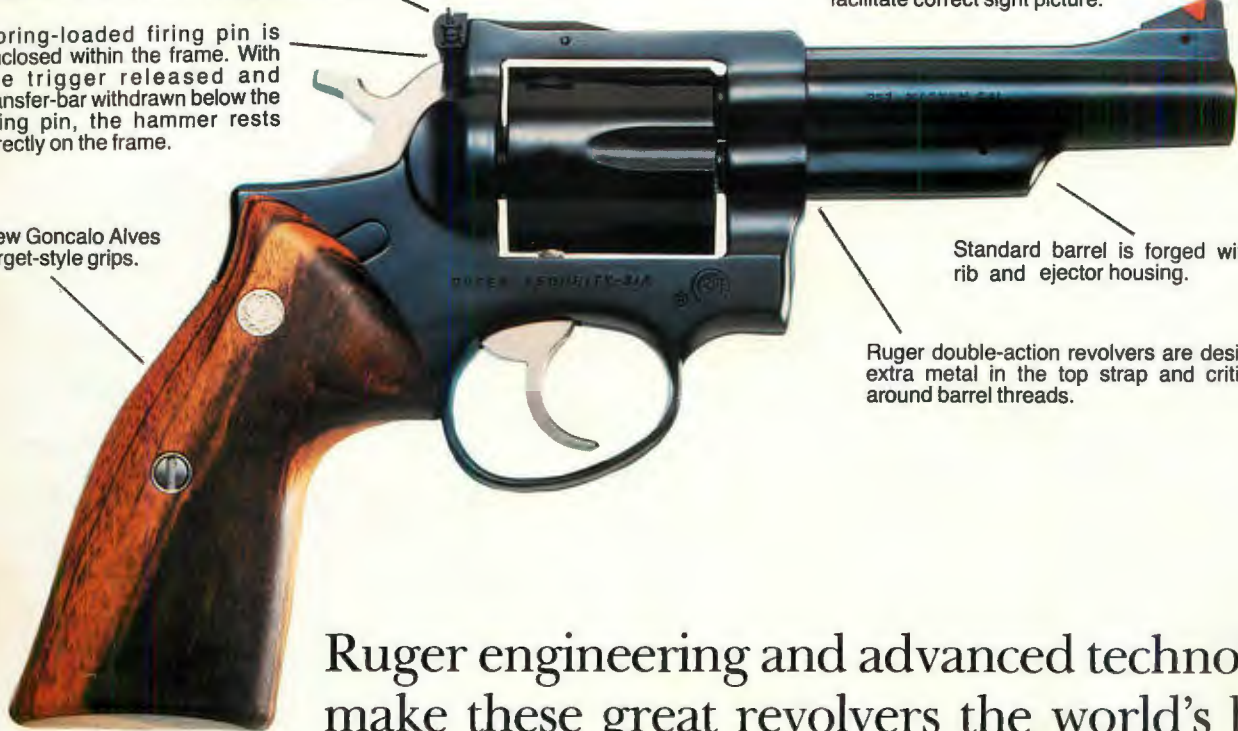
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