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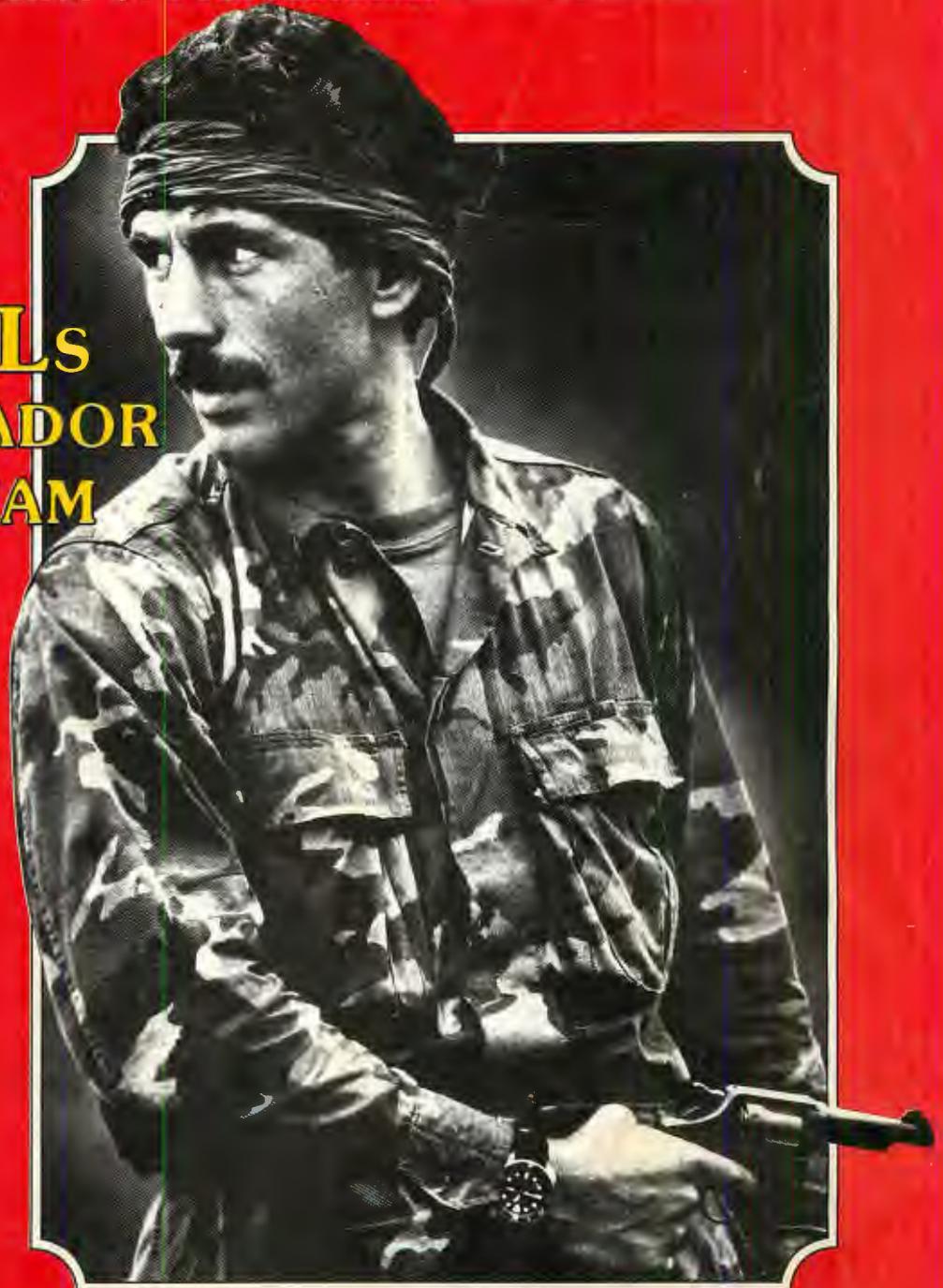
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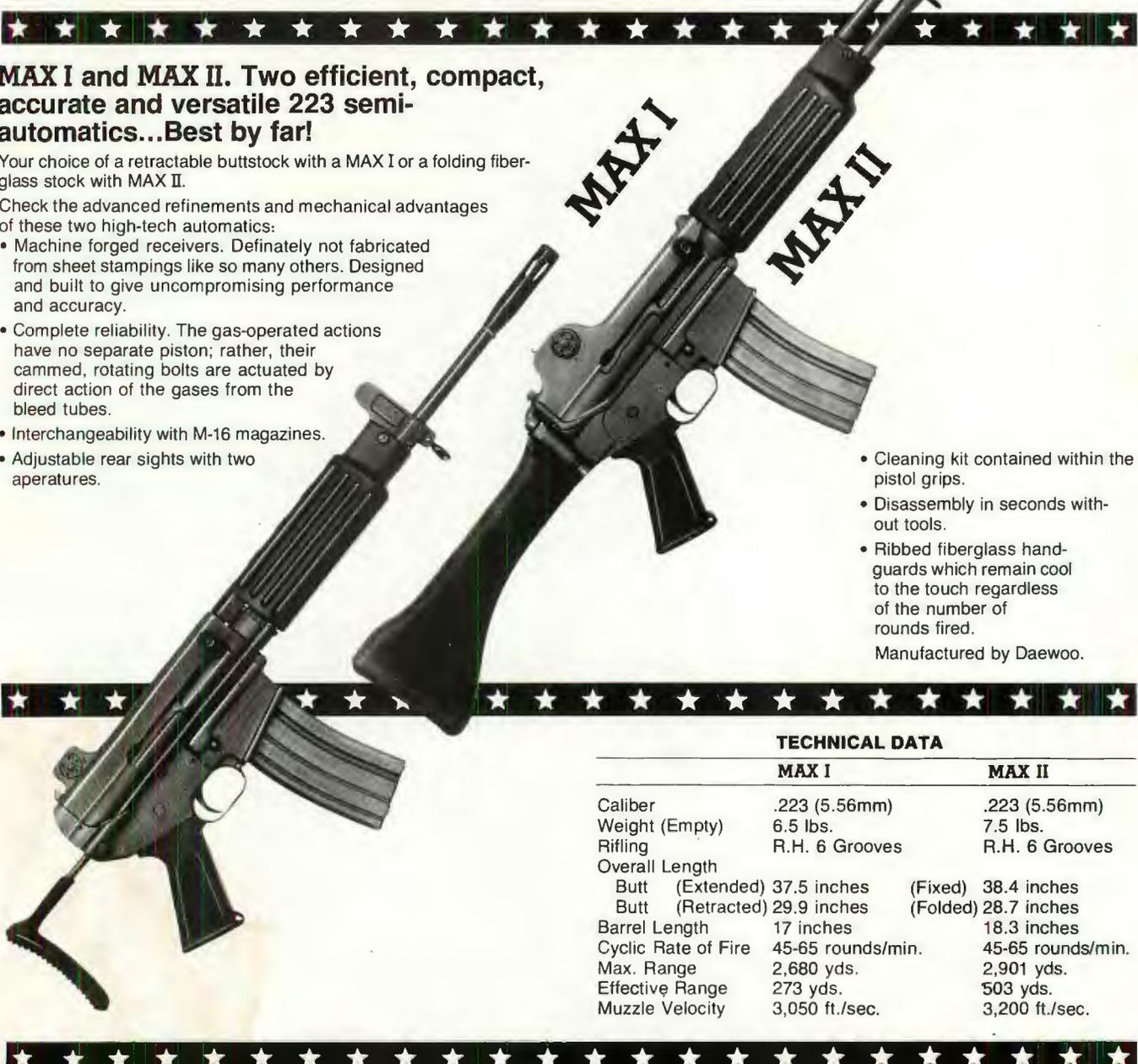
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NINJA HANDS OF DEATH

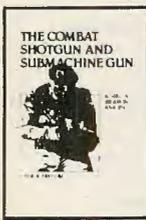
by Ashida Kim

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by Duncan Long

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COMMAND GUIDANCE

by Robert K. Brown

EAGLE Magazine editor, SF veteran and former SOF combat reporter Jim Morris probably said it best: "The only thing you can learn to be in a 10-day mercenary school is a corpse."

For two months we've been flooded by calls and letters asking for the scoop on merc schools. That's natural. Since SOF has been the source for private-sector military news for the last 10 years, who else would you call? At any rate . . . journalists, readers, school-teachers, lawyers and all manner of would-be soldiers have been clogging our mailboxes and phone lines ever since so-called mercenary schools came back into the news.

First, Civilian Military Assistance got linked with Frank Camper's school. Then an Air India plane dropped into the Atlantic and the FBI was looking for a couple of Sikhs they suspected of bombing the plane. Camper figured he was on a roll, and proudly proclaimed the turbaned thugs had attended his school, too. Meanwhile, back here in Colorado, the ever-strident Democratic congresswoman Patricia Schroeder was calling for the little merc junior colleges to be closed. Obviously they were a threat to the civilized world.

Well, since I'm the senior statesman of the popular paramilitary business in the United States, I figure it's time for me to set the record straight.

First, the last place you can expect to see a professional soldier — national service or private contract — is at a self-styled mercenary school. We don't know a single working merc, 20-year Marine, sergeant in the Foreign Legion or

American vet of the Rhodesian Army who ever darkened the mess-line of one of these paramilitary McDonald's.

But don't tar all private training schools with the same brush. Cooper's Gunsite, as an example, is legendary. His security is tight, he *invented* modern, combat-style shooting competition, and he collects the rewards of such a high reputation by providing supplementary weapons training for many pros who have the need to know. Other academies — local and national — give refresher courses and additional training for both law-enforcement and military personnel. Such responsible trainers provide fresh ideas and new techniques for incorporation into more traditional training schedules of police and military.



As far as the Sikhs go, they're good and bad, like the adherents to any faith. But a quick perusal of any text on their religion will show they study to be warrior/saints. The outward sign of this

effort is a religious obligation to carry a weapon at all times, even if it's just a little iron sword bound in the turban. Practice of arms is historically a part of their religion, and good Sikhs can be found in private weapons classes all over America . . . just like good members of the National Rifle Association. That's normal . . . and it's protected by the Bill of Rights.

But Camper's public claim that his school trains terrorists (alleged or otherwise) is nothing but selfish, short-sighted, destructive grandstanding. His school doesn't take the time or possess the facilities to

Continued on page 94

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COVER: U.S. Navy SEALs earned two decades of rep as some of the world's toughest and most flexible warriors, and unusual dress and weapons contribute to their mystique. Read their past and present beginning on p. 52 and check up on the progress of some of their best students, the Salvadoran Naval Commandos, in SOF's report beginning on p. 46. Photo: Peter D. Sundberg

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STAND UP, BE COUNTED...

In these days of special interest groups which fill political warchests to curry favor on Capitol Hill, it is increasingly important that individual voters make themselves heard as individuals — not just at the polls, but all year long. Every day our Congress takes up a multitude of topics ranging from Central America to Afghanistan to what kinds of weapons and ammunition you can keep in your own home. One way to keep abreast of the confusing list of issues is to read a good newspaper every day. Even if you get a stilted version, at least you'll be aware of the issue itself. Then call your elected representatives in Congress and tell them what you think. Democracy only works for those who participate in it. Here's how.

Write your congressman, addressing him or her by name (U.S. Rep. John Doe), and send it to: U.S. Capitol, Washington, D.C. 20515. The address for the United States Senate is the same, except the Zip Code is 20510. Or call directly by dialing the U.S. Capitol switchboard, (202)224-3121, and asking for the office by name. Tell the receptionist in that office that you'd like to talk with a staff person handling the issue you are interested in. Then tell that staff person what you think, who you are and how they can get back in touch with you. Organized telephone blitzes are particularly effective, as they keep staff attention focused on a single issue throughout the work day. Good luck.

BULLETIN BOARD



MAJ. NICHOLSON MEMORIAL FUND...

Friends grieved and outraged over the murder of U.S. Army Major Arthur D. Nicholson in Berlin have banded together to preserve his memory by helping his surviving family. Nicholson was shot to death by a Soviet guard earlier this year while performing authorized duties in an unrestricted military zone of Berlin, where Nicholson was attached to the nearby U.S. Military Liaison Mission. The MLM CO, Col. Roland Lajoie, was injured in a similar incident when his jeep was deliberately rammed by a Soviet truck. Driving the U.S. vehicle on both occasions was staff Sgt. Jesse Schatz. Although tough talk was exchanged between President Reagan and Soviet leaders over Nicholson's murder, it was quickly overshadowed by negotiations between the two superpowers to set up nuclear arms control talks. The Major Arthur D. Nicholson Memorial Fund was established to help care for his widow and daughter in the coming years. Those interested in contributing should send their donations to one of two addresses: **The Major Arthur D. Nicholson Memorial Fund, Dept. SOF, 11301 Cromwell Court, Woodbridge, VA 22192. Overseas contributions should be sent to: The Major Arthur D. Nicholson Memorial Fund, Dept. SOF, U.S. Military Liaison Mission, APO New York 09742.**



William B. Guthrie, SOF's new executive editor.

SOF CHANGES THE GUARD...

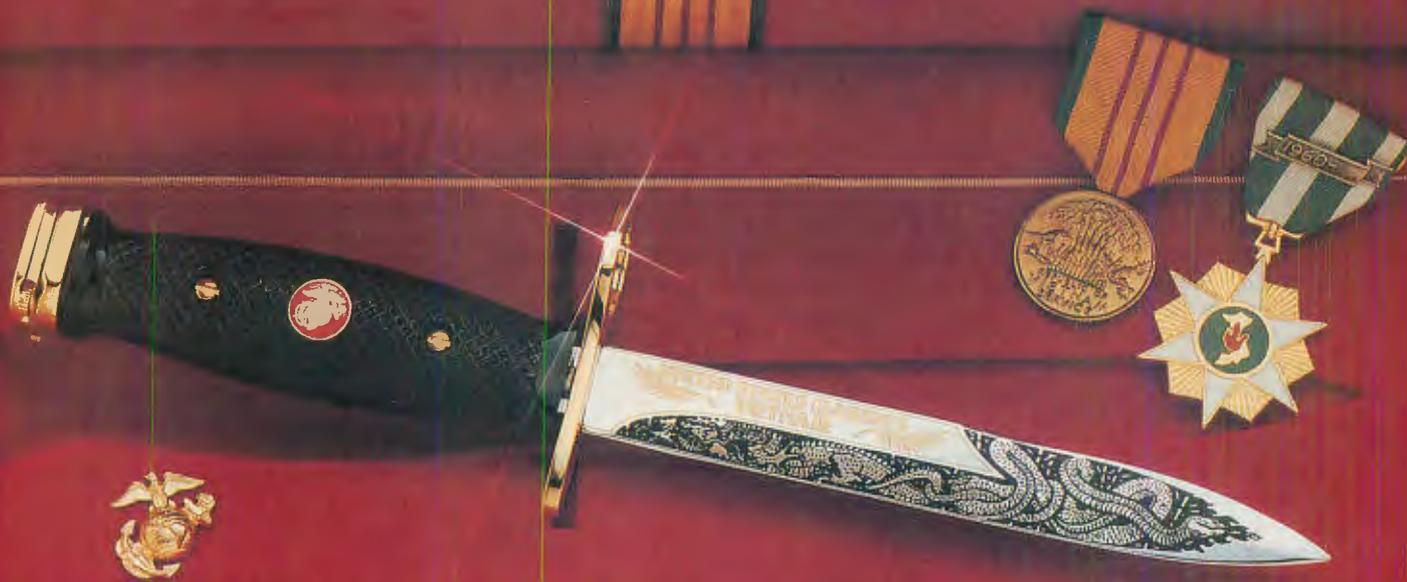
It's official. No sooner had Captain Dale A. Dye, USMC (Ret.), marched *Soldier of Fortune* through its most successful year than he took off for bigger and better things — in Hollywood. Dye's professional acumen and military savvy (not to mention his drill instructor persona during convention pugil stick competition) will be sorely missed.

The Skipper came to SOF in June 1984 after retiring from 22 years in service. After a year — and with his first novel about to be published by Avon (*Run Between the Raindrops*) — Dye recognized an unfilled need in the film industry and decided to launch his own business, Warriors, Inc. Warriors offers professional technical advisers for films involving military personnel or equipment, trains actors in military know-how and provides technical and period research. In addition, Dye is trying his hand at script treatments and screenwriting.

Coming up through SOF's ranks to take over the helm from Dye is William B. Guthrie, who started at the magazine as a proofreader, then served as assistant editor, associate editor and most recently as senior editor before promotion by Publisher Robert K. Brown to SOF's top editorial slot. Dale Andrade will move up from associate editor to take over as senior editor.

VIETNAM WAR BAYONETS OF HONOR

Announcing the world's first limited edition Bayonets. Plated with 24-karat gold and made to full G.I. specifications using original wartime tooling.



Overall length: 11 $\frac{5}{8}$ "



"Dak To, Pleiku, Khe Sanh. A Shau Valley
... Who are the names on the Wall?"

The American Historical Foundation is proud to help draw national attention to the unheralded Americans who fought the Vietnam War and to provide an individual memorial to them, through the world's first limited edition Bayonets, "The Vietnam War Bayonets of Honor."

Four different commemorative Bayonets of Honor are being issued—one each for the Marines, Army, Navy and Air Force. They are available individually or as a complete collection to honor all Americans who served.

This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for Vietnam veterans, their families, those who are proud of the Americans who answered the call to duty and military collectors.

The fact that this is the first limited edition commemorative bayonet ever issued in world history will in itself draw further attention and importance to this issue—especially among collectors. And each time it is displayed and studied, the Vietnam War and those who served will be remembered! These Bayonets are beautiful, yet deadly, symbols of combat that say: "NEVER FORGET!"

A Bayonet Cannot Be Ignored!

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

When you pick up each Bayonet of Honor, you will know you are holding a combat-worthy weapon. Designed in 1963, each is made to full G.I. specifications with a total of 16 parts, including two working spring-loaded releases. And each is tested to fit the M16 Rifle.

We have specially commissioned the Imperial Knife Company to custom make each re-issue Bayonet for this Collection. They are using the same original tooling that they used during the Vietnam War, and each is made in the United States.

Twenty years ago (14 Apr 65)
U.S. Marines land in Vietnam.

However, that's where all similarity ends. An incredible amount of hand work makes each a presentation grade collectible, worthy of this tribute...

- The 6 $\frac{5}{8}$ " blade is heat-treated high carbon steel, polished to a mirror finish and deeply acid etched with a tribute inscription and a jungle scene, designed by Vietnam combat veteran B.J. Weber, with a dragon and serpent, symbolic of warfare in Southeast Asia. The blade is hard flash chromed to assure lasting beauty and gold-gilt and black enamel in-filled for contrast.
- The grips are specially made of highly polished black phenolic, checkered to the authentic G.I. pattern, and inset with a full color cloisonne medallion of the service branch insignia.
- 24-karat gold is thickly plated on the crossguard, two releases, butt, two grip screws and two grip nuts—after they are polished to a mirror finish.
- After the craftsman carefully files, fits and peens together the 16 components that make up this Bayonet, he inspects it in all particulars and tests it for fit on the M16. Then the individual limited edition serial number is engraved on the blade reverse.
- Finally, the numbered Certificate of Authenticity is matched with the Bayonet, ready to deliver to you.

Limited Edition Of 2500

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Yes, I wish to reserve each of the following limited edition Vietnam War Bayonets of Honor with 24-karat gold plating. No shipping charges. Satisfaction guaranteed.

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 Army Air Force
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 - in two equal monthly payments.
 - in full.
- My payment in full is enclosed (\$189 per Bayonet; display case, add \$24).

Name

Address

For Visa, MasterCard or American Express, please send account number, expiration date and signature. Virginia residents add tax.

A LEGACY OF TEARS...

One of the most long-suffering legacies of the Vietnam War is the plight endured by thousands of Amerasian children, the innocent offspring of U.S. servicemen and Vietnamese mothers. Vietnam, like Korea and most Asian cultures, socially shuns children of mixed race, especially if those children are already down and out. The State Department says they are a U.S. responsibility. Vietnam says it is willing to send them to this country. But Vietnam's Amerasian children are the victims of a lot of talk and very little action.

One man is trying to change that. Father Robin Connors of the Saint Francis Church in Spartanburg, S.C., has established the Queen of Peace Home to sponsor Amerasian children from Vietnam. Donations are tax deductible. More information is available by writing: **Queen of Peace Home, Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 18372, Spartanburg, S.C. 29318.**

SPECIAL COMMENDATION...

SOFers regularly send boxes of field equipment to the El Salvador/Nicaragua Defense Fund (5721 Arapahoe Ave., Boulder, CO 80303) but John L. Burford has exceeded our expectations. Some \$20,000 of spare parts for helicopters arrived at the SOF warehouse, and they have since been trans-shipped to the grateful Salvadoran armed forces.

Burford dedicated this conspicuous act of patriotic generosity to "... all the men who served with Co. F (LRRP), 58th Inf. ABN, 101st ABN DIV RVN 1968."

RANDALL BITES THE BULLET...

Admittedly, SOF's Military Small Arms Editor, Peter Kokalis, was a bit incredulous when he heard the news. The Randall LeMay .45 ACP, one of four stainless-steel pistols reviewed by Kokalis in the September issue ("Waterproof Weaponry"), is no longer in production. Despite a reorganization effort last year, the Randall Firearms Company was recently forced to file for bankruptcy. Said Mr. Machinegun: "The firearms industry continues to sail through a sea of turmoil and the collapse of other companies now seems certain. Randall apparently was painted into a corner by the introduction of Colt's stainless-steel version of their 1911A1 Government Model. The Randall will be missed. For one thing, the Colt Series 80 pistols all feature a firing-pin safety mechanism that appeals to none but Colt's product liability lawyers."



GOLD BOUNTY STILL STANDS...

Attention, grocery shoppers in Saudi Arabia! Forget the stamps and coupons. Go for the gold. One SOF reader just saw \$10,000 on the hoof walk past him in a Jiddah grocery store. None other than Idi Amin, accompanied by a few of his large litter of children, was shopping — now get this — the Happy Family Super Market.

Amin still is living quite comfortably in Saudi Arabia, although he remains a very wanted man in Uganda. A reward of \$10,000 in gold for Amin from SOF Publisher Bob Brown still stands. The bounty is offered to anyone who can provide information leading directly to Amin's live capture and return to Uganda to stand trial for numerous crimes against humanity in general and his fellow Ugandans in particular. Happy hunting.



These are the types of martial arts weapons affected by the Kennedy bill.

WHAT NEXT, CONGRESS?...

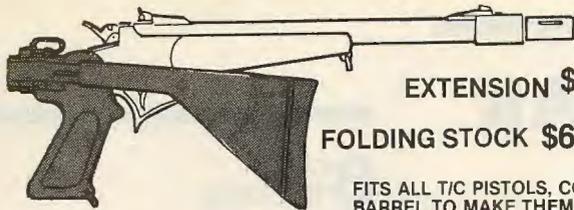
One of the supposed advantages of democracy in the United States is the freedom to say what you think. In so doing everyone can hear the pros and cons on which to base a rational decision. But in matters of weapons legislation, two things are becoming increasingly clear. First, if pro is the opposite of con, then progress must be the antithesis of Congress. Second, some of our elected members in Congress should be seen and not heard.

Take U.S. Sen. Ted Kennedy ... Please.

One of Kennedy's staff members leaked a preliminary draft of a bill known as the Martial Arts Weapons Bill. As Kennedy originally intended the legislation, it would have banned the interstate sale and shipment of tomahawks and Bowie knives. The National Muzzle Loading Rifle Association, which has many members who use tomahawks and Bowie knives in primitive matches, was not happy. Neither was Jack Kelly, a black belt martial arts instructor from South Amherst, Mass., Kennedy's home state. Kelly quickly mailed a throwing star to every member of the U.S. Senate.

Fortunately, more level-headed members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, where Kennedy's bill was referred for review, prevailed on the liberal Democrat to make his bill more reasonable, relatively speaking. The Kennedy Martial Arts Weapons Bill (S. 1363) is now aimed at prohibiting buyers from using the U.S. Postal Service to circumvent state laws banning the sale of three weapons: the throwing star, nunchaku and manriki gusari (an ancient Okinawan weapon consisting of a handle with a weighted, curved blade attached to it by a chain). Senate bill 1363 specifically *excludes* from its jurisdiction knives, swords and "ceremonial and collector weapons."

Continued on page 100



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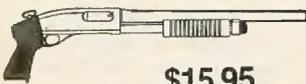


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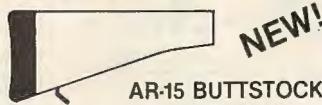


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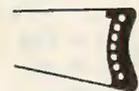
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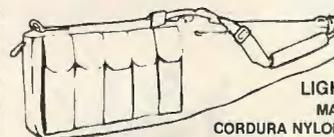


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RATING RAMBO...

Sirs:

I'd like to commend you on "Rambo: First Blood Part II" (June '85 issue). This was a well-made movie and I'm glad to see that your magazine granted it the justice it deserves. The topic of POW/MIAs is one that has concerned me and many of my co-workers (I'm a security policeman, USAF). Though many of us were far too young to serve during the Vietnam War, our hearts and blessings are with the men and women who served.

Paul G. Arnswald
A1C, USAF

Now that you've puffed *Rambo* with a cover story, don't you think you might get around to reviewing books by real veterans of the Vietnam War? I don't know what Stallone did in order to avoid the service, but I do know that Charles Anderson, author of *The Grunts* and *The Rear: Vietnam, the Other War*; Ken Miller, author of *Tiger the Lurp Dog*, and a dozen other poverty-stricken authors who fought in Vietnam deserve some attention.

Jim Dunlap
Ann Arbor,
Michigan

Rambo is a film which admirably works to convince Americans, many of whom are too young to remember, of the worth of the Vietnam War and its warriors. They were crusaders denied communion. Thus it is our hope that a widely viewed film like *Rambo* will work to bring those veterans and their cause back into the hearts of America in a way special-audience books never shall. And we haven't excluded such books; we print as many critiques of veterans' literature as any national magazine. We simply have not had room for all their reviews.



FLAK



THE ISSUE OF TERRORISM...

Sirs:

I would like to take this somber occasion [American civilian hostages held in Beirut this past July] to thank you for excellent reporting in *SOF*. I have been a subscriber since 1976 and find it the most complete way of keeping up with significant military events: the news other media don't publish.

Carey W. Taylor
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

We're saddened and shamed that a handful of hoodlums can dictate terms to us. But that's the kind of foreign policy that results from a culture so devoid of a sense of mission that it can't make hard choices. The questions raised by this are hard, too, and you can read some of the answers in an incoming feature on Iran and the terror network.



BG-15 BLUNDER...

Sirs:

I must say that *SOF* keeps its readers well-informed on a wide area of information. I really enjoyed the July '85 issue, but I did pick up one minor mistake. David Isby's "Soviet BG-15" mentions that the RPG-18 is a copy of the U.S. LAW. In fact, it's not the U.S. M76 LAW but an M72-A2 LAW that is used in today's U.S. Armed Forces.

Michael E. Hair
Sneads Ferry, North Carolina

Sorry about the typo. We're as dedicated to accuracy as anyone and we're thankful for readers like you who help keep us on track.

LEGISLATIVE GUN GRABBING?...

Sirs:

I'd like to call attention to a number of unfair anti-gun bills pending in the California State Legislature. Bill AB 1509 by Assemblyman Art Agnos would limit the ownership of many semiautomatic weapons such as the Ruger Mini-14, HK 91, 93, and 94, and the Colt AR-15. Only those persons whom the Attorney General finds to have a "good" reason for owning one of these firearms could be issued an ownership permit.

Touted as a crime prevention bill, it would only infringe on all the Second Amendment rights of the law-abiding gun owner. Don't let would-be gun grabbers take away your semiauto sporters. Write your congressmen and assemblymen now.

Douglas J. Lovell
Pacific Grove, California

This is an unbelievable law, but — thank God — it appears to be failing; not the least because of NRA lobbying and mail drives. NRA membership is still the best money you can spend to protect your rights.

FONDA FOOTAGE...

Sirs:

Accuracy in Media recently aired "Television's Vietnam: The Real Story," a critique of the PBS 13-part "Vietnam, A Television History." In it Hanoi Jane Fonda was shown dancing and prancing among her commie North Vietnamese hosts — all smiles as she mounted the *active* anti-aircraft piece being used to shoot down American patriots. We haven't seen this film footage since 1972; America's youth have never seen it. And being the darling of the media her recent career successes (and millions) are no surprise.

AIM is to be commended for including this footage. It's a big part of what went wrong in Vietnam. AIM plans to air the critique on cable TV in September and is looking for tax-deductible contributions to fund an aggressive publicity campaign. Contributions should go to: AIM Film Cable TV Project, Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 28390, Washington, DC 20005.

Robert G. Wheaton,
ETR3 USN (Ret.)
San Antonio, Texas

PROFILE OF A FOX?...

Sirs:

I just finished the article on RKB in the August Anniversary issue. Very interesting. But you left out a very important part. Since this guy is such a total fox, is he married? Next time do a centerfold.

J.R. Dailey
Vail, Arizona

Editor/Publisher Brown thanks you for your kind words but informs us he is married to his work. But he does appreciate the fan mail.

REMEMBERING VIET VETS...

Sirs:

I just returned from Washington D.C. and during my stay I took time to visit the Vietnam Memorial. Between this emotional experience, your firm position on the men who fought that war, and *National Geographic* coverage of the memorial, I thought it would be appropriate to write about this experience.

When I visited the memorial, I started to cry. It was somewhat embarrassing because 50-year-old men don't cry in broad daylight and in front of all those people. Right? Wrong! When I looked around, 80 percent of the people were doing the same thing.

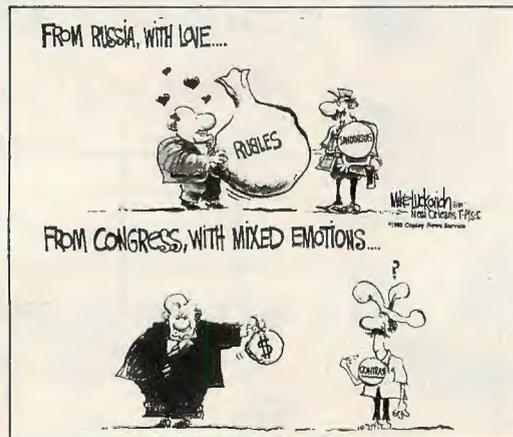
Because there are people like you, the history books will reflect the sacrifices and contributions all these people made on behalf of the people of the United States of America.

Leonard Stefanelli
San Francisco, California

I know there are a lot of Vietnam vets out there that read *Soldier of Fortune* so I am writing to all who served there. I know how you were treated when you got home but I have always respected you. You're a special breed of soldier and I would like to say thanks and welcome home. I am proud of you. I'd love to hear from any Nam Vets, particularly anyone who fought on Hill 861 from January to March '68.

Diedrie Hulshof
6371 Clymer Road
Coloma, Michigan 49038

We must all come to terms with what we lost: lives, limbs, friends, innocence and — for a short time — pride. But it's important to remember that America did fight a hard, dirty war and even though we didn't fight it the right way, we fought for the right reasons. America is only now learning to honor our dedication to the freedom of others during the Vietnam War.



STUDENTS AID AFGHANS...

Sirs:

Please find a donation to the Afghan Freedom Fighters Fund. The money was raised in a class project by students who raised money from the sale of printed shirts. Enclosed is also the silkscreen for your use for sale, donation or distribution to help raise further funds for the Afghans. From the response I have had while wearing the shirt I'd say considerable funds could be raised for the Afghan Freedom Fighters. We earnestly hope so.

Jim Adams
Social Studies Teacher
Borable High School
Roseville, Michigan

We're confident that the shirts will be a hit with our readers. They'll be on sale at the Sixth Annual SOF Convention and Combat Weapons Military Expo, and, of course, through the magazine. So keep an eye out for them.

PUBLISHING CONGRATS...

Sirs:

I write to express my appreciation to you and your staff for your help and cooperation in my research for "The Vietnam Experience," a Time-Life/Boston Publishing book series. The information on SOF and modern mercenaries will be incorporated into a sidebar that will appear in volume 17 of the series.

Sandra Jacobs
Boston Publishing Company,
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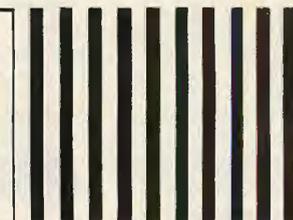
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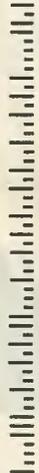
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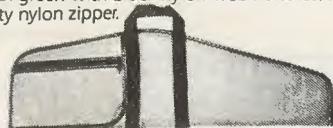


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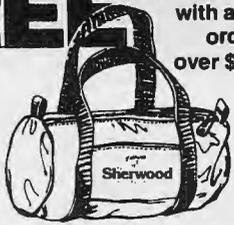
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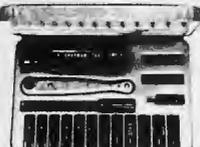
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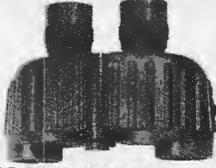
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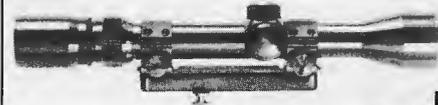
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A recent re-interpretation of the provisions and regulations of the 1968 Gun Control Act by the Firearms and Explosives Imports Branch of the BATF has drastically stemmed the flow of Title II "dealer samples" into the United States.

In addition to a few other authorized purposes, these NFA (National Firearms Act of 1934) weapons can be imported solely for use as law-enforcement sales samples by a Class 3 dealer through a registered Class 1 importer. Section 179.111 of the federal law stipulates that the burden of proof rests on the importer or dealer to demonstrate that he is complying with these standards. Previously a simple statement by the Class 3 dealer that he was purchasing the weapon for law-enforcement demonstration purposes only was deemed sufficient. No longer.

The dealer must now submit a detailed explanation that includes the following: 1) justification for the weapon's use in law enforcement, i.e., most belt-fed machine guns will probably not qualify (a totally unwarranted and capricious subjective assessment on the part of the BATF) — while submachine guns and assault rifles will probably meet this BATF-imposed "standard" of appropriate police weaponry; 2) the dealer must certify that a sufficient inventory of this weapon exists at some level to fill subsequent orders (weapons on the Curios & Relics list will not qualify); 3) a list of the prospective customers and previous demonstrations and sales; and finally, 4) "...letters from law-enforcement agencies expressing a need for a particular model of firearm or interest in seeing a demonstration of a particular firearm would be relevant."

No doubt a number of firearms were imported as sales samples and not actually used for this purpose, but rather to enhance personal collections. Most Class 3 dealers have no established relationships with law-enforcement agencies. They had better develop some — fast, if they ever expect to import another machine gun.

Some importers have reacted to this fuss in the anticipated manner. Heckler & Koch has announced that they will no longer import Title II dealer samples. Several smaller importers have turned belly-up. Those few that remain have reported a 60-percent rejection rate by BATF on Class 3 dealer applications to import. If there is a discernible pattern to the rejections, it seems to weigh heavily against Class 3 dealers who already have considerable numbers of dealer samples in inventory and do not document user interest in the item they wish to import.

All of this will have mixed results depending on who you are. Class 3 dealers with large inventories of unre-



FULL AUTO

by Peter G. Kokalis

Okie Krinkov



Fleming Firearms selective-fire Mini 47 conversion of semiauto Chinese AKS fitted with rare 20-rd. Kalashnikov magazine. Photo: Peter Kokalis

stricted-transfer weapons are already rubbing their hands in glee as they watch the value of their merchandise escalate in response to the increasing demand and now further diminished supply. And yet another breed of cat now looms on the horizon, ready to supply rattle guns to the ever expanding hoard of auto-weapons enthusiasts — the Class 2 manufacturer. These individuals specialize, among other things, in legal, unrestricted-transfer, full-auto conversions of the semiautomatic-only versions of military small arms marketed in this country. In this area *caveat emptor* (let the buyer beware) prevails with sinister certainty, as there are more than enough incompetents peddling their pathetic wares to the unwary.

But most assuredly not all are of this ilk. There are a few — very few — consummate artisans who create faithful duplicates of the factory selective-fire versions and sometimes even improve the original form. One such is William H. Fleming (Fleming Firearms, Dept. SOF, 7720 E. 126 Street N., Collinsville, OK 74021).

I have one of Fleming's more exotic creations, the so-called Mini 47. Bill started with a folding-stock, semiautomatic PRC (People's Republic of China) AKS rifle. He then cut the barrel back at the muzzle end to an overall length of 12 inches, re-installing the front sight and muzzle device (after re-threading the muzzle). To achieve a 12-inch barrel length, he moved the gas block back about two inches after tapping a new gas vent in the barrel. The gas tube and cleaning rod are also chopped accordingly. All of this requires a new piston as well, which Fleming fabricates from 4140 bar-stock gun steel and re-attaches to the bolt carrier.

Original AKM/AKS factory parts are used for the trigger mechanism's selective-fire conversion, including the auto safety sear. The sear hole is located and drilled using a jig Fleming constructed from a factory selective-fire rifle. The semiautomatic-only blocking tab (located just below the selector lever on the right side of the receiver) is removed and the selector positions re-located in the proper Kalashnikov sequence (full auto is always the middle position). An "A" indicating the full-auto position has been carefully stamped into the receiver wall. Bill plans an even shorter version with the

front sight heliarc welded to the top of the gas block.

Very interesting ... but does it work?

You bet it does. By carefully altering spring pressures and release times, Fleming has dropped the cyclic rate from the original 600 rpm to about 500 rpm. Even the most inexperienced operator can be taught to tick off two-round bursts after no more than two magazines. Muzzle blast is far less than the Colt M16A1/2 Commando and muzzle climb appears to be no greater than the standard Kalashnikov. The accuracy potential — never phenomenal in any weapon of this series — has not been degraded at normal ranges of engagement. Felt recoil, hit probability and reliability are also unaltered by the Fleming conversion.

There were no stoppages of any kind during a firing test of 1,000 rounds of assorted Yugoslav, PRC, Russian and reloaded (PRC cases with Vz52 propellant and projectiles) ammunition.

The Mini 47, to which I have added the rare 20-round magazine, makes a nasty little car gun. Very shortly I expect to be tooling around the streets of San Salvador in the usual armor-plated Jeep Wagoneer with this green tracer machine sitting on my lap. What more can I say?

Fleming's greatest emphasis, however, has been placed on the conversion of the Heckler & Koch series of weapons. Using factory parts and duplicates made to H&K specifications, he can convert your HK94 9mm carbine to an MP5, the compact MP5K (that still utilizes the factory buttstock, if you desire) or, with Doc Dater components, into a suppressed MP5SD with an integral suppressor unit that's dedicated to the weapon (only one tax stamp is thus required for sale to individuals). Your 5.56mm HK93 can be turned into an HK33 or a short-barreled HK53 that looks and operates exactly like the factory original. The 7.62mm HK91 can be converted to the G3 configuration or Fleming's so-called selective-fire HK51 with an 8.9-inch barrel (the big-bore boys will really drool over this Frankenstein)! Fleming's magic wand also transfigures AR15s to M16s, UZI carbines into sub-machine guns and M1 .30 Carbines into M2s. Finally, he has just perfected a conversion of the Steyr AUG — no mean feat.

Bill Fleming offers his superb selective-fire weapons to law-enforcement agencies and Class 3 dealers exclusively. Police agencies should inquire on their letterhead. Class 3 dealers must submit a copy of their FFL and ATF identification letter for further details. Fleming's prices are more than fair and his craftsmanship is outstanding. ☒

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REMEMBER when Randolph Scott led Carlson's Raiders against the Japanese? Well, don't worry about it if you haven't already seen Scott's interpretation of Evans Carlson in *Gung Ho!* From the view of a knife collector, maker or user, the movie didn't cut it. The troops of the Marines' wayward commando leader weren't carrying the Marine Raider Bowie.

Unlike the Sykes-Fairbairn, K-BAR or most other legendary knives of World War II, the Carlson's Raider Bowie wasn't ever in issue. James Roosevelt, Carlson's XO, bought the privately distributed knife from Case Cutlery of Bradford, Pa., with Raider Battalion funds. It wasn't bought on a government contract and only a few hundred knives were purchased for use of Carlson's troops.

This knife was famous in WWII as the Carlson's Raider Knife, but the Raiders weren't the only ones to use them. Known by type as the V-44, this general-purpose survival/combat blade was also produced by Collins Co. of Hartford, Conn. and Western Cutlery of Boulder, Colo. Both companies' big Bowies still closely follow the original V-44 design. Green horn grips distinguish the Collins-made Carlson Bowie from the regular V-44.

A bulky knife at 14½ inches overall and 4¾ inches across the quillions, it handles surprisingly well. The blade is a sweeping, deep-bellied, 9½-inch exaggerated Bowie profile with a shallow clip cut about 3½ inches back from the point. Friend Eric Strahl's much-sharpened specimen is still over 2 inches wide at the blade's belly, though it dwindles to 1¾ inches at the guard. At its thickest the blade is .178 inches and the metal stock tapers forward and backward from a point about an inch in front of the guard.

Two ¼-inch "blood grooves" are ground into each side of the knife proceeding toward the point from about an inch in front of the guard. Since the grooves are ground out of the stock (and corroded at the bottom) they're very uneven, averaging about .020 inches deep.

A quillioned guard is the next thing (after sheer bulk) that draws the eye. Cast from soft bronze, it sports terminal balls fully ½-inch across. The guard is otherwise ¼-inch thick and ⅞-inch wide.

Perhaps a concession to the concept of camouflage, the usual V-44/machete handle of black synthetic has been replaced with green horn. The handle is a normal machete-type bird's-head and the horn scales are attached to the full tang by five brass rivets. There is no thong-hole.

Now, before I further my reputation as a slaughterer of sacred cattle, let me



BATTLE BLADES

by Bill Bagwell

Carlson's Gung Ho Bowie



Bulky battle blade: Carlson's Raider Bowie distinguished from ordinary V-44 survival knife by green horn grip. Photo: Dale Andrade

tell you what's good about this knife. In performance, it's probably the best design in general service in WWII. It's a fairly quick knife largely because it's built of such light stock, leverage is fairly good because of the blade's 9½-inch length and deep belly, momentum is better than average because so much of the knife's metal mass sits two-thirds of the way up the blade and the bird's-head handle of horn provides excellent grip security.

Between the V-44 and a K-BAR there's just no choice. Carlson's Bowie is better in the field or in a fight than the Browning Automatic Rifle blade.

But the quillions are way too big for a knife that size. They'll get hooked in clothing and webgear, and the terminal balls will help keep the guard tangled. Guards are great things in a fight, but just look at the utility knives of primitive people and outdoorsmen. Machetes, the Finnish *puukko*, the Green River knife, my own hand-forged utility blades and even surgeons' scalpels have no guard at all. That's because the guard interferes with the variety of grips required for a knife used as a precision tool. Deep,

scooped quillions are fine for a sword, but you don't chop brush or spread C-rat peanut butter with a rapier. For a combination utility/combat knife, the guard should be compact so it doesn't foul in your gear and so it doesn't get between you and your work. The V-44 guard should've been made about half as long as it was.

The clip is too shallow and this keeps the point at least ¾-inch above the axis of thrust. Jabbing this knife into tissue would force a combatant to shove the curve of the blade through the target, instead of allowing a centered point to cut a track for the rest of the blade to follow.

The rest of the Carlson knife's problems are caused by its original form: the Collins No. 18 machete. Available at the time as the Model 1939 No. 18, the U.S. government bought these grass-slashers by the carload. Collins made most of the machetes issued to our troops in WWII, and the 22-inch-blade No. 18 was one of the most popular.

Now the Collins No. 18 is a fine machete. But a machete depends on metallic flexibility — not structure — for strength. A fighting knife, on the other hand, needs lateral strength and rigidity that a cut-down cane-lopper

Continued on page 93

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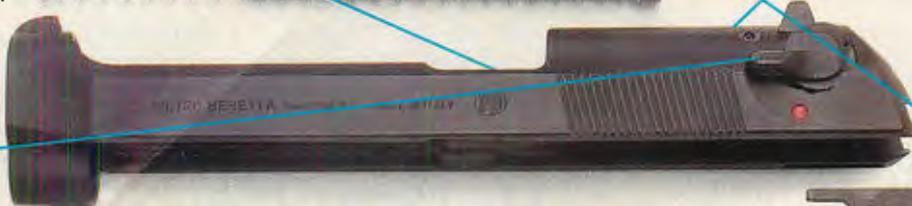
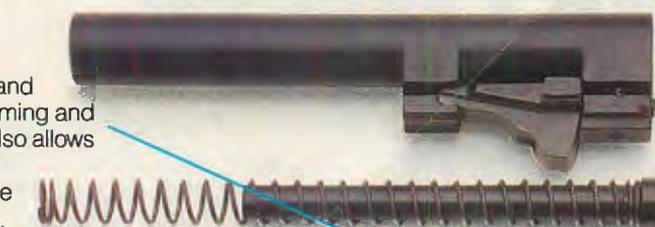
Prevents firing pin from moving forward until the trigger is actuated.

Exposed Hammer Spur. For single action operation.

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Designed for right or left-handed shooters. Allows quick, convenient magazine exchange.

Chamber Loaded Indicator. User can tell when a round is chambered by sight or touch.



Beretta U.S.A.

ADVENTURE QUARTERMASTER



FLAMELESS FIREPOWER

All the firepower in the world won't pull you out of trouble if the enemy can see your muzzle flash. Everybody knows that and many companies have put out flash suppressors that are supposed to take care of the problem. Most of them work with various degrees of success.

The Nil-Flash device delivers on its promise to wipe out muzzle flash. In fact, there is absolutely none. Believe it or not, even at night, the Nil-Flash obliterates the tell-tale flame that roars out of the end of your rifle.

A few bugs need to be worked out, though. The prongs tend to catch brush on the trail — not a good idea if you need to get your rifle into action quickly. And if the Nil-Flash hits a solid object, it rings out like an amplified tuning fork.

This model fits on the AR-15/M16 and it can be had in either a blued or Parkerized finish. If what you want is zero muzzle flash, the Nil-Flash is the way to go. Buy it for \$49.95 from D.C. Brennan Firearms, Dept. SOF, 3628 Victoria Ln., Cincinnati, OH 45208. Phone: (513) 871-6724.

A SHOT IN THE DARK

There's been a proliferation of laser-point gunsights recently. All of them do the job pretty well so the question of which is better can become a dilemma.

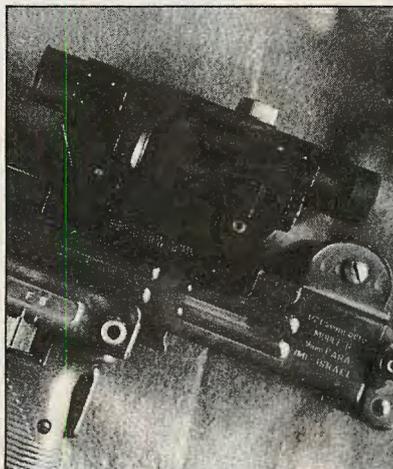
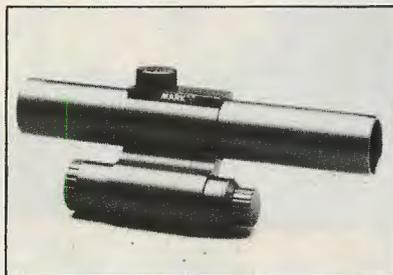
Action Arms has entered the laser-sight game with the Mark V Electronic Sight. It's the perfect accessory for low-light shooting or under conditions where fast target acquisition is a must.

This newcomer operates in the same way as the well-known Aimpoint. Both use mercury batteries, both have non-magnifying optics and both are parallax-free so that wherever the red dot points, the bullet hits.

But there are some differences. Action Arms' Mark V is lighter — only 5½ oz. — and more compact. And that's an important consideration when you're lugging a rifle through the bush. There is one minor drawback, though.

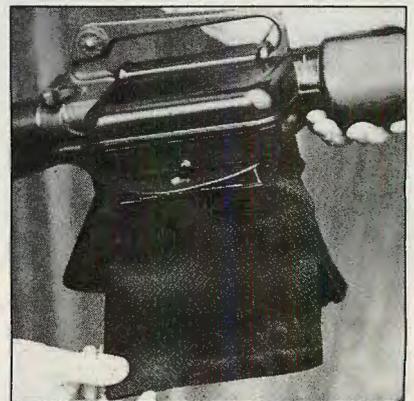
The red dot on the Mark V is not bright enough to be clearly seen on extremely sunny days. Some type of filter needs to be provided with this scope.

And if you have a UZI that needs to become a fast-handling carbine, you might try Action Arms' new UZI scope mount. It will take all one-inch scopes up to 3x9x40mm — a perfect mate for the Mark V



laser sight. Don't worry about losing the iron sight capability — this mount allows either without modification. The carbine mount goes for \$56.00 and the scope for \$183.50.

Contact: Action Arms, Ltd., Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 9573, Philadelphia, PA 19124. Phone: (215) 744-0100.



GOLD IN THAT BRASS

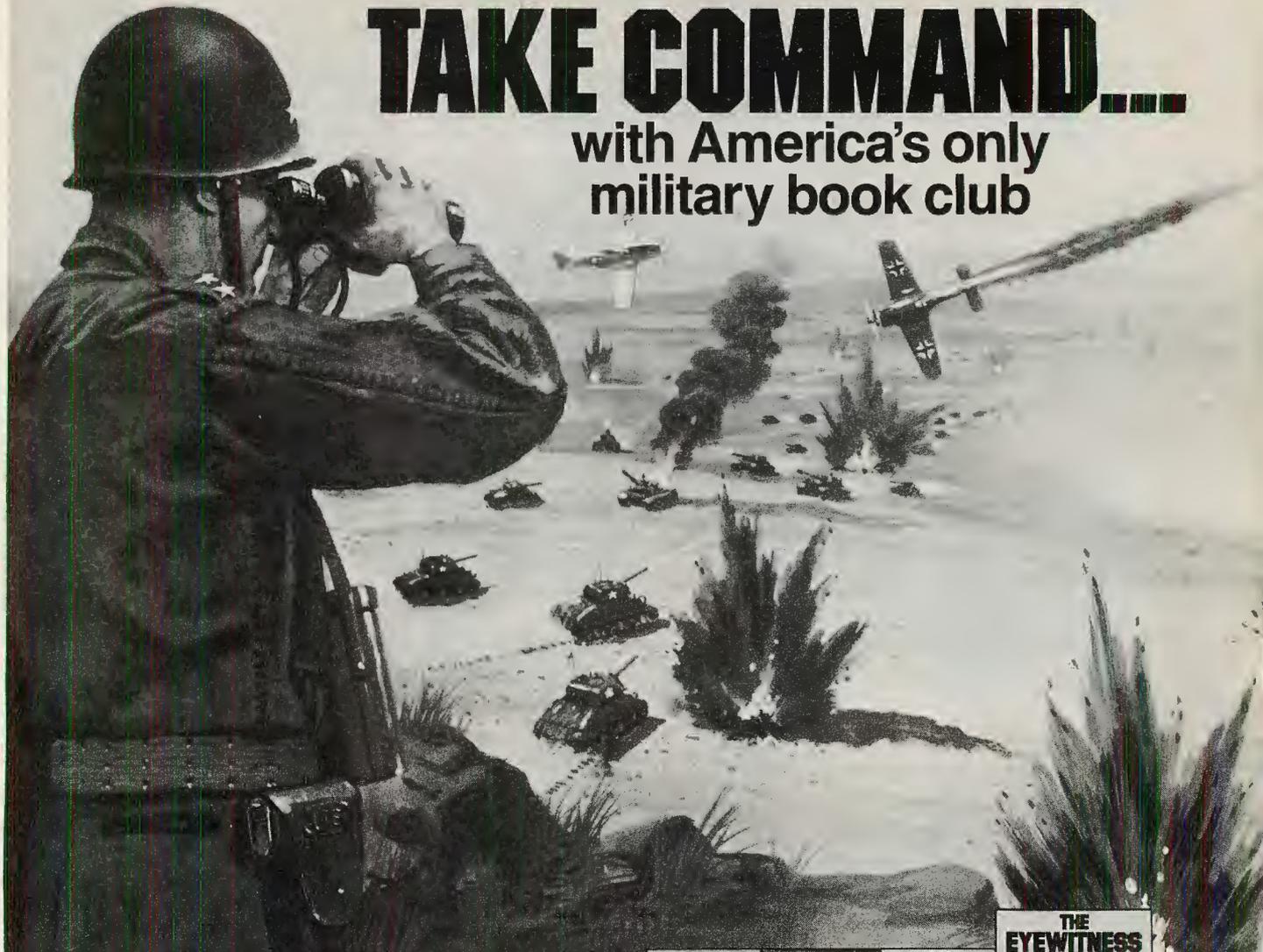
Anyone who shoots frequently knows the value of reloading. But who wants to run around bent over looking for shells of one particular caliber among the many different casings lying about?

There's a better way. Hook an Apex brass catcher over the ejection port of your AR-15/M16, HK or Ruger Mini-14. It may look a bit strange and it certainly isn't the ticket for combat, but down on the range it can't be beat. So if you don't mind people thinking your lunch-bag's stuck to your rifle, you might want to try it out. It sure beats a bad back.

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Fire discipline can mean the difference between winning and losing an engagement. Photo: DOD

THE application of effective fire is a fire unit's first responsibility. It makes no difference if it be a fire team or a company, giving effective fire is why they're there.

So, what is effective fire? Effective fire is that which potentially produces enemy casualties, and prevents him from returning fire accurately. (For our purposes, suppressive and effective fire are synonymous.)

Now, there's a fine line between effective fire and noise. And being able to tell the difference distinguishes between combat veterans and green troops. Effective fire produces kills, and noise just produces noise. Experienced troops can recognize the difference. Inexperienced troops think everything is effective fire, because they haven't taken enough of it yet.

Effective fire is easy to tell. If the enemy can't shoot back and either make your men casualties or prevent them from returning fire, your fire is effective.

The advantage of having effective fire is what makes winners. Being on the receiving end of effective fire — and being unable to respond — makes losers. And there's no mistaking the difference. If your head's in the grass and you can't shoot or move, then the enemy has effective fire and you don't.

In Africa, our immediate action drill was to shed our packs and assault into the fire . . . *always*. That was because the terrors were not able to deliver effective

fire, and their bullets went high. We would quickly establish fire superiority, and rarely ever lost a man.

But that's not the case if two disciplined units are slugging it out, toe-to-toe, both delivering effective fire. That's a good firefight. And there's only one way to increase your chances of survival. Establish fire superiority.

Fire superiority means you are delivering a *higher* volume of effective fire than your enemy. When two units exchange effective fire at close range all they can do is aim more accurately and increase the rate of fire in order to establish fire superiority. They can't just run from it.

Movement on a battlefield will only get you killed without covering fire. That covering fire has to be good. You can't just shoot up the air and run. The most common error made by troops neutralized by effective fire is to spray ineffective fire about the area. That makes more noise, but diminishes effective fire.

Remember. Your enemy can shoot and move when he is not engaged by effective fire. On the other hand, shooting and moving under effective fire is downright risky.

The difference is great and obvious on the receiving end between effective fire and noise. But how does any unit

organize its fire to make it effective, instead of noise?

It's simple. There are three main components of effective fire. First, fire control. Second, using the appropriate rate of fire. Third, accurate shooting.

Fire control is the way the unit commander concentrates and distributes effective fire on a selected target. That means the unit commander chooses targets, and judges how much fire is required to suppress each target.

Rate of fire is the control of ammunition expenditure with respect to distance, ammunition availability and the number of targets. Too many rates of fire and commands are confusing. The rates I use are: deliberate fire at five rounds per minute, snap shooting at two rounds for each exposure of the enemy, rapid fire at 20 rounds a minute, and intense fire is fastest at 30 rounds a minute . . . pause to aim every shot. The common error in fixing a rate of fire is applying too high a rate to long-distance engagements. Aim must be more precise at distance, and higher rates of fire are inappropriate.

These two characteristics — fire control and rates of fire — are given to the troops in the form of a fire control order. Fire control orders are the means by which the unit commander transmits direction of fire control and rate of fire to his troops. Fire control commands must be short, clear, and every soldier must know what they are . . . and obey them.

Fire control orders and their organization of the unit's effective fire is the responsibility of the unit commander. But the last and most important element of effective fire is entirely in the hands of the individual soldier. His leaders may instruct him in the principles of accurate fire, but only the individual soldier can apply those principles to deliver effective fire to the target.

It is generally agreed that there are four elements of accurate shooting: steady position, correct aiming, breath control and trigger control. The commander can't do these things for the soldier. He must perform these tasks himself. And when he practices accurate shooting on the battlefield, it will be without supervision. Common errors are not aiming (especially at night without night sights) and not adopting a steady position. And unless a soldier shoots accurately, his commander's fire control orders can have no effect.

Delivery of effective fire is the aim of every fire unit. Unfortunately, it's an easy thing to forget when the lead hail falls. But that's when it's most important, and why fire control needs to be practiced constantly. ✕



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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Our blowgun has a .625 I.D. Constructed of heavy 16 gauge steel, it is 40 inches long. The end is chamfered to remove any burrs that might deflect darts. Our blowgun has a special durable black finish. It weighs about 1½ lbs. and is very strong — a weapon in itself.

In addition to our 40 inch steel blowgun, we also have available a 24 inch lightweight model. It has the same mold injected mouthpiece, dart clip and accommodates all our .625 Magnum darts and most accessories. However, the tube is constructed of high impact styrene instead of 16 gauge steel.

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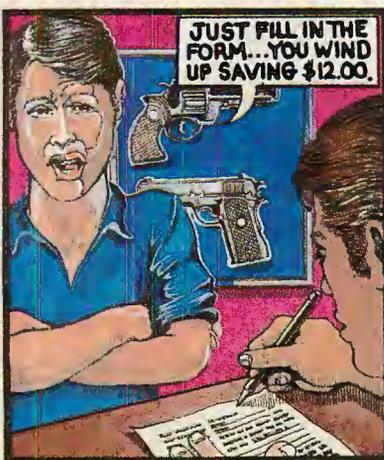
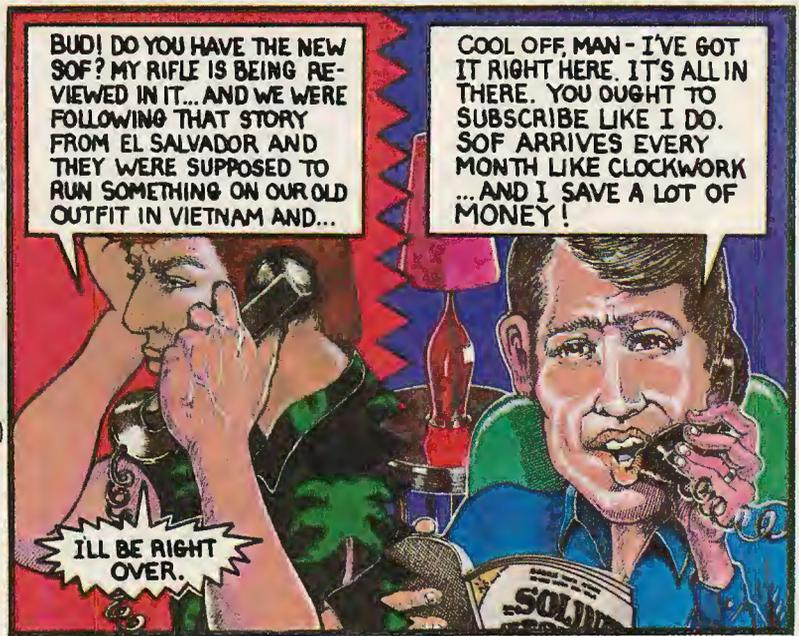
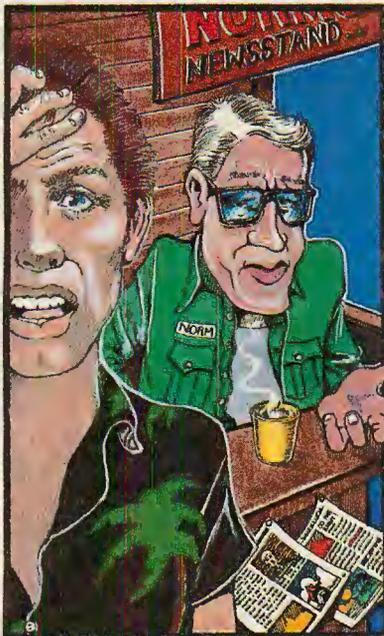
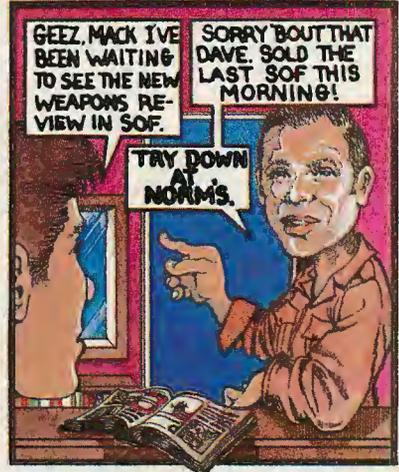
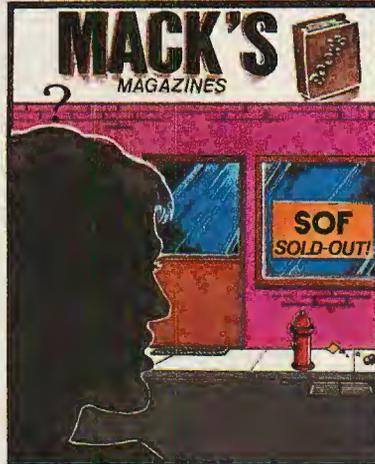


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I WAS THERE

by C.C. Coffman

Bushmaster Backfire

In the wet, late spring of 1966, C.C. Coffman Jr. and his platoon of Recon Marines were airlifted far west of their camp on the beach at Chu Lai to an SF camp called Kam Duc, a few clicks inside the Vietnam border with Laos. In a soggy valley surrounded by some formidable, deeply forested and tangle-grown mountains, they had to perform a series of "Bushmaster" ambush patrols along Uncle Ho's infiltration routes. But what they encountered wasn't the enemy.

BRIEFINGS were short and to the point; map reconnaissance, sketchy. Then we were off. Two teams of six men were lifted some 1,500 feet into the mist through gigantic growth of trees and bamboo and were inserted at dusk to an old Japanese airstrip, Nok Tavok. As the UH-34s clattered and wheezed into the murk, we split the two teams. Stumbling and sliding, we made our separate ways into the soaking bush to hide until the next day's light could provide at least minimum visibility.

After a drizzle-filled, chilly night, huddled in absolute darkness, we spent the day fighting mud, huge boulders covered with muck, leeches, heavy briars, and dense fog. And for the first time in my 56-month Vietnam experience it grew very cold.

"Gunny, if the fuckin' gooners really want *this* place, they're deservin' of it," exclaimed my pointman, "Mouse" Wrenn.

It was as bad a piece of terrain as I'd seen in Korea, Malaya, Dom Rep, or eastern Vietnam. And with the heavy rucks, dangerous footing, and low visibility our progress was extremely slow.

Near exhaustion, we reached the thin, twisting trails on the narrow ridge-backs late evening on the second day. You couldn't see 10 feet in any direction. There was a wall of misty rain and deep shadows from the tremendous trees and thick second growth.

The next day was spent laboriously searching for a decent ambush site along the obviously well-used tracks. Charlie had been here and had used the sinuous network for an extended

period.

Suddenly Wrenn alerted like a Doberman. I gave a "no fire" signal and we all faded left into thick, honeysuckle-like growth. The gooners were talking, bitching, and making enough noise to indicate a complete lack of either concern or unit discipline. But we never saw them despite the fact that they had to have passed within five meters of us.

My problem was three-fold: First, we needed an extremely good ambush site because there would obviously be no back-up from aircraft, artillery, or anything else in this God-forsaken place; second, you couldn't see well enough to tell what the hell you were jumping on or how many; and third, getting *out* of here would be at least as hard as getting in had been.

Firepower was no problem for us. Among six well-trained, experienced Force Recon Marines we had two 12-gauge pumpguns, two auto M14s, two M3A1 .45-caliber "Grease guns," a .45 pistol each and the usual assortment of grenades, plus a couple of "rigger-rolled" claymores. But nearly 17 years in the Corps and five previous Purple Hearts had taught me that firepower wasn't near as good as position, surprise, and speedy execution.

On the morning of the fifth day the weather had lightened up somewhat: no rain but still that damned fog. That morning I found my spot. It was located along a straight, slightly downhill grade with a steep drop-off on one side of the relatively narrow trail. Just at the end of the straight section, we found a well-defined bend to the left with thin-stalked bamboo on the uphill side for good, close concealment. Behind us would be a narrow cut in slime-covered rocks for a fast, covered withdrawal.

Finally.

I set my team carefully, making sure that each of us had exactly the right interval, position, and field of fire under and through the slender, leafy bamboo. It averaged five meters from each position to the trail and although a standing man would be visible only from about the waist down, it was nearly perfect. Nothing showed for the rest of the day.

But just after dawn Corporal Dove signaled that six were on the way into our zone. Peering under and through the bamboo at the dimly visible trail, I saw several pairs of legs and triggered the ambush by firing a claymore and half a magazine from my M3A1.

Our fire was brief and intense but what immediately followed was mind-boggling... there was a noise like several tractor-trailer horns blaring, bush being ripped to shreds, and the earth trembled like an earthquake.

"Jesus Christ, Gunny, we've ambushed three huge fuckin' elephants... and God are they pissed!" screamed my RTO, bounding like crazy for the narrow cleft in the rocks, followed by the rest of my team. I wasn't too far behind them.

It took us three days to get back to Kam Duc, dragging our asses all the way. ✕

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MERCENARY TROOPS IN MODERN AFRICA

Gerry S. Thomas

MERCENARY TROOPS IN MODERN AFRICA. By [Lt. Col.] Gerry S. Thomas. Westview Press, Inc., Dept. SOF, 5500 Central Ave., Boulder, CO 80301. 1984. 157 pp. \$15. Review by Wm. B. Guthrie.

XENOPHON'S *Anabasis*, Hoare's *Mercenary*, Mockler's *The Mercenaries* and SOF . . . If you'd read those books you once could say you knew more about contract soldiering than most World Court lawyers. Now there's a new title to add to that list: Thomas' **Mercenary Troops in Modern Africa**. It's not as stylish as Hoare, timeless as Xenophon, complete as Mockler or timely as SOF but within its sphere, there's nothing comparable.

Most SOF readers will find Thomas' book a little dry. Nevertheless, it puts more clearly expressed information in the hands of the reader in a more compact form than any other book on mercenarism. But **Mercenary Troops in Modern Africa** was never intended as a popular book, and shouldn't be judged by the standards of, say, Rolf Steiner's *The Last Adventurer*.

Although some SOF readers may find Thomas' work deficient in the thrills-and-chills department, they'll find few defects in his bibliography. Including works cited in endnotes, there are materials from over 200 references in the slim softbound volume. Thomas is a lieutenant colonel in the Defense Intelligence Agency, and obviously knows how to do research. And he demonstrates just how good his grasp of the subject is by including a staggering amount of mercenaries' first-person narration, most of which would send a voting member of the Organization for African Unity into

IN REVIEW



convulsions. (SOF figures prominently in his index.)

Yet — for all the book's strength in semantics and documentation — there are two real problems for the student of private-sector soldiering. Thomas does not consider foreign technicians as mercenaries, and white ranch-security personnel are typed as mercenaries.

We can understand, in a way, making such a mistake with hired private security workers. After all, they spend their lives scouring the underbrush while carrying weapons. But Thomas introduced his subject by claiming he would write a *functional* definition of mercenarism based on what mercenaries do, not why they do it. To gather private security into the mercenary fold multiplies the census of soldiers for hire by opening the ranks to bank guards, bounty hunters and rent-a-cops. Their duties are no different, despite the often-accidental inclusion of white ranch guards in African COIN warfare.

But excluding radar and missile technicians from consideration, only because they don't carry guns, is a bit artificial. Cal Tech graduates who maintain automatic, radar-aimed, anti-aircraft systems on the Saudi side of the Persian Gulf might be surprised to be labeled mercenaries, but considering that they are foreigners participating in hostilities (although they don't kill with their bare hands) for pay, it's odd that Thomas would exclude them from his study. The argument might be made that they don't pull triggers, but there's little difference between their work and that of a soldier laying land mines. About the only thing separating the radar technician from the ordnance specialist is a plastic pocket protector. To be fair, it is possible the author knew that the inclusion of technicians would complicate the study and cloud what is an otherwise clear, intelligent, realistic consideration of the conditions of and reasons for mercenarism in modern Africa.

Lt. Col. Thomas obviously isn't a mercenary, so some SOFers will pass this book by in order to dive into *Firepower* for the fifth time. That's a shame. Because if they'd read Thomas' book they might have learned enough to know what's wrong with *Firepower*. **Mercenary Troops in Modern Africa** is on the editorial required-reading list at SOF.

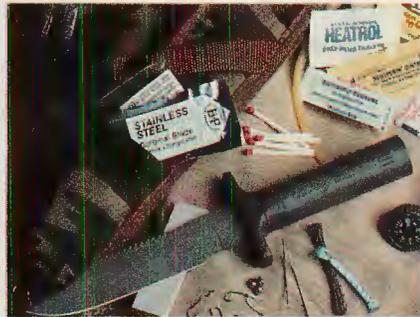


THE FRENCH FOREIGN LEGION: The Inside Story of the World Famous Fighting Force. By John Robert Young. Thames and Husdon, Dept. SOF, 500 Fifth, New York, NY 10110. 1985. 212 pp. \$16. Review by Blaine Taylor.

IN 1964, noted author Geoffrey Bocca wrote in *La Legion!*: "The Foreign Legion may exist for a few more years yet, but it is a walking corpse." How wrong he was is faithfully and scrupulously illustrated in this superb new work on one of the globe's truly elite units by John Robert Young, who both wrote the text and shot the stunning photographs. This is definitely a book for anyone who loves military history, adventure, derring-do and excitement in far-off places.

Bocca wrote his premature obituary for the Legion in the aftermath of the abortive Legion anti-Gaullist coup of April 1961 that attempted to keep Algeria territorially within the French political orbit. In the resultant Legion vs. Legion civil war, DeGaulle won and the Legion units involved were disgraced and their officers put on public trial. Coming on the heels of its defeat at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, the events in North Africa seemed, indeed, to number the days of the Foreign Legion as it moved its base — for the first time in over a century — to mainland metropolitan France. All this is only lightly

Continued on page 100


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SOF WEAPONS

Singapore troops on patrol with the SAR 80. Photo courtesy of CIS

SIZING UP THE SINGAPORE

M

Mars

SQUAD Automatic Weapons are hot. Real hot. People no one ever heard of before are loudly proclaiming their SAW to be the best. They cite "tests" concocted in corporate boardrooms. They donate a few weapons to the SEALs or SAS, then hype their entry's use by "elite" units. Goaded along are writers for the popular gun press who delight in criticizing the choice of the M249 (FN Minimi) as *the* SAW for the U.S. military.

And exactly what characteristics do "Squad Automatic Weapons" possess that distinguish them from other types of machine guns?

They invariably use the same ammunition as the squad rifles. Outside the Iron Curtain this means 5.56mm NATO. Most



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#1017



#1016

feature quick-change barrels. All have bipods. They can be either magazine- or belt-fed, or both. They should weigh no more than 2½ times as much as a rifle of the same caliber — the less, the better.

Sound vaguely familiar? It should. We used to call them light machine guns before the general purpose machine gun (GPMG) became an ordnance fetish. But the "gimpy," as the Brits call GPMGs, is fading fast. It's taken 40 long years to convince most people that the GPMG concept is a failure. Something for everything usually means nothing for anything.

The Russians never abandoned the light machine gun. Soviet units fight in Afghanistan equipped with the RPK-74 SAW chambered for the 5.45x39mm ComBloc cartridge. The belt-fed RPD and magazine-fed RPK series are true squad-level machine guns. Their greatest defect has always been the lack of quick-change barrels.

The armed forces of the Free World are confronted with an ever-increasing list of alternatives. Squad Automatic Weapons in the 5.56mm NATO cartridge are offered by the Belgians, Germans, Italians, British, Austrians and Spanish.

Even Singapore is getting into the act with its version of the SAW. While owned by the government's Ministry of Defense, Chartered Industries of Singapore (CIS) is operated as a private, profit-oriented enterprise. Design of their SAW — modestly called the Ultimax 100 (Ultimate/Maximum) — began in 1978, in response to requirements proposed by the Singapore Armed Forces.

James Sullivan — who worked on the development of both the Armalite AR-15 and AR-18 assault rifles — was a principal member of the design team. Some of Sullivan's basic design concepts were innovative, almost brilliant. But the Ultimax 100 is flawed by inexperienced user input.

Originally part of Great Britain's colony in Malaya, Singapore became a separate and independent state in 1965. The defense forces of this island trading post traditionally were manned mostly by citizens from other countries. Since independence, the Armed Forces of Singapore have never faced the test of all-out war. The Ultimax 100 clearly exhibits the importance of battle experience in shaping the proper forms and characteristics of the infantry's killing tools.

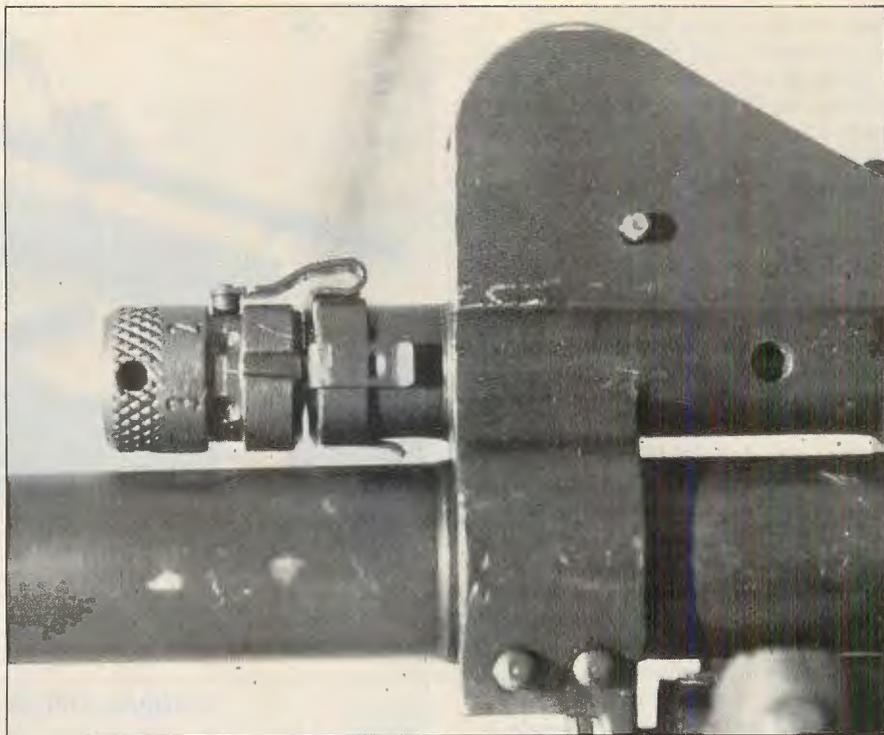
I flew to Singapore to test the mettle of the CIS line-up of infantry small arms. Here are the results.

Ultimax 100 SAW

The Ultimax 100 is gas-operated with a rotary bolt. It fires from the open-bolt position. An adjustable gas regulator operates the short-stroke, tappet-type piston. The barrel's gas vent is only nine inches from the chamber face — at a high point on the gas-pressure curve. This was supposed to produce a "self-cleaning" gas system.

Rubbish.

Vietnam is the last place we saw a weapons system billed as being maintenance-free. Plen-



Ultimax 100: adjustable six-position gas regulator and front-sight assembly.



SAR 80 front-sight assembly and adjustable gas regulator. Note the front sling swivel mounted directly to barrel.

properly adjusted. Felt recoil is reduced dramatically. As a consequence the designers were able to place the entire system in a package weighing *only* 10.3 pounds empty with bipod attached. In comparison, the Galil ARM weighs 9.6 pounds.

A slot in the bolt carrier runs over a guide rail on the left interior wall of the receiver. The receiver is fabricated from two sheet-metal pressings, bent and welded together into a rectangular shape. A sliding sheet-metal plate serves as the receiver's rear wall. The guide rod's rear end is retained by a nub on the back plate. A flat sheet-metal rib has been welded to the top of the receiver body for better alignment. The front sling swivel is a steel rod bent into a U-shape and welded to the receiver. It does not move, but the sling can be attached to either the right or left side of the receiver. The finish is matte-black enamel over phosphate.

The nylon-base plastic buttstock has a bottom hook for the support hand when fired from the prone position with the bipod. It has a rubber recoil pad. The buttstock is hollow, without foam filling. It should be provided with a storage compartment. There are sling swivels on both the right and left side. Well-placed toward the top of the butt, they rotate 360 degrees. The buttstock is attached to the receiver by two short steel rods which run in channels on either side of the receiver in the manner of the U.S. M3 submachine-gun series.

To remove the buttstock, press the two stock latch buttons inward against the receiver walls and pull the buttstock away

ty of good men died because of Colt's early bullshit about the M16. All firearms have to be cleaned and maintained, no matter where the gas port is located.

At the heart of Sullivan's system is his unique "constant-recoil" concept. The bolt carrier never strikes the receiver's rear wall if the gas regulator is adjusted properly. Its long rearward travel is a function of an extremely long recoil spring and guide rod coupled with an unusual bolt-carrier body which extends above and considerably forward of the bolt itself. Incorporated in the bolt-carrier extension is an inertia block to reduce bolt bounce and the danger of ignition out of battery. The carrier extension rides over the barrel and is protected from overheating by a stainless-steel reflector shield in the upper receiver body.

Thus the bolt group more or less floats inside the receiver, never impacting against the receiver's rear wall. But, I reiterate, this is provided that the gas regulator has been

from the receiver at the same time. The weapon can be fired without the buttstock.

With the buttstock off and the bolt group forward, the disassembly button can then be pushed forward to disengage the receiver's backplate from the recoil-spring guide rod. Slide the backplate down and withdraw the entire bolt group out the rear of the receiver. Disassembly procedure for the recoil spring, guide rod, firing pin, cam pin and bolt is self-evident. It takes about 20 seconds to field-strip the Ultimax 100 and twice that for reassembly. There are only 90 components. But in my opinion too many of them are pins and screws (24) and springs (24).

The rotary eight-lug bolt uses the extractor as one of its lugs and the extractor spring has a rubber insert. A conventional bump-type ejector and spring are located in the bolt face. The firing pin is spring-loaded. It's retained by a cross-pin and is easily removed. The firing-pin spring is not removable by the operator. The bolt is rotated by means of a cam pin which moves in a cam path cut in the bolt carrier.

A steel barrel extension containing recesses for the bolt's and barrel's locking lugs is fitted to the receiver, somewhat in the manner of the Steyr AUG. The barrel's lugs are machined around the chamber area. The Mark II Ultimax 100's barrel can be changed in a few moments by depressing the barrel locking button, twisting the barrel assembly counterclockwise and sliding it forward.

However, changing the barrel is difficult when the gun is overheated. Unfortunately, that is almost always the reason one would want to change the barrel in the first place. The AUG-type barrel locking button becomes so hot you can't touch it with the bare hand.

I have been told that this Ultimax 100 component is being redesigned. Its barrel can be removed or installed with the bolt either forward or retracted. Re-installation of a new barrel takes longer than removal. It's difficult to index the barrel lugs with the barrel extension recesses under stress. An indexing nub at the chamber end of the barrel actually hinders re-installation, in my opinion. The MkI prototype has a fixed barrel and non-adjustable gas regulator. The MkII Ultimax 100 has an adjustable regulator.

Three barrel lengths are now available: 14, 18 and 20 inches. Overall weapon length with a 20-inch barrel is 40.5 inches. Larger ports are on the gas regulator for the 14-inch barrel. Chrome lining for the barrels is not standard. The six-groove barrels have a right-hand twist with one turn in 12 inches to accommodate M193-type ammunition. Barrels with 1:7-inch twist are also offered. An M16 bird-cage-type flash suppressor with the 6th (bottom) port blocked is provided, held securely to the barrel by a jam nut. A spring clip accommodates grenade launchers. The carrying handle is attached to the barrel and can be used to assist barrel changes. A new, simplified handle is fixed and no longer rotates to the right.



Ultimax 100 SAW — disassembled.

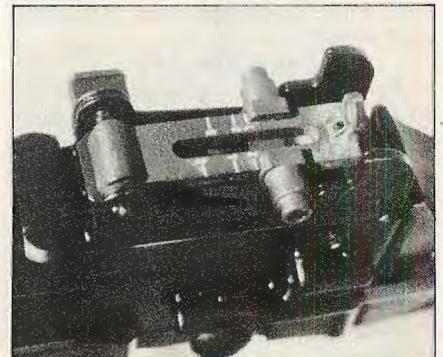
Ultimax 100 SAW Specifications

Caliber	5.56mm NATO
Operation	Gas. Six-position adjustable regulator with cut-off position for grenade launching. Short-stroke piston. Rotary bolt. Fires from the open-bolt position. Unique "constant-recoil" system.
Cyclic rate	520 rpm
Feed mechanism	100-rd. reloadable drum. M16-type magazines can be adapted.
Weight, empty, w/bipod and buttstock	10.3 lbs.
Overall length	40.6 inches with 20-inch barrel.
Barrel	Air-cooled, quick-change type. Button broached. Six grooves with a right-hand twist of one turn in 12 inches. Not chrome-lined.
Barrel length	20 inches. 14-inch and 18-inch lengths available on special order.
Sights	Round, post-type front with protective ears; adjustable for elevation zero. Sliding tangent, ramp-type rear with peep aperture; adjustable for windage and elevation from 100 to 600 meters. Sight radius of 18.6 inches.
Accessories	Sling, vehicular twin mount, blank-firing adapter, carrying case and pouches for weapon and drums, cleaning tools and bayonet.
Status	In production. In service with the Singapore Armed Forces.
Manufacturer	Chartered Industries of Singapore Pte., Ltd., 249, Jalan Boon Lay, Singapore 2261.

Ultimax 100: adjustable bipod leg.



Ultimax 100: rear-sight assembly.





Company field test of the Ultimax 100.
Photo courtesy of CIS

At the request of the Singapore Armed Forces, a bayonet lug was attached to the barrel, a macabre (and useless) reminder of their most recent contact with opposing military forces. The Japanese charged up the hills of Malaya screaming "Banzai" 40 years ago with 20-inch bayonets fixed to their Type 99 light machine guns. Bayonet lugs on such weapons were then — and are now — a classic case of tits on a bull.

Also mounted to the barrel is the gas regulator. Six positions — 0 to 5 — are on the regulator knob. Rifle grenades are launched with the knob set in the 0 position. This seals off return gas completely. The 5 setting permits the greatest amount of gas to enter the system and should be employed only under adverse conditions. Always adjust the gas regulator knob so that the bolt carrier will not impact against the rear receiver wall. Holes in the side of the regulator knob permit adjustment with a tool, but the tool was not provided to the author.

During firing sequences, the regulator gets quite hot and cannot be rotated with the bare hand. The regulator knob on one barrel fouled halfway through my 2,000-round test. It froze after cooling and could not be rotated for adjustment. The gas regulator and piston are chrome plated.

To disassemble the gas system, first rotate the regulator knob until its slot is aligned with the stud on the regulator spring. Pull the knob off the regulator. Depress the regulator and pull the gas-block cross-pin to the left. Withdraw the regula-



Ultimax 100: left side view. Note that cocking handle knob must be rotated forward before it can be retracted. The magazine latch spring has been mounted outside the receiver.

Ultimax 100 drum-loading tools.



tor, piston, spring and piston plug. Reassemble in the reverse order. Make certain the piston plug's cut groove is facing upward so the cross-pin can be re-installed.

The bipod is located under the barrel, just to the rear of the gas block. It has been designed to provide both lateral and rotational movement of 30 degrees. Five locking positions offer bipod leg adjustments; a command height from 6.1 to 8.5 inches. Pull down on the legs to fold them under the barrel. The gun can be fired without the bipod by depressing the barrel latch button, removing the barrel, then rotating the bipod assembly 45 degrees in either direction and withdrawing it outward.

Also part of the barrel assembly is the

front sight. Its protective ears are integral with the gas-block/carrying-handle group, which is sweated and pinned to the barrel. The round front-sight post is adjustable for elevation zero in the M16 manner. To alter the windage zero, a spring-loaded screw on the gas block must be depressed from the left side. Rotating its head on the right side will move the entire front-sight housing.

The sight radius is 18.6 inches and the rear sight is mounted to the receiver. The sliding tangent-type ramp has a peep aperture. Elevation adjustments are from 100 to 600 meters. There is no battle sight position. Windage corrections are accomplished by pulling out a spring-loaded flat knob on the right side of sight and rotating. The rear sight's protective ears need to be enlarged. They do not protect the peep aperture when it's adjusted for maximum elevation. As yet, there is no provision for optical sights.

The receiver is cut away on the right and left sides to expose the barrel for more efficient air cooling. *Be careful.* Keep your support hand on the nylon-base plastic vertical foregrip bolted under the receiver. Both insulation cloth and an aluminum heat shield protect it from overheating. Its finger-grooved pistol grip is a bit too small for non-Asian hands and it is currently being redesigned. But the grip's shape is very comfortable and a valuable support when firing from the hip assault, sitting, kneeling or standing positions.

Cut into the right side of the receiver body is the ejection port. An 11-component dust cover/case deflector has been bolted over the port . . . Far too many bits and pieces here.

A slot for the non-reciprocating retracting handle is cut into the receiver's left side. The cocking handle must first be rotated counterclockwise (rolled forward) before it's pulled to the rear. Peculiar and totally uncalled for. After the bolt has been retracted the retracting handle should be pushed forward to its locked position.

The trigger housing assembly cannot be removed from the receiver by the operator — a very serious design flaw. Using punches and hex wrenches, an armorer must first disassemble the stock latch, magazine latch, sear buffer assembly, trigger pivot pin and trigger group detent pin before the trigger mechanism can be removed.

While we don't necessarily want the gunner to be able to detail-strip the trigger housing group, he must be able to remove it from the receiver to inspect and clean it properly. There is no way the Ultimax 100 trigger mechanism can be cleaned or examined properly in the field.

Based on this problem alone, I would not carry this weapon into combat.

However, the trigger group's pistol grip is well-designed and angled correctly. It could benefit from a finger swell and a storage trap for cleaning equipment and small spare parts. The trigger itself is wide and smooth and offers an excellent purchase for the operator's finger. The trigger guard cannot be swung down or removed for arctic environments.



SAR 80 assault rifle.



Right side of SAR 80. Note the generous-sized magazine catch release button and peculiar sliding dust cover that does not protect the ejection port.

Selector mechanism on the SAR 80 rifle, which has been taken from the M16.



The SAR 80 flip-type, peep-aperture rear sight, taken directly from the M16.

Located just above the pistol grip on the left side is the fire selector. It's large and easily manipulated. There are only two positions, safe ("S") and fire ("F"). Selector markings should appear on the right side of the receiver also. Rotate the lever down to move into the fire mode. No need for a semiautomatic function since the cyclic rate of this machine gun is only 520 rpm. Experienced gunners can always tap off single rounds whenever the need arises.

Firing from the open-bolt position, the bolt group is held back behind the feed area and the bolt carrier is engaged by the trigger mechanism's sear. The front end of the sear contacts the sear actuator on the fire selector. Pulling the trigger releases the bolt group by means of the sear actuator and strips the top cartridge out of the magazine. If the trigger is released, the sear once more will engage the bolt carrier. There is no hold-open and the bolt group remains forward after the last round has been fired. The sear incorporates a buffer system and this unique lock-out mechanism prevents accidental firing if the weapon is improperly cocked or dropped.

Controversy already has arisen over the Ultimax 100's feed system. I have never cared much for drums. Complex, expensive and usually fragile, they have largely been replaced by box magazines which successfully address these criticisms. The only more or less reliable drum magazine I have ever used is the 75-round RPK drum. Although heavy and robust, even it can prove to be cantankerous.

The original CIS concept was to pre-package ammunition in 60- or 100-round disposable drums. This proved impossible to sell to anyone. Repeated use of the early drums resulted in a problem of slow follower rise during environmental testing. The 60-round drum was discarded and the 100-round drum was completely redesigned. The new drum has a slightly larger diameter with only three tracks instead of four. The feed lip and loading gate are now of metal construction. The rear plate remains trans-



SAR 80 rifle disassembled.

SAR 80 Assault Rifle Specifications

Caliber	5.56mm NATO
Operation	Gas. Four-position adjustable regulator with cut-off position for grenade launching. Short-stroke piston based on Armalite AR-18 system. Fires from the closed-bolt position.
Cyclic rate	700-750 rpm
Feed mechanism	Staggered box M16 type; 20 or 30-rd. capacity.
Weight, empty	7.5 lbs.
Overall length	38.2 inches
Barrel	Six grooves with a right-hand twist of one turn in 12 inches. Button broached. Not chrome-lined. M16A1-type flash suppressor.
Barrel length	18.1 inches
Sights	Round front-sight post of the M16 type with protective ears; adjustable for elevation zero only. Flip peep-aperture rear of the M16 type with protective ears; adjustable for windage by rotating drum on right side. Sight radius of 20.4 inches.
Accessories	M16-type bipod, blank firing attachment, sling, cleaning kit and bayonet.
Status	In production. In service with the Singapore Armed Forces.
Manufacturer	Chartered Industries of Singapore Pte., Ltd., 249, Jalan Boon Lay, Singapore 2261.



parent plastic so the operator can readily check the rounds remaining. Even the plastic dust cover has been reconfigured from smooth to ribbed. That's good. You haven't lived until you've almost died trying to remove the dust cover on an M3A1 "grease gun" magazine in a stress environment.

CIS seems to have licked not only their early problems, but my generic objections to drum magazines. The two magazines I used in the SOF 2,000-round test and evaluation produced no stoppages. They had been in service with the CIS demo team for three months and had been reloaded at least 10 times prior to my use. M16-type magazines can also be employed, but two holes must first be drilled into their left wall to engage the magazine catches.

The magazine release button is positioned on the right side of the receiver. Large and grooved, it's convenient to locate and use. The magazine latch spring, a long steel bar, is mounted externally to the left side of the receiver. This has been criticized for its potential to snag jungle brush. But I doubt it is any more prone to do so than other parts protruding from the weapon.

There are three ways to reload the Ultimax 100 drum. Loading by hand is not difficult, but it is somewhat slow. The other two loading methods involve tools developed for this purpose. A portable unit that disassembles for greater compactness in the field accepts M16-type, 10-round stripper clips. A more elaborate device stands on four legs with a hopper to sort loose rounds. Both are equipped with a large, spring-loaded plunger handle. Both work efficiently. The usual assortment of other accessories, such as a sling, canvas carrying bag and a BFA (blank-firing attachment) are available.

Firing the Ultimax 100 is an interesting experience. There were no stoppages of any kind throughout the 2,000-round test sequence. Two barrels were used. They were changed every 400 rounds. I fired the weapon at a rate of approximately 100 rounds per minute. The CIS demo team often fires the Ultimax 100 in a continuous 100-round burst. Dramatic and impressive, but without application to the battlefield.

The weapon was cooled every 800 rounds until the barrels could be held in the bare hand. With the gas regulator adjusted properly, felt recoil is no more than a light tap on the shoulder. As a consequence, hit probability and accuracy potential are very high — amazing in a machine gun weighing little more than 10 pounds. And a loaded 100-round drum adds only another 3.4 pounds. CIS requirements for mean dispersion at 100 meters are a sum of the horizontal and vertical spread no greater than 11 inches (10-shot group).

Continued on page 88

The SAR 80 bolt group was adapted from the system employed by the Armalite AR-18 assault rifle.

BARGING IN ON CHARLIE

Uncle Sam's Brownwater Navy

by Robert Andrews

MARINES may have grabbed most of the headlines in South Vietnam's I Corps, but they weren't the only ones fighting and dying there. In fact, we thought the Marines had it easy. When the rockets and mortar rounds rained down, they could jump into foxholes and bunkers.

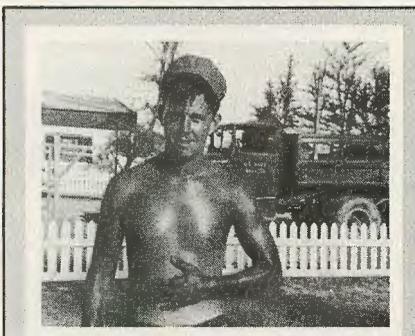
We poor souls manning the deck of a Navy river boat could rule out running for cover. We just sat tight and hoped like hell that Charlie would miss.

There were a few advantages to river boat duty, though. The YFU-82 (Harbor Utility Craft) was constructed with the shallow rivers of Vietnam in mind. It was the largest river boat to navigate the muddy waters of I Corps. And like most large boats, Harbor Utility Craft had more room for the comforts of home. The six-man crew had hot and cold running water, a stove and refrigerator, and air conditioning that worked about half the time.

But each crewman had an M16 and a .45 pistol and the hardware wasn't for show. We were the ducks in Charlie's shooting gallery. The VC celebrated most of our runs with fireworks so we had to be ready to party.

Dodging bullets was distracting, but cargo was our big problem. You name it and we delivered it. The forward welldeck was large enough to transport a tank, a jeep and 100 Marines with room to spare. That was a good load for us, of course. Charlie thought twice before pissing off that much firepower.

Usually we didn't have that much hardware and manpower. Our average load con-



After a day of engine repair in Da Nang, the author looks for a place to clean up.

RIVER RAT JOCKEY

Robert Andrews saw the Vietnam War from a different angle than most vets. Instead of paddies and jungles, he saw the waterways that were often the lifeline for troops operating in the rugged terrain of I Corps.

Andrews served in the U.S. Navy for three-and-a-half years as an E-4 engine man and completed eight-and-a-half months of his Vietnam tour of duty on a river boat before he was sent home with a broken back, the result of a boat explosion.

He currently works with Marshall County Police Department in Plymouth, Indiana, where he holds the rank of line sergeant.

Andrews has had four articles published in SOF's *I Was There* column.

sisted of pallets of black powder and artillery projectiles. One well-placed shot would have vaporized us.

My first river run was the same day I reported in-country — 1 May 1970. We pulled away from the Lighterage Causeway in Da Nang and headed out to sea. Three miles off the coast we caught up with a freighter loaded with black powder. We tied up alongside and they lowered a forklift into our welldeck. The forklift driver would no sooner get one pallet stacked when they dropped another in behind him. When he was finished the pallets were stacked two high, with about four feet of the load sticking above the sides of the welldeck. I thought it was stupid to advertise our cargo that way, but I was the New Guy. I kept my mouth shut. We remained three miles off the coast and traveled eighty miles north to Cua Viet. The craftmaster stopped just long enough to pick up two bags of mail and an Army sergeant. As we pulled off the Cua Viet ramp the sergeant told us that there had been a mining incident a few days before.

The craftmaster sounded the red alert horn and put us at battle stations for the eight-mile river run to Dong Ha. I was placed on the portside .50-cal. machine gun. I almost forgot where I was.

A cool breeze fanned over me and I eased back and enjoyed the scenery. Two miles up the river from Cua Viet the crack of a rifle shot sent me spinning back to reality. I whipped the barrel of the .50 to the bow and was ready to return fire, but the craftmaster grabbed me by the arm and pointed to the

Army sergeant standing on top of the well-deck wall. An M14 bucked at his shoulder as little geysers of water erupted just ahead of the boat.

The craftmaster saw my obvious confusion and as the boat slowed, he explained to me that the sergeant had seen a paint brush bobbing in the river. That made no sense at all to me until he explained that the Cong often attached some common object to their mines. The paint brush might be a mine flotation device. Since they didn't always use the same thing twice, a sharpshooter had to fire on anything that floated.

After emptying a magazine and failing to blow up the paint brush the craftmaster pulled the boat ahead slowly. As the boat neared the paint brush the Army sergeant motioned the craftmaster to continue. When the bow came even with the paint brush the sergeant waved his arm to the left and the craftmaster responded by steering the boat to port. The paint brush had been floating in one foot of water over a sand bar. The run continued.

When we arrived at Dong Ha and dropped our ramp, four Vietnamese women with forklifts unloaded the boat. The

women handled the forklifts like turnpike truckers. Each move was well-planned and they treated the pallets of black powder like eggs going to market. Once the craft was empty, we got underway for seaside. The run back downriver was uneventful.

Mostly uneventful, that is. Rounding a bend in the river, we came upon two Vietnamese fishermen in a sampan. When the craftmaster blasted two notes on the boat's whistle warning them to get out of our way, they stopped in the middle of the river and just looked at us. The craftmaster thought they might be planting a mine so maybe a little machine-gun chatter would light a fire under them. I was ordered to open up.

Now the Marines at Camp Pendleton had showed me how to fire a .50, but I never said I was any good at it — I sunk the boat. As we fished the two men out of the river, it was obvious that they weren't very happy with us. Maybe a few smiles and two cartons of Salem cigarettes would make them happier. The cigarettes went over pretty good, but the smiles were a waste of time.

Some wise-ass on my boat drew a picture of the boat I'd sunk and put a big X on it — I found it taped to my wall locker. The craftmaster told me that I only had to sink six more to rank as an ace.

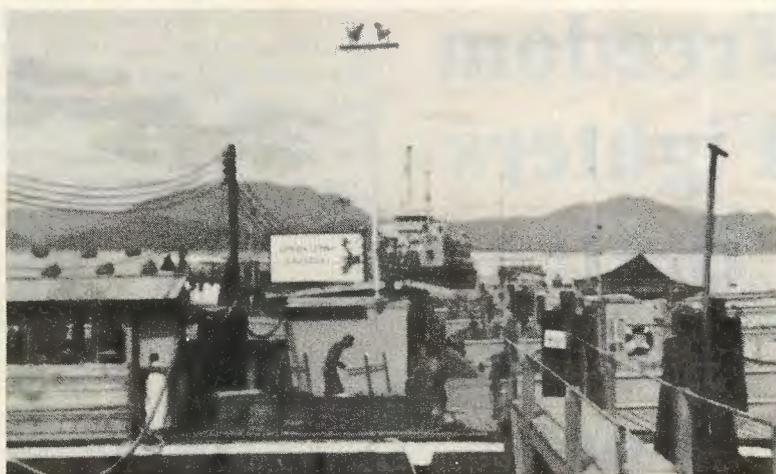
When we reached Da Nang there wasn't time to resupply before we had travel orders again, this time for Dong Ha. The load we picked up sure made the crew happy. It was a mixed load of small-arms ammo, and several pallets of beer. While en route to Cua Viet the crew got busy and opened the pallets. The cases of beer were to be used as trading stock, and the ammo was put in our ammo locker. I was told that most of the time our requests for ammo, engine parts, and food were turned down. So every time we got the chance to pick up a little extra trading stock, we did it. When the boat requested four cans of .50 ammo we'd get one. The craftmaster hated down time, so when we needed engine parts to keep us going it meant a midnight raid on Navy warehouses or stripping another boat on the causeway. Food wasn't a big problem. What we didn't get from the Navy we picked up from the Australian freighters in the bay. They got the stolen beer and we got the choice cut steaks that were going to the officers' club at Da Nang.

Pulling into Cua Viet was a rerun of our last trip. Two bags of mail for Dong Ha and one passenger, this time an Army lieutenant. He had only been in-country for a week and was going to Dong Ha for his first assignment. I thought I was new — this guy still had an umbilical cord attached.

On this run, my imagination got the best of me. I saw snipers in the corn fields, along the river bank and in the water. It was as if I had been dipped in ice water. I think they call it fear.

But some might call it premonition. On the south side of the river, about one hundred yards in the middle of an open field,

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NEITHER RAIN, NOR SLEET, NOR ENEMY FIRE...

Elements of the Third Marine Amphibious Force stormed onto Red Beach, Da Nang, in March 1965 to protect the vital Da Nang air base from the Viet Cong. With the Marines firmly established in I Corps Tactical Zone (the five northernmost provinces in South Vietnam), it was not long before the Navy got into the act and assumed its historical role of supporting the Marines in combat.

Shortly after the Marines were inserted, it became clear that an advance supply base would have to be constructed in I Corps and headquartered in Da Nang, Vietnam's second largest city. For the first time since World War II, there was a requirement for the U.S. Navy to move ashore from ships and establish a major logistic support base at a remote location. And it had to be done without months of prior planning.

The Operations Department was formed on 15 October 1965 concurrent with the establishment of the U.S. Naval Support Activity, Da Nang. From a modest beginning with only 60 small craft and a handful of men, the department grew to over 3,500 USN personnel and operated or controlled more than 350 ships and craft.

Home base: Lighterage Causeway, Da Nang.

The Operations Department transported cargo in lighterage craft from Da Nang to offload sites at shallow draft ports, beaches and ramps along the coast and up the rivers of I Corps. These deployments were unique because craft not designed for lengthy operations completed thousands of day-and-night coastal transits, often under extremely hazardous monsoon conditions. Mother Nature's obstacles were enough to make life difficult for the sailors, but there was even more. Mines and the threat of swimmer-sappers, rocket, mortar and small-arms attacks livened things up some.

River craft making the supply runs were YFUs (harbor utility craft), LCUs (utility landing craft) and LCM-8s and LCM-6s, some of which even saw action during the granddaddy of all beach assaults — the D-Day invasion.

In its short four-and-a-half-year history, the Lighterage Division alone suffered more than six percent of all Navy personnel killed in Vietnam. The men were not forgotten, though — seven Silver Stars were awarded to men of this division. Thirty-seven lighterage craft proudly display the Presidential Unit Citation for operations during the 1968 Tet offensive.

DAYLIGHT RAID

RISKS are one thing. People who voluntarily go into a war zone confront in their own minds that certain risks are understood. Just being there is a physical risk. And as every war veteran who has ever lost a buddy in combat knows, making close friends in a war zone is an emotional risk.

But *foolish* risks are something else again. Deep in Kabul Province — the area of Afghanistan most firmly under the jackboot of Soviet invaders — I have a nervous suspicion that my hosts are embarking on a questionable mission.

My Afghan translator, Haliq, seeks in his own way to ease my worry. He jams a full magazine into his Chinese Type 56-1 assault rifle as he explains why our mujahid group will risk a daytime attack on a fort over open ground.

“We have information that the government army post will surrender soon after we attack it. The morale of Afghan soldiers is very low. They are tired of being forced by the Soviets to fight their Afghan brothers,” he says.

The freedom fighters with whom I am traveling are part of about 200 mujahideen under Commander Abdul Mohammed, who is himself a former member of the Afghan Army. His irregular force is part of Jamiat-i-Islami, one of six major resistance organizations frustrating the Soviet occupation army. Abdul Mohammed is intelligent, low-key and well-respected by his men. After Afghanistan's communist coup in 1978, he persuaded much of his division to desert and join in the fight against Afghanistan's puppet regime.

Aided by the Soviet invaders, Afghan government troops repaid Mohammed by storming into his family home and shooting his mother and sister as they sat down to lunch. Seven years have passed. Despite the tremendous struggle, bloody bitterness and death that have crossed his path since then, Abdul Mohammed remains undaunted in his march to free a country that has been his homeland for untold centuries.

I had joined him and a 20-man platoon in Pakistan six weeks earlier. Our long, arduous march through Khyber Pass and over the mountainous border has brought us to our base camp, one of a series of caves overlooking a mountain valley in Kabul Province. The caves were dug out of the low

Freedom Fighters Batter Kabul Fort

Text and photos

by Philip Edwards

FREELANCE ADVENTURER

This article covers the last days of Philip Edwards' recent six-week foray into Afghanistan, his first time in that country. Although he has no military background, Edwards obviously has a yen for adventure. As this issue went to press, he was planning his second trip into the war-torn nation. Edwards, 26, received a college degree in zoology and has worked as a professional ornithologist. “But I've always been interested in Central Asia, particularly Afghanistan. I've always wanted to go there, especially since the war started and they've received very little help.” How did he develop such a craving for action and adventure? “My Mom blames it on the *National Geographic* she left in the bathroom when I was growing up.” Thanks, Mrs. E. And welcome aboard, Philip, for your first appearance in *Soldier of Fortune*.

yellow cliffs by the British in the 19th century for protection from Afghan warriors. The Crown made one of history's many futile attempts to invade and rule Afghanistan. Today the caves are used by the Holy Warriors in their desperate fight for independence from Soviet military rule.

The army post targeted for attack is just a two-hour march downstream from our position. Using binoculars we can see the garrison's white sentry post from the mouth of our cave. We are less than 10 miles from the capital city of Kabul, where the Soviet military presence in Afghanistan is heaviest.

My interpreter, Haliq, and a dozen others outside the cave finish cleaning and loading their automatic rifles and begin packing heavy weapons. Everything is set by noon. A Chinese Type 53 82mm mortar, a Russian 73mm SPG-9 recoilless gun and rounds for both are strapped to two horses and a mule.

After completing all their other preparations to leave, Usman and Masoud, two of Abdul Mohammed's fighters, prepare an Islamic rite of blessing, this one for holy warriors about to do battle. They hold between them parchment containing verses from the Koran, the Moslem world's most sacred text, wrapped in white cloth. The last thing each of the mujahideen do before leaving is to kiss the cloth and step beneath it.

I curiously watch Usman assist in this rite. On the trip from Pakistan, I have spent much time with him. He has tried to teach me bits and pieces of his language, and I have reciprocated. In this awkward fashion we have grown close to each other, developing an unspoken kinship. Despite the somberness of the occasion, Usman and the others smile at me as I photograph the ritual.

As we move out, Nur, a former Soviet tank crewman, takes the point with a Chinese 40mm grenade launcher slung over his shoulder. The column winds single-file down the gravelly slope to the stream we will follow to the post. Nur was captured two years ago by Abdul Mohammed after his tank was ambushed and destroyed by Mohammed's men. Nur pleaded with his captors for his life, saying he also was a Moslem and wanted to join in the fight against the godless Soviet aggressors. Nur's story was plausible to his captors. They knew his home territory, the southern

Soviet republic of Tadjikistan, is full of devout Moslems who have suffered long and hard under oppression by the communist government in faraway Moscow. After six months of secret surveillance, Abdul Mohammed was satisfied his prisoner was not a spy. Nur has been one of his best fighters since then.

After 90 minutes of walking, we halt at a small village of mud houses. Several guerilla groups cooperating in the attack have agreed to rendezvous here. Ours is the first to arrive, slumping along a mud wall for rest.

Plopping down next to me, Usman smiles and gives me an apple from his pouch. I

enthusiastically devour the fruit while he watches with a grin. After tossing the core away, I pull my hat down over my eyes for a snooze.

But Usman wants entertainment from the Westerner. He nudges my side and tries out one of the few English words I've taught him. "Pho-tos?" he carefully pronounces.

I ignore him, pretending to already be asleep. But Usman knows better. He chuckles and prods my ribs even harder. "Phil-ip, pho-tos." I try to maintain my ruse, but Usman persists, laughing at what he knows is fake slumber.

Finally, I crack a laugh myself. I sit up and pull out a few of the photos I carry —

girlfriend, Afghan friends, relatives and the like. He looks carefully at each one and smiles, occasionally pointing and indicating that he likes the way the person looks or that they remind him of someone he knows. He returns them with a "Thank you."

Throughout the afternoon small bands of mujahideen like ours file into the village, swelling the ranks gathered along the wall. We will launch the attack at 1600. The commanders reason that a late-afternoon assault will leave them all night to take the post if it does not surrender as expected.

By 1500 over 100 modestly armed mujahideen have gathered. The word comes down to prepare to march. The fort is only a

Undeterred by being an outstanding target, an Afghan freedom fighter shoulder-fires a 73mm recoilless gun at the Afghan army garrison.



KIA

Usman, right, cares for an injured village girl as her father watches. A week later when the author/photographer accompanied Usman and his mujahid group in a daylight attack on a fort near Kabul, Usman lost his foot in a landmine explosion. Edwards and Usman's other friends succeeded in getting him to a doctor two hours away. Then they set off on a three-day race to get him to a border hospital. Usman died the first night as they struggled through the high mountains toward Khyber Pass.

short walk. The commanders divide the force into units according to what type of weapons they carry. I join a six-man recoilless gun crew. There are at least 10 recoilless gun crews in our force.

Soon after leaving the village, we climb away from the stream. We cross a few hundred yards of bare ground to reach a chest-high wall of rock. The fault snakes along hardscrabble earth for several hundred yards in each direction.

Crawling up to the rocky wall, I peer over the rim. There is the fort, a gigantic earthen block that is almost the only thing sticking up across 500 yards of bare, flat, wide-open ground. Naked mountains rise behind it. So this escarpment will be our firing line — and our only cover.

I begin to grow more skeptical. A daylight attack over bare ground against a heavily fortified position. I know the fort must have superior firepower, too, because

Abdul Mohammed and his fellow commanders are motivated to attack because of their need to capture weapons and ammo. International aid has been insufficient and erratic. As I gaze at our target, the plan hardly seems tactically sound.

Saying a quick, silent prayer, I hope Haliq's forecast of quick surrender holds true. The mujahideen seem confident.

I try to reassure myself. At least our foe is a garrison of Afghan army regulars — not



BELOW: Under return fire from the government fort, mujahideen with a 73mm Soviet recoilless gun run for scarce cover. Two plumes of smoke rising over the fort attest to the gun crew's skill and accuracy. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Afghan freedom fighter wields a Chinese 40mm Type 69 grenade launcher during the daytime attack on a government army post near Kabul. **BOTTOM CENTER:** Thick smoke rising from the garrison probably means major damage. Suffering at the hands of such modestly armed and poorly supplied guerrilla bands, plus the reluctance of the Soviets to send helicopters from only five miles away to defend the outpost, can only serve to further demoralize Afghan government troops barricaded inside. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Two Afghan freedom fighters support an attack on the fort with fire from an RPD, left, and a PKM.



the well-trained Soviet troops usually deployed in this area. Since the communist takeover, the Afghan army has shrunk from 80,000 troops to 30,000, mainly due to desertions to the mujahideen. And this is in face of an intense and highly intimidating door-to-door conscription campaign.

Moreover, I tell myself, what remains of the army is largely demoralized and unreliable, as Haliq had said. I have heard reports that when they are on joint operations, Soviet troops confiscate weapons every night from their Afghan comrades. Apparently Ivan is afraid that these weapons might be given voluntarily to guerrilla infiltrators under cover of darkness. Then there is always the possibility that the Afghan soldiers might turn these weapons on their Soviet "allies."

A scream startles me from my reverie.

"Allah Akbar!" cries a gunner from atop the wall. I look up as his recoilless gun spews forth a deafening blast of fire and smoke. He is right: God is great. The first round is a direct hit, blasting mud and timbers from above the sally port.

I look at my watch. It is 1600 precisely. Bullets from medium and heavy machine guns are already chipping shards of mud from the fort wall.

Very quickly return fire begins ping-pong off the rock wall in front of me and whining overhead. I duck and the recoilless gunner jumps for cover. There is a lull. I risk a peep over the rim. Along the fort's ramparts a yellow stitching of heavy machine-gun fire flashes and crashes. Rock chips and dust rain down on me as I crouch again just before the rounds begin chewing at our rock cover.

Then I hear it. The tell-tale *ka-thunk, ka-thunk, ka-thunk* of dropped rounds leaving mortar tubes inside the garrison. There will be no quick, easy surrender. They will fight. This thought is driven home with emphasis as the ground shakes with the impact of mortar rounds behind us.

Then return fire breaks off. The soldier next to me, the recoilless gunner, immediately jumps back up on the wall with his weapon to take aim. If a sniper in the garrison is watching, this guy must make a truly outstanding target.

"Allah Akbar!" he screams before unleashing another jolting report from the recoilless gun. His aim is exemplary. This and another well-placed round elicit a gray plume of heavy smoke from inside the fort.

I begin to understand. No doubt about it.

In Afghanistan, God speaks through the muzzle of a 73mm recoilless gun.

By sundown smoke is rising from the fort in two places. The mujahideen still cannot advance on the fort until complete darkness. So the battle remains a distant exchange of mortar, rocket and automatic weapons fire.

Just as the sun drops behind the mountains on the opposite side of the fort and we consider a possible advance, the enemy ups the ante significantly. A jarring explosion

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AIR APACHES ACROSS THE PACIFIC

Ma Deuce Beefs Up B-25s

by Lawrence Hickey

In early 1943, fifteen months after the Japanese devastated the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, a new weapons system was being tested which would have a profound effect on the conduct of the war in the Pacific — the B-25 strafer.

In Australia, at the rear base of the newly constituted 5th Air Force, Major Paul I. "Pappy" Gunn, an engineer and tinkerer

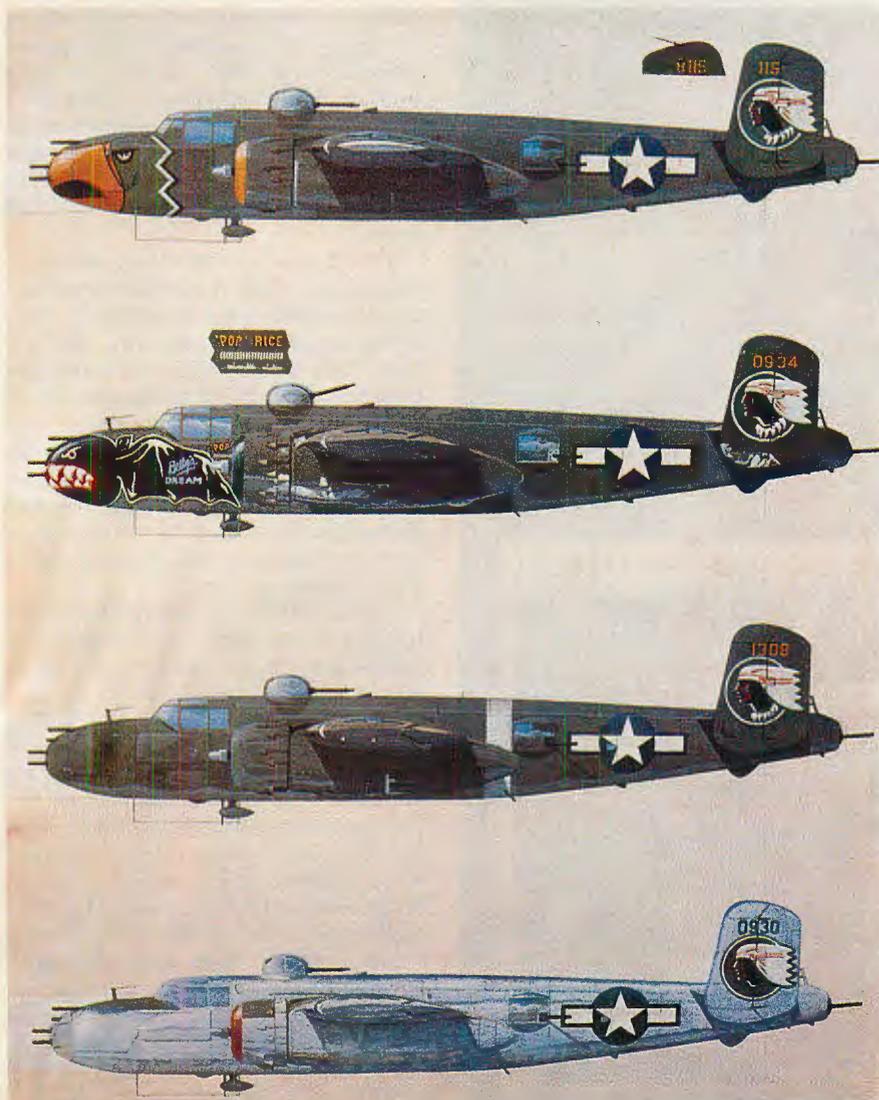
who had recently escaped from the Philippines, was about to unleash a devastating machine for eliminating Japan's ability to make and sustain war in the Southwest Pacific. By removing the bombardier-navigator from his greenhouse compartment in the nose of the "Mitchell" bomber, Gunn found he could install eight (later as many as 14) forward-firing .50-caliber

AIR POWER HISTORIAN

Lawrence J. Hickey has been fascinated by aviation since his boyhood in Kansas. In 1966, he graduated from Rockhurst College in Kansas City with a degree in history. He spent the next year living with a Vietnamese family in Saigon while working as a researcher for the Department of the Air Force. During this period, he traveled widely throughout Vietnam and flew as an observer on numerous combat missions.

After completing detailed studies on the effects of air operations in Southeast Asia, he returned to the U.S. where he entered graduate school at Georgetown University. He also began a career as an analyst for the Defense Intelligence Agency, where he took over the South Vietnam political desk. During the next four years, Larry served in the Order of Battle Section, the Southeast Asia Situation Room and as Political Analyst for North Vietnam. Concurrently, he served as a consultant to the National Security Council Staff on enemy plans and operations.

At the direction of the president, he returned to Vietnam in 1970 to conduct research in the Mekong Delta for a major ceasefire planning study. After a highly successful intelligence career, Larry left government service in 1972 to become a private businessman. He lives in Boulder, Colorado with his wife Sue and two stepsons, and is the president of jewelry manufacturing and publishing companies.



B-25J-11 # 43-28115, 498th Squadron at Ie Shima, August 1945

B-25J-32 # 44-30934, Betty's Dream, 499th Squadron at Ie Shima, August 1945

B-25J-32 # 44-31308, 500th Squadron at Ie Shima, August 1945

B-25J-32 # 44-30930, 501st Squadron at Ie Shima, August 1945

machine guns in an aircraft originally designed to conduct its missions from 8,000 to 12,000 feet. This was born the low-level B-25 strafing, a weapon which would revolutionize warfare in the Southwest Pacific and unleash the hell-raising aerial hot-rod that lived in the souls of many young Air Corps medium-bombardment pilots.

In March, a handful of strafers underwent their baptism of fire off the northern coast of New Guinea, a massive island just north of Australia. In that action, known as the Battle of the Bismarck Sea, the planes played a decisive role in the wrecking of an important Japanese convoy. The strafers used their devastating firepower to suppress the deck guns of the Japanese escorts, then swooped in at mast-top height to skip 500-pound bombs into the sides of the Japanese ships. Four destroyers and eight troop transports loaded with reinforcements for the fighting in northern New Guinea went to the bottom.

During the summer of 1943, another role for the B-25 strafers was defined. With each

bomb bay loaded with over 200 23-pound parachute fragmentation bombs, waves of B-25 strafers flying at a hundred feet rained deadly hail on the airfields of the Japanese 4th Air Army around Wewak, New Guinea, leaving them littered with the wreckage of over 200 aircraft.

In June a new American bombardment group consisting of the 498th, 499th, 500th and 501st Squadrons arrived on the scene after ferrying just over sixty B-25s on the dangerous route across the Pacific from California to Australia where they joined the fierce struggle to wrest control of New Guinea from the Japanese. Within months, the 345th's exploits over Wewak and Rabaul became legend.

By mid-1944 Japanese air units had been driven from New Guinea and the mighty Japanese air and naval bastion at Rabaul, on the nearby island of New Britain, had been reduced to impotence. Throughout the campaign, the 345th — now known as the Air Apaches — played a key role in the fighting and photographs from cameras mounted on



This dramatic photo was taken from the 499th's *Ruthless Ruth* during the fighting on 6 April. Photo: Maurice J. Eppstein Collection

The Air Apaches located two frigates steaming near Quemoy Island off the China coast on 6 April. Capt. George H. Musket scored a direct hit with a 500-pound bomb. Photo: Eppstein Collection



the tails of their aircraft often made the front pages of newspapers around the world.

Through the late summer of 1944, the 345th helped wrest control of the islands between New Guinea and the Philippines from the Japanese, scouring enemy airfields with bullets and parafrags and sweeping the seas clean of shipping. In October they were chosen to be the first American bomber group to land in the Philippines and the troop transports of the unit's ground echelon were subjected to some of the first attacks by the Japanese kamikaze suicide corps — which cost the 345th over 100 dead.

By early 1945, the Air Apaches had been instrumental in knocking out scores of Japanese air fields in the Philippines, had sunk dozens of merchant ships and had often rendered critical air support to U.S. infantry units slugging it out with the Japanese on the islands of Leyte and Luzon. It was on the latter island, from the air base at San Marcelino, that the 345th undertook

the mission of closing down the critical Japanese over-water supply routes which stretched around the perimeter of the Asian mainland. Over the next few weeks the 345th hunted the South China Sea from the shores of Formosa, westward along the China coast to Hong Kong and the Island of Hainan, then southward along the French Indochina coast as far as Saigon. Between the Air Corps strafers and U.S. Navy submarine wolf packs, the critical sea lanes upon which Japan depended for much of its food and raw materials were made virtually impassable to the Japanese convoys. But the cost was high, and in the month of March alone, the 345th lost a quarter of its aircraft and crews to Japanese anti-aircraft gunners.

In late March 1945, one last major Japanese convoy attempted to make the run from Saigon across the China Sea to Formosa. Consisting of seventeen ships — six cargo vessels and tankers escorted by eleven warships — the convoy was detected by radar search planes and U.S. submarines as

it moved up the Indochina Coast toward Hainan Island. The 345th first hit the convoy on 29 March sinking two escorting Kaibokan-class frigates and at least one oil tanker, and damaging several other ships before the rest made their escape into an area of rain squalls and fog. More vessels fell prey to U.S. submarines.

The next day the 345th lost two planes to the convoy escort as the surviving ships rode at anchor in Yulin Bay off the south coast of Hainan Island. By 2 April, aerial reconnaissance photographed one of the surviving vessels in Hong Kong. A strange short-bowed warship was also photographed in the harbor. This was the Kagero-class destroyer Amatsukazi (Heavenly Wind). Displacing 2,553 tons, it carried a special high-pressure boiler which allowed it to make over 34 knots — one of the fastest ships in the Japanese Navy.

Earlier in the war, the bow of the Amatsukazi immediately forward of the bridge had been blown completely away by a torpedo



hit from an American submarine. The ship was towed to Saigon where a steel-plate jury-rigged bow had been welded in place. Nearly as swift as ever, the destroyer had left Saigon with the Japanese convoy, hoping to make a shipyard in Japan where the bow could be rebuilt.

But it was now evident that the surviving merchant ships had no chance of running the American blockade, so on the night of April, the Amatsukazi and Kaibokan-class escorts Number 1 and 134 left Hong Kong steaming northeastward at full speed for the Formosa Straits and Japan. The 345th was alerted and made a sweep of the ship's line of route during the daylight hours of the 6th, but visibility was poor and no contact was made.

Forecasters indicated that the weather along the China coast would improve on the 6th, setting the scene for a furious battle which produced the most spectacular series of combat aviation photographs of World War II.



INTELLIGENCE estimated that the convoy seen leaving Hong Kong on April 5th would be steaming east-northeast along the coast of China somewhere between Amoy and Swatow by midday on the 6th. The Air

Still underway and fighting, the Amatsukazi was finally sunk. Capt. Albin V. Johnson, the 498th Squadron Leader, was credited with the kill. Photo: William R. Witherell Jr. Collection

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A Japanese frigate under attack by Air Force Apaches near Amoy, China on 6 April, 1945. The photo was dubbed "The Air Picture of the Year" by the Army Air Force's intelligence magazine IMPACT. Photo: U.S. Air Force



DEATH FROM THE DEEP

Naval Commandos Haunt Gs

Text and photos by Steve Salisbury



Salvadoran commandos practice infiltration during training exercises.

CADET Rafael Guzmán clearly recalled that sunny day on El Salvador's coast last April. Six guerrillas had approached the beach in two canoes without a worry in the world. What the terrorists did not know was that in a matter of minutes they would be nothing but bullet-ridden corpses floating in the lagoon's surf, ambush victims of Cadet Guzmán's 15 Naval Commandos, the Salvadoran version of U.S. Navy SEALs.

"They were making their rounds to shake down the peasants for 'war taxes,'" said the budding Naval Commando officer who had already commanded several forays into guerrilla country. Because the Salvadoran Navy has a shortage of commissioned officers, it has had to rely on cadets still in training. And what better way to get on-the-job training?

Guzmán searched his memory. "At first we thought they were fishermen. But then the villagers came running, telling us they were guerrillas. When they disembarked, we saw their weapons and opened fire. A couple were killed immediately. The others tried to escape."

But that was out of the question. The commandos had been practicing their ambush techniques the last two weeks with their American instructors and an alert M60 machine-gunner finished the fleeing guerrillas with ferocious enfilade fire. The commandos recovered four M16 automatic rifles and plenty of ammo. The two other rifles were lost in the water.

"The *campesinos* were happy," remembered Cadet Guzmán. "We killed three *comandantes*. Ironically, we had captured one of them, Veneno, months ago, but the Sixth Brigade had to release him under pressure from the Red Cross. He's not going to be released again." The cadet's cat-like grin made his satisfaction clear.

"The *campesinos* said this was the first time they had seen the armed forces kill all the guerrillas and not have any casualties." All this certainly was a change from the days when army battalions would sweep the coast, rarely recovering weapons, but routinely suffering casualties.

Three years ago, the Salvadoran Navy decided a Naval Commando force would be better suited to fighting an insurgency than conventional Marine formations. (The Navy now believes a Marine battalion is essential, too, and started training one last February.) In August of 1982, the Naval Commando unit was formed with 60 men just back from infantry training at Fort Benning or Panama. Today the Naval Commandos number 330 men, including 12 frogmen, 90 base security troops and 110 men who regularly man the weapons aboard Piranhas and other high-speed patrol boats. Aspiring to match the daring of U.S. SEALs at Grenada or the finesse and lightning-striking power of Marine Force Recon in Vietnam, El Salvador's Naval Commandos are determined to keep communist guerrillas from establishing beachheads on the coastal areas of their homeland. The Naval Commandos regularly prowl mangroves, coconut forests and beaches in eight- to 15-man teams, ambushing guerrilla columns and raiding rebel encampments.

Although the occurrence of close combat has been low, the Naval Commandos have badly hurt the guerrillas. Just the threat of Naval Commando ambushes and raids has seriously hampered rebel activity. Lieutenant Marco Palacios, commander of the Naval Commando First Company, put it all in perspective. "We use guerrilla tactics. Our action is mostly psychological. The guerrillas never know where we are, but they know we're there. Even when we're not there, they are thinking about us. The guerrillas are scared."

I knew the commandos had been doing well. In late March, on a visit to Captain Humberto Villalta, Commandant of El Salvador's Navy, I got the lowdown. "Come and see them operate," Capt. Villalta told me from his office in San Salvador.

The Salvadoran Navy — not to mention the Naval Commandos — has been virtually ignored by the international media. The only major publication to have previously published an article about the Salvadoran Navy is *Soldier of Fortune* (see "Patrolling Hot Waters, SOF, December, '84). I immediately accepted Captain Villalta's invitation.

At 0930 on 12 April, I boarded a commercial air taxi from San Salvador to the eastern Salvadoran port of La Unión where the Naval Commandos are based. Stiff crosswinds tossed the 206 Cessna about as we moved over the Salvadoran countryside. Under the clear sky I could see the shores of all three countries upon which the Gulf's warm waters wash: El Salvador, Honduras and



Patrol boat security: A Salvadoran sailor and his 25mm chain gun scan the distance for signs of trouble.

Nicaragua. The landing was about as rough as the flight. But from there everything went smoothly. Capt. Villalta, clad in natty green fatigues, was awaiting me at the runway.

"¡Hola! Steve." The burly captain smiled and clasped an arm around me. "What good luck. You're here in time to join Operation *Esperanza*."

Operation *Esperanza* was the largest Naval Commando operation to date. It involved 67 commandos in a foray along El Espino beach, a traditionally guerrilla-controlled area 60 clicks southwest of La Union. Capt. Villalta swears that it is a major receiving point for arms and ammunition shipped to the rebels from Sandinista Nicaragua. In some places the stretch of gulf waters separating Nicaragua and El Salvador is as short as 20 miles. The Reagan Administration has long maintained that Nicaragua has been shipping weapons to the Salvadoran guerrillas. The sailors based at La Union will not only confirm that for you, they will tell you precisely how it's accomplished. They see plenty of it.

In early August of 1984, General Paul Gorman, then-commander of the United States Southern Command headquartered in Panama, showed a congressional committee meeting in closed session, infrared aerial videotapes reportedly showing guerrillas unloading arms from fast, high-powered launches onto

remote beaches in El Salvador for further transport inland on donkey caravans. More recently, Napoleón Romero García, a high-ranking guerrilla commandant who defected to the government last April, revealed that 70 percent of the guerrillas' arms come from Nicaragua and are always secretly shipped in small boats.

"The weapons make a run that starts in the Nicaraguan department of Chinandega and enter Salvadoran territory always by sea near the localities of Jucarán and Montecristo in Usulután," the former guerrilla commander was quoted as saying in the Salvadoran newspaper *La Prensa Gráfica* in its 13 May issue. This was no news to El Salvador's senior naval officer who had planned Operation *Esperanza* hoping to surprise a subversive launch on El Espino off-loading arms from Nicaragua.

In an interview last August, Capt. Villalta spoke of the problem of catching the guerrillas red-handed. "Our problem is that we haven't been able to catch an embarkation from Nicaragua yet despite the fact that several boats always patrol the Gulf . . ." and this is still the case. Maybe the Naval Commandos would be lucky and catch one this time, though.

Capt. Villalta's valet took my bag and we climbed into a jeep. With the commandant of El Salvador's Navy at the wheel, we drove to headquarters. A sailor dressed in blue denim opened the gate and we entered the small compound. I waved to an American adviser driving out. Captain Villalta parked and we left the jeep for a couple sailors to wash. Climbing the shiny tiled stairs to a grimy two-story building, we headed for the officers' mess. A couple ensigns stood at attention and saluted. Capt. Villalta returned their salutes and we sat.

Captain Melchor, the gregarious commander of the Naval Commandos, entered the mess room. He saluted Capt. Villalta, then vigorously shook my hand. "*Que bueno!*"

"Steve's going to join the commandos at El Espino," interjected Capt. Villalta. "He needs gear."

"Of course," replied Capt. Melchor. He ordered a commando to bring it, then sat across the table from me. The commando soon returned with a knapsack, web gear and a spanking-clean M16.

At 1230, Capt. Melchor and I boarded a 75-foot cutter. The engines coughed into a deep-throated growl at the behest of the boat's chief engineman and we churned away from the dock. The 10 commandos I would be hitting the beach with the following morning were resting below deck. Heeding Capt. Melchor's comment that the Naval Commandos normally operate at night, I took a siesta in the cabin.

These Naval Commandos show their stuff during a mock amphibious assault.



The gray vessel rocked gently beneath my chair and I was asleep in a blink. However, I was awake when we cruised off El Espino an hour-and-a-half later. From beyond the palm trees softly swaying over its empty white sands, the guerrillas have been known to lob mortar rounds at patrol boats. We were out of light mortar range, but, just in case the Gs had anything heavier, a couple sailors were ready to respond with the 81mm mortar fixed under a .50-caliber machine gun in the stern. Two .50-cal. machine guns mounted on the port and starboard sides, along with a 25mm chain gun on the bow, rounded out the cutter's impressive armament. The guerrillas would be gluttons for punishment if they dared to attack us.

The fully camouflaged young commandos were up and about, raring to hit the beach. They had enough firepower to do it too — armed to the teeth with M16s, M60 machine guns, and M79 and M203 grenade launchers. But in broad daylight with peasant fishermen casting nets from small dugouts just offshore, the commandos would lose their most crucial weapon — surprise. We sailed on.

The Bay of Jiquilisco appeared before us two hours later. Its verdant mangroves gave way to the small harbor of Puerto Triunfo. We docked next to a dozen dilapidated trawlers and disembarked. A couple of commandos escorted me to a fenced-in adobe house where I met Captain Quijada, the commander of Puerto Triunfo's small detachment of Naval Commandos. The dark slender captain, poised in his beige dress uniform, did not know I was coming but treated his surprise guest very graciously. He was happy to practice his rusty English with an American. I was happy to chow down on the sumptuous baked shrimp his assistant served us in the patio.

After dinner, the captain led me into his office and showed me guerrilla caravan routes on the situation map. "The guerrillas try to avoid combat in this region." He ran his hand through his jet black hair. "Their mission is purely logistics. Our job is to cut it off. Sometimes we get lucky with an ambush here or an ambush there. But we don't have enough men to set ambushes along every trail they have been known to use. Fortunately, the BIM (the new Salvadoran Marine battalion in training) will be operating in a couple months."

We moved out again at 2200. Capt. Melchor was at the dock to see us off and he gave final instructions to the corporal commanding our unit as we boarded a 36-foot patrol boat and surged away from the dock into the oily black bay under a thin crescent moon.

Under fire: Salvadoran commandos take cover behind a bridge as they return fire after being attacked by guerrillas.



The bay was calm, but the open sea was rough. We lost our bearings in the choppy waves, but our wonder-kid skipper, dressed in a T-shirt and shorts, quickly put us back on course and we made our rendezvous with the two Piranhas that would take us ashore before daybreak. Two five-man groups climbed aboard the 27-foot speedsters and we kicked up spray through an inland channel back to the ocean where we anchored a couple clicks off the coast.

I drifted off to sleep only to be jarred awake at 0400 by the crash of mortar rounds in the distance. One of the three commando squads inserted the night before was raining terror on a guerrilla encampment with two 60 mike-mikes. That was our cue to continue to our point of disembarkation, an inlet several clicks west of El Espino. The Piranha crew lifted anchor and we slashed through the sea full-speed ahead following the glowing phosphorescent wake of the other Piranha. Ten minutes later our skipper slowed the twin 150-horsepower Johnson outboards to a quiet hum and we crept into the 100-meter gap of darkness separating the sandy shoreline which glowed in the moonlight. If the Gs were in the inlet, maybe they would not hear us. The Piranha gunners were not going to count on that, though — they trained .50-cal. and M60 machine guns on the pitch-black jungle, ready to unleash their awesome firepower at the first crack of



Taking it to the Gs: Salvadoran Naval Commandos are striking at the communists from the sea.

incoming rounds. We neared shore as much as our boat's shallow draft would permit, then disembarked.

Slogging through waist-high brine to the beach's dry white sand, we rejoined our other five team members. The first rays of dawn tinged the coast in a sepia glow. We walked five meters apart in Indian file along a jungle trail to a coconut grove where Lieutenant Marco Palacios, the commander of Operation *Esperanza*, and his six-man escort met us 20 minutes later.

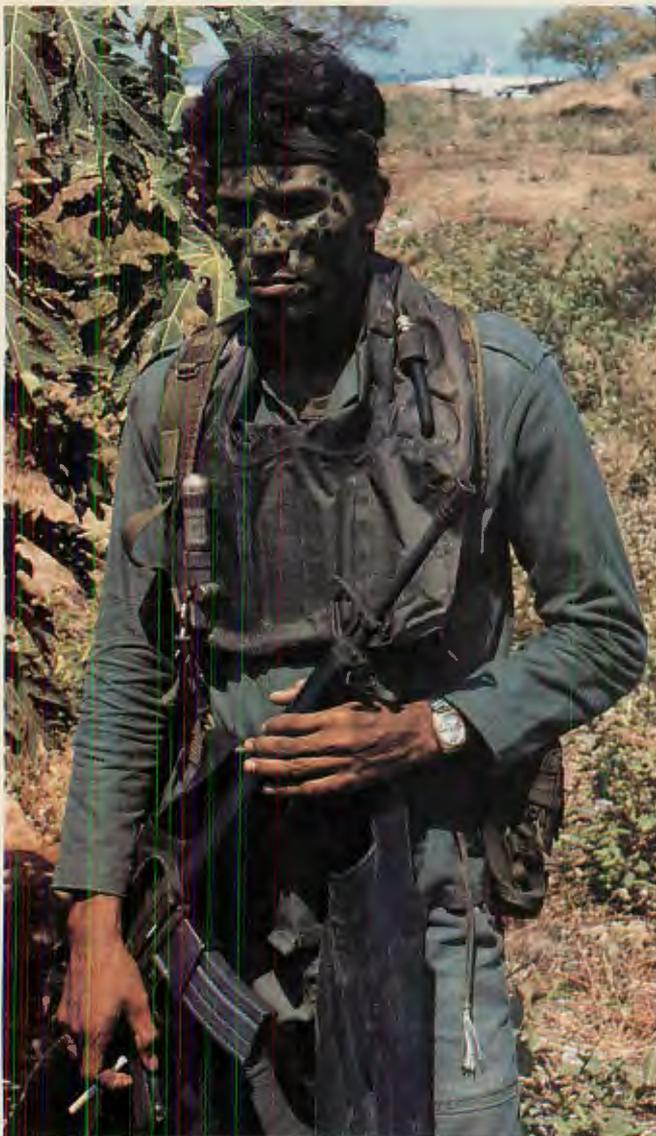
"Hey, it's *Soldier of Fortune!* Great!" said the surprised 26-year-old First Company commander in perfect English, firmly shaking my hand. "They told me an Alpha (American) was coming, but I didn't know it would be you." The grimy, unshaven warrior was wearing cammie fatigues, sweat-drenched from stalking terrorists all night. At first I didn't recognize the stocky, muscular lieutenant as the same clean-cut officer I had met over eight months ago in La Union.

El Salvador's Armed Forces have many fine junior officers. Lt. Palacios is one of the best. The top student of his class in the Salvadoran military academy in 1978, then-Cadet Palacios was sent to the prestigious Naval School of Venezuela in September of that year. Four

years later he graduated first in his class in military education, naval aptitude and athletics — and he managed to earn a degree in mechanical engineering as well. Returning to El Salvador at the end of 1982, Lt. Palacios received his ensign's commission and command of a 100-foot cutter for eight months. U.S. Navy Lt. Cmdr. Albert Schaufelberger — the first member of the American military killed in El Salvador — recommended to the Salvadoran Navy's Commandant that the talented young ensign be the first Salvadoran sent to the Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL Training School in Coronado Island, California. After studying English for six months in the Defense Language Institute in Lackland, Texas, Palacios passed the grueling six-month SEAL course, then returned to his homeland to command a platoon of Naval Commandos for 10 months. On 1 January of this year the hard-driving lieutenant assumed command of the First Company. He loves his country and his job.

A scrawny boy from a nearby straw hut offered us piping-hot tortillas and a large bowl of black beans with *moronga*, fried pig's blood. Lt. Palacios graciously accepted the food.

"We usually don't accept food from the local population, but when we do, we almost always pay." This time the treat was on SOF. I handed Lt. Palacios a



The face of war: A Salvadoran frogman strikes a pose before a training mission.

five-colon note to give to the youngster.

"I thought we had the guerrillas yesterday." Lt. Palacios licked bean broth from his fingers. "The *campesinos* told us exactly where they were. But when we arrived, they were gone." We finished breakfast, returned the empty bowl to the kid, then resumed our hunt for that most dangerous quarry: terrorists.

Marching over grassy flat terrain, scanning the mangroves for guerrilla snipers, we reached a sleepy hamlet at the edge of a lagoon where the three other commando squads joined us. Lt. Palacios pointed to the parched foothills around the town of Jucuaran seven clicks away, a traditional battle site between the guerrillas and government forces.

"There are hundreds of guerrillas in those hills. The Belloso Battalion is now sweeping there trying to drive them south into our ambushes. But there is a lot of swampland for them to escape. At least our presence shows the *campesinos* that the guerrillas do not own this area."

According to the *campesinos*, the guerrillas claim to be the authorities here. The rebels distribute abandoned land to their sympathizers, impose "war taxes," draft young men and administer justice ranging from forcing a drunk to dig trenches in their encampments to executing government collaborators. "They're the law when the

army isn't here to protect us," lamented one old man.

The few peasants I talked with did not like the guerrillas one bit. They just wanted to be left in peace.

"But what can we do? The guerrillas have the guns," whispered one discreetly so as not to be overheard by a rebel supporter. There were many young men in the village who did not look too thrilled about the commandos' presence and could have easily been guerrillas on R&R. But as long as we did not have proof they were rebels, there was nothing we could do. It was impossible for us to know how many villagers sympathized with the Gs, but Lt. Palacios was determined to win their hearts and minds. He had his troops gather the villagers in front of a bamboo hootch for a *charla*, or talk.

Sinewy men dressed in tattered clothing doffed their straw hats. Plump women wearing smudged dresses held malnourished babies. Grimy children played in the dirt. Lt. Palacios spoke passionately to his audience of perhaps 50 people.

"Call them whatever you like: guerrillas, rebels, subversives, terrorists." Lt. Palacios' camouflage-painted face was serious. "You know better than anyone what they are: thieves. The facts don't lie. They barge into your homes and take your food without paying. They force you to pay 'war taxes.' They take your boats. They even take your children. They claim to be fighting for you. But when they cut power lines, you don't have electricity. The army isn't affected; the *cuartels* have generators. When we come, they flee. But when we leave, they quickly return to rob you again. They say we're fighting for the rich. Are you rich? We were *campesinos*, too, before becoming commandos. We know how hard you work. We're fighting so that you can enjoy the fruits of your labor. We're fighting for your opportunity to become rich. But how can that happen if the guerrillas steal what little you have? They don't work. They just live off your sweat. You're our boss. As you know, in the elections last year, the people elected a civilian president. We all know who he is. He's our commander-in-chief. If you don't like him, you can vote for someone else."

Guerrilla death threats stopped the villagers from voting in legislative elections two weeks ago.

"Some of you here may be confused and sympathize with the guerrillas," continued Lt. Palacios. "But remember the guerrillas are communists. The communists don't believe in God. How is someone going to care for you, if he doesn't care for God?"

Salvadoran commandos display M16s taken from the Gs. Many of these captured rifles have serial numbers indicating that they were left behind by the U.S. after the Vietnam War.





Lt. Palacios reloads magazines after a firefight.

Speeding out to sea, these Salvadoran commandos prepare for an infiltration drill.



A mentally retarded teenage boy leaning against a tree beside the lieutenant nodded his head in agreement.

"The communists deceived the Nicaraguans and look how those people suffer. I invite you to come with me to La Union and see the hundreds of Nicaraguan refugees who have risked their lives to come to our country. They may have nothing here, but at least they have freedom and can pray as they wish. I'd rather die with dignity than live under a criminal government like that of the Sandinistas' in Nicaragua now."

After the *charla*, the villagers returned to their fishing boats, fields and bamboo homes. It was hard to tell if the lieutenant's words had any impact on them. They had received hundreds of harangues from the guerrillas and were accustomed to listening patiently with deaf ears.

The commandos spent the rest of the day in ambush positions, gnawing on mangos and taking turns to rest. The tropical heat was suffocating. Lt. Palacios, wiping

sweat from his brow, squinted at the mangroves with frustration.

"There's an encampment of 50 guerrillas a kilometer from here in the mangroves. We tried to raid it last time, but the jungle is impenetrable. You have to know the guerrillas' paths, which are probably mined."

According to a Western military source, most of the Salvadoran Armed Forces casualties have been inflicted by mines and booby-traps so far this year.

"An air strike would really help us in this situation," continued Lt. Palacios. "At least it would blast clear some of the jungle for us to launch an assault. But it's very rare that we have Air Force support. We usually even have to evacuate our wounded by boat. All we can do is wait for the guerrillas to fall in our ambushes."

But that did not happen today. We had to settle for mortaring the rebel encampment at dusk, then marched a couple clicks to a once-beautiful beachfront home — now a dilapidated shell. There the commandos set ambushes again and took turns sleeping. The Gs did not fall into our deathtraps that night either. So it goes. Sometimes you wait forever and only kill the mosquitos swarming your sweaty body. Sometimes you hit pay dirt and wipe out a guerrilla unit.

Just before dawn we moved out in parallel movement with another unit. The two other squads stayed behind for security. Dawn broke and we walked through high grass a couple clicks inland. On the outskirts of the village of El Espino a couple campesinos carrying firewood told us the guerrillas were at a nearby bridge yesterday, but did not know if they were still there. In two prongs we cautiously approached the stone bridge, which crossed a shallow estuary. The guerrillas were gone. We searched for anything they may have left: empty C-ration containers, propaganda, booby-traps. We found nothing. The bridge has been the scene of several fierce firefights. The bullet-pocked walls and rubble of nearby buildings attest to that fact.

The next village showed the effectiveness of guerrilla terror. Lt. Palacios gathered maybe half of the village's 200-odd inhabitants for a *charla*. Many had just been at church and were still carrying their Bibles. "Viva the armed forces!" shouted an old man after the *charla*. He remembered when the armed forces crushed El Salvador's first communist insurrection in 1932. But instead of seconding him with hearty cheers, the crowd returned home conspicuously silent. I realized why, watching hard-faced youths roaming the dirt streets among adobe houses painted with guerrilla slogans such as "Death to Orejas (informants)." The eyes and ears of the Revolution were ubiquitous.

"You should stay so that the guerrillas won't come back," said a *campesino*. But a permanent presence of naval light infantry at this remote village could not be considered until the Marine battalion was trained, Lt. Palacios told me after the *campesino* left.

Lt. Palacios and I walked through the village reviewing our security. The sharp eyes of the lieutenant spotted a suspicious swathe of canvas wrapped around the base of a wooden pole erected atop the roof of a thatched hut.

"Who knows what they (the guerrillas) put up there," said an old woman, unconvincingly. Lt. Palacios ordered a commando to take it down. It was a huge guerrilla banner reading, "Long Live the 55 Years of Errorless Struggle of the PCS, 28th of March of 1930-1985." A yellow hammer and sickle acted as an exclamation mark after PCS, the initials of the Salvadoran Communist Party. Since the Gs wouldn't need it now it made a good souvenir for the First Company.

Lt. Palacios was incensed by the guerrilla campaign of

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SEAL SAGA

North Africa to Normandy to Nha Trang

by John B. Dwyer



U.S. Navy SEALs and South Vietnamese Marines prepare for a joint mission. Photo: U.S. Navy

UNITED States Navy SEAL (Sea-Air-Land) Teams have become a household word among unconventional warfare students. But where did their well-deserved reputation for toughness and efficiency come from? SEALs have not been around that long — their tactical operational methods come from three special Navy units that were forged in the hearth of WWII. The men who served in the Scouts and Raiders, Navy Combat Demolition Units (NCDUs) and Underwater Demolition Teams (UDTs) honed the varied skills that would later come together as the SEALs.

The first of these operational antecedents, the group

that can truly be called the “forgotten ancestor,” were the U.S. Navy Scouts and Raiders for Special Operations. When word was first put out for volunteers, the call went for those interested in joining a new “amphibious commando” group. The first 10 volunteers who answered that call came from General Tunney’s “Tunney Fish” Phys-Ed outfit.

The Scout and Raider mission was to work with Army personnel in special operations prior to invasion landings — specifically to locate, scout and maintain a position at a designated beach area hours before a landing, and then to serve as guides for incoming assault waves. After training in small boat and rubber raft handling, landing craft operations, map reading, demolitions, communications, gunnery, clandestine swimming techniques and unarmed



SEALs hit the beach in kayaks and scan the terrain for trouble. Photo: Peter D. Sundberg

combat at Little Creek, Va. and Solomons, Maryland (and later at Ft. Pierce, Fla.), the Scouts and Raiders were commissioned in September 1942. Their first mission would come a month later in advance of Operation Torch — the Allied landings in North Africa.

Teams of five, their scout boats stowed aboard, embarked on 10 of the big assault ships which comprised the North, Central and Southern Attack Groups. The new unit performed so well during its baptism of fire on Red, Blue and White beaches that eight Navy Crosses were earned by its members. Scout and Raider personnel went on to participate in pre-assault missions at Sicily, Salerno,

Anzio, Omaha and the beaches of southern France.

By December 1944, the Scouts and Raiders were being phased into new operational groups, Amphibious Roger One and Two, whose members would see duty in the Pacific and China-Burma-India (CBI) Theaters. A group of about 20 joined forces with Admiral Milton Miles' Navy Group China (SACO). Though short-lived, this amphibious scout and reconnaissance unit operated successfully against the Japanese, adding new tactical and operational methods to the Navy's strategic repertoire.

On 20 November 1942, the Marines hit the beach at Tarawa. Hundreds of them died when their landing craft were smashed against hidden reefs. That tragedy led directly to the formation of Navy Combat Demolition Units (NCDUs).

Using pre-assault hydrographic intelligence, the NCDUs were charged with clearing any obstacles that would endanger landing craft or access to targeted beaches. Formed at Ft. Pierce, Fla., the new group filled its ranks with men from the rugged Seabees, veteran powder monkeys and some former Scouts and Raiders. Under their first commander, former CO of the Navy's Bomb Disposal School, Lieutenant (later Admiral) Draper Kauffman, NCDUs trained hard. The emphasis was on strenuous PT, swimming and demolition techniques.

All of that sweat and hard work was focused on a job that would take place on a single day in June of 1944. For it would be their monumental task to blow 50-yard-wide gaps in the hellish maze of steel and concrete — the infamous mined hedgehogs of the Normandy beaches.

Divided into 32 teams of one officer and eight enlisted men per team, each man carried 40 pounds of TNT wrapped around him in order to clear the way at Omaha and Utah beaches. But theirs was a costly success —

A combat swimmer, wearing Mark V breathing apparatus, emerges from the sea. Unless water temperatures or specific mission requirements dictate differently, SEALs wear camo fatigues on missions. Photo: Peter D. Sundberg





Mission accomplished: SEALs finish up a training exercise with an extraction by rubber raft. Photo: Peter D. Sundberg

60-percent casualties at Omaha, 30 percent at Utah. But they did their job with courage. Seven of the demolitioners won Navy Crosses and a Presidential Unit Citation which read in part: "The Navy Combat Demolition Unit of Force 'O' landed on Omaha Beach with the first wave under devastating enemy artillery, machine-gun and sniper fire. With practically all explosives lost and with their force seriously depleted by heavy casualties, the remaining officers and men carried on gallantly, salvaging explosives as they were swept ashore, in some instances commandeering bulldozers to remove obstacles. In spite of these grave handicaps, the demolition crews succeeded initially in blasting five gaps through enemy obstacles for the passage of assault forces to the Normandy shore and within two days had sapped over 85 percent of the Omaha Beach area of German-placed traps..."

With a beachhead on the European continent secured, naval operations planners turned their attention to the unique problems posed by the Pacific war strategy. "Island-hopping," as it became known, required accurate hydrographic intelligence and cleared paths to the beaches that were targeted for amphibious assault. These tactical puzzles prompted the formation of Underwater Demolition Teams (UDTs). The 5th Amphibious Force commander, Admiral Richmond K. Turner, ordered the re-organization of surviving NCDU personnel into new UDTs that would consist of 13 officers and 100 enlisted men of four platoons each. The nucleus of those first teams were formed at Ft. Pierce with the men then deploying to the newly established UDT training school at Maui, Hawaii.

The NCDUs hadn't given top priority to swimming — demolitions training got top billing — but the UDTs made it an equal priority. They couldn't rely on making it all the way to shore by boat. From then on it was swimfins and muscle power that got them to the objective. These "webfoot warriors" placed their charges on coral reefs, Japanese-placed obstacles or any other hazard that might prevent amphibious landings.

There wasn't much time for those first UDTs to train — a one-month cram course was all they got before taking on their first assignments at Kwajalein and Roi-Namur. After that it was the September 1944 invasion of Peleliu, then right on through to Okinawa. By that time a standard routine had been developed: With naval-gunfire and plane-bombardment support, ADP fast troop carriers with four LCPRs (Landing Craft, Personnel, Ramped) aboard traveled rapidly to within several miles of the target beach where the LCPRs, seven-man rubber boats

slung apart, would be lowered to the water. Taking a zigzag course to an area 1,000 yards off the beach, the UDTs began the "splash run." Swimmers slipped unseen from LCPR to towed rubber boat and into the water, all on the seaward side to avoid detection. After the needed hydrographic data had been collected, the swimmers moved to a designated spot, formed a line, and awaited extraction. The same insertion/extraction method was used for the follow-on demolition run which utilized a series of charges all connected by det cord.

Thirty-four UDTs had been formed by the war's end. Some of those veteran "frogs" would see service in Korea and in Vietnam. Some were also there to take command positions when personnel for the first SEAL teams were drawn from the ranks of UDTs 11, 12 and 21.

On to Vietnam

SEAL teams were established 1 January 1962 as the Navy's response to JFK's personally led counterinsurgency initiative. But the Navy was already on the road toward a SEAL capability. In June 1961, an action proposal letter generated by the office of the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) called for "development of an improved naval guerrilla/counterguerrilla warfare capability" with emphasis on the "urgent need for the Navy to plan for aggressive implementation of naval responsibilities in restricted waters and rivers of critical areas, especially in the Far East."

Inevitably, a study group was set up comprised of Scout and Raider, NCDU and UDT veterans, among others. Their experience and knowledge led to the establishment of Special Operations Teams. These teams were to conduct and support paramilitary operations, would be separate components within Underwater Demolition Units One and Two and would have the cover name SEALs, a contraction of Sea-Air-Land which also defined their multiple capabilities. The doctrine was transformed into reality with promulgation of CNO Speedletter #697P30, 11 December 1961 which authorized formation of U.S. Navy SEAL teams.

A SEAL's familiar attire: This frogman wears the newly designed closed-circuit breathing gear as he emerges from the ocean after a training swim.



As ultimately refined and stated, the SEAL mission had five parts: 1) to destroy enemy shipping, harbor facilities, bridges, railways and other maritime and riverine environment installations; 2) infiltrate/exfiltrate agents, guerrillas, evaders and escapees; 3) conduct reconnaissance, surveillance and perform other intel-gathering activities; 4) accomplish limited counterinsurgency civic action tasks normally incidental to counter guerrilla operations and 5) organize, train, assist and advise U.S., allied and other friendly military/paramilitary forces in the conduct of the above tasks.

The SEALs wasted no time in executing that mission and several months after their formation were sending seven-man Mobile Training Teams to Naval Advisory Detachment (NAD) Da Nang. They trained and advised Vietnamese Navy counterparts, the Lien Doi Nguoi Nhai (LDNN) and commando platoon personnel in underwater demolition, long-distance swimming, land navigation, unarmed combat, counter guerrilla/insurgency and raiding techniques.

NAD Da Nang was a SOG base. It was from there that Vietnam LDNN and commandos launched their raids against North Vietnam above the 17th parallel. In what became known as SOG OPS 31 Maritime Operations, NAD Da Nang operations ran psy-ops involving "borrowed" North Vietnamese who were taken to Phoenix Island for indoctrination. After royal treatment, medical care and instructions, they were given radios and returned north. A few of them paid back U.S. hospitality — they sent back hard intelligence.

But the major SEAL commitment was to the Rung Sat Special Zone (RSSZ) — the so-called "Forest of Assassins" — and the Mekong Delta with SEAL Team One deploying Detachment Golf to Nha Be in early 1966, followed by Team Two establishing Det. Alpha in early 1967. In March and April of 1966, Det. Golf SEALs participated in Operation Jackstay, the first amphibious operation into the 400-square-mile hell of the RSSZ. Although supposedly limited to recon and intel-gathering patrols, by the end of 1966, Det. Golf SEALs had accounted for 100 VC KIA, 21 sampans and two junks destroyed, 33 huts and bunkers demolished, 521,600 pounds of rice captured or destroyed, numerous arms and munitions captured, plus retrieval of many enemy documents which proved valuable in ongoing operations.

In 1967 Detachments Golf and Alpha began taking it to the VC in what had previously been unmolested areas, unleashing raids and ambushes, locating yet more weapons caches and capturing more documents.

When not stalking the enemy in his own back yard, SEALs worked with riverine and coastal Task Forces 115 and 116 in combined operations that further damaged the VC's ability to act with impunity in the Delta. In 1967, in response to their devastating effectiveness, General Westmoreland stated "I would like to have a thousand more like them."

As operations increased and intensified, direct-air and boat-support units were established. Helicopter Attack Squadron Three (HAL-3) was formed in April 1967. First based at Vung Tau and then later at Binh Tuy, its Huey gunships logged 35,000 hours and 600 combat missions per year in support of SEAL missions. Ultimately, HAL-3 grew to nine operational detachments and served until 1972.

Because of the demanding nature of operating in the Mekong Delta, SEALs served six-month instead of 12-month stints. Most SEALs pulled multiple tours and logged numerous missions in what might best be called "mission-intensive" work.

The SEALs weren't always stationed in the Delta. Initially deployed on TDY status to Da Nang for SOG ops,



Two SEALs pause during Operation Crimson Tide west of Saigon. Vietnam severely tested SEAL training — they passed with flying colors. Photo: U.S. Navy

Boat Support Unit (BSU) personnel went on to the Delta. Utilizing all the craft at their disposal, BSU crews provided the SEALs with insertion/extraction and fire support. The BSUs would later evolve into today's Special Boat Squadrons.

SEAL Det. Bravo was formed as the Provisional Recon Unit (PRU) support detachment, its members serving as PRU advisers in 12 of the 14 Delta provinces. Never a large group, Bravo SEALs, with their indigenous PRUs, hunted and neutralized the Viet Cong Infrastructure (VCI). Preferring capture to killing — it's damn hard to get information from a corpse — the SEAL PRU Det. was, by 1968, neutralizing 800 VCI per month. According to military after-action reports released after the war, by 1973 — the last year of overt U.S. military involvement in Vietnam — the SEALs operating in the Delta had succeeded in destroying many of the communist cells in the area.

Since 1962, the SEAL mission hasn't changed much although it has evolved. SEAL teams are now the primary operational arms of Navy Special Warfare Groups One and Two based respectively at Coronado, Calif. and Little Creek, Va. The Special Warfare Groups — the first under Commander-in-Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC) and the second under Commander-in-Chief, Atlantic (CINCLANT) — train for and conduct naval special warfare operations and provide forces to designated operational commanders, as directed by the fleet commander.

The mission is still the standard special warfare stuff — mobile operations, unconventional and counterinsurgency operations, beach and coastal recon, special tactical intelligence operations, coastal/riverine interdiction, training/advisory assistance, control of friendly indigenous forces in the conduct of naval special warfare and other special operations as assigned.

No special warfare group has an easy job in life and the SEALs are no different. Prospective SEALs have their work cut out for them — they must successfully complete the strenuous 26-week Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL (BUD/S) Course conducted at Naval Amphibious School, Coronado, Calif. And that's where the fun all begins.

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SOF KNIVES

RANDALL **MADE** **KNIVES**

40 Years of Battle Blades

by Robert L. Gaddis



Randall Made Knives passed the test during WWII. Today, they're just as good.

“**D**EAR Mr. Randall, if it wasn't for your wonderful handmade knife I wouldn't be writing this letter today.” For 40 years such praise has typified letters coming across the desk of W.D. “Bo” Randall of Orlando, Fla.

Randall Made Knives have been used in about every war, conflict, police action and “brush fire” in which Americans have played a part since World War II. The knives that brought these letter writers back to life were usually one of Bo's combat/survival models: the Model 1 “All Purpose Fighting Knife,” the Model 2 “Fighting Stiletto,” the Model 14 “Attack,” the Model 15 “Airman,” the Model 18 “Attack-Survival,” and the Model 17 “Astro” — a very special knife. To fighting men the world over, they are known simply as “a Randall.”

The design of these world-famous combat and survival tools didn't just happen. As Bo has said, “There is a story behind each and every model of Randall Made Knives.”

The knife that most military men think of as “The Randall” is now called the Model 1 “All Purpose Fighting Knife.” This is the knife design that put the name Randall, alongside those of Garand, Browning and Colt, in the minds of American servicemen during WWII. This association with famous American weapons designers is only fair and just because the Randall Model 1 was derived from the American combat knife, the Bowie. This is the way it happened.

In early June of 1942, with America's entry into WWII only about seven months old, Army Lieutenant J.H. Zacharias came to Bo's backyard shop in Orlando, with the request for a Bowie knife which he could take to war. Bo asked Lt. Zacharias exactly what size and shape of blade he had in mind. The lieutenant described a large, massive knife with a long clip-point blade. Bo said he thought that such a large and heavy knife would become a problem to carry on long combat missions in addition to the other equipment required to be carried.

Bo got out some paper and pencils and they began to sketch knife designs as they talked. This knife had to be a true fighter. It must feel good in the hand and be able to slash and thrust as a natural extension of the user's arm. It had to be strong enough to open wooden ammo boxes and steel gas cans without breaking. The edge must not be dulled by cutting poles to make a shelter or a blanket litter and the point must be sharp enough to dig thorns and other sharp objects out of your hide. In short, it must be a fighting knife that was also an all-purpose soldier's knife . . . one that stayed sharp and didn't break or bend under severe usage.

That was a tall order for a knife, but the successful results of the efforts of Bo and Lt. Zacharias that day in June 1942 have been attested to by three generations of men the world over. In Bo's order log book, under the date of 15 June 1942, is the following entry: “1 Special made; Swedish steel; Jap Sticker for Lt. J.H. Zacharias.” The blade length and other specifications



These knives were designed for the U.S. Marines and taken before the USMC Equipment Board. Photo courtesy of Randall Made Knives



A LOOK AT RANDALL MADE KNIVES

Robert Gaddis has worked as a project engineer for such companies as Cadillac Gage and Hughes Aircraft Company. After a stint in the Air Force as an aircraft mechanic, Gaddis became interested in flight engineering, but his interests aren't limited to that.

In 1971, he formed Gadcon International, Inc. His most recent endeavor is Nordic Knives (1634-C Copenhagen Dr., Solvang, CA 93643), specializing in custom and handmade knives. Watch for Gaddis' upcoming book on Randall Made Knives.

for this first knife are not noted, but on 9 November 1942 the lieutenant ordered two more, and an additional one on 5 January 1943. All three of these are specified as having eight-inch blades and stag handles.

While the Randall Model 1 has undergone a number of minor design refinements since June 1942, it still shows its Bowie ancestry.

As the year 1942 progressed, more and more American servicemen found themselves in England and North Africa. In these exotic places they were introduced to the Fairbairn-Sykes commando dagger carried by their British compatriots. This special-purpose knife came to be considered “the British combat knife” at the time, and has since become the best-known knife to come out of WWII. Many of these American newcomers wanted a toad sticker like the veteran Brits carried. And they were willing to spend a fair amount of coin to obtain one.

Bo was given an English-made Fairbairn-Sykes early in the fall of 1942. One of his active sports at that time was knife throwing, and he was no slouch, so he took the commando knife into the backyard to throw at a target. After the second or third throw the point broke off. Well, a knife maker isn't going to just stand there with a broken knife in his hand when the shop is only a few yards away. In short order, the forward portion of the blade had been reshaped into a more rounded and thus stronger point.

This experience started him thinking about the whole idea of a spearpoint dagger being used as a soldier's everyday knife. The basic style is great for thrusting and penetration, but very poor for slashing, and can never be made as strong as a Bowie design at the same weight. While the Fairbairn-Sykes had been tailor-made for specific usage, its thin dagger style had become “the combat knife” in the minds of many soldiers.

Then and there he decided to offer a



RANDALL

stronger, more general-purpose model of the spear-point dagger. His blade was thicker, almost straight-sided and with a somewhat rounded point. He kept the basic shape of the commando handle but made it larger, thicker and gave it a hand-filling oval form. The outcome was a dagger or stiletto that was strong and handy enough for most combat duty, yet still suitable for quietly taking out an enemy.

Orders for this new Randall began arriving from overseas in early April 1943. This "Fighting Stiletto" — now known as the Model 2 — was a quick success. By the end of 1943, blade lengths from six to eight inches were being ordered, with widths available from 3/4 to 1 1/2 inches. The standard was and still is a blade of 1 1/4 inches in width with a length of seven or eight inches as desired.

In late 1953 or early 1954 as the Korean War was winding down, a Marine combat pilot by the name of Major "Tex" Mehaffey came to Bo in search of a really first-rate knife for pilots and aircrew members. He was displeased with the ones being issued by the Navy and Marine Corps. The knife had to be extremely strong — strong enough to pry open a stuck canopy or hatch so that rescuers could get at the man inside. It also had to be capable of smashing Plexiglas and/or chopping and cutting through aluminum if you were the man inside and needed to exit rapidly from an aircraft after a sudden and unscheduled landing.

After the pilot was out, this prybar had to become an all-around survival knife. It could be no more than 10 inches in overall length, with a sheath that could be worn on the leg or upper arm. On top of all of that, "Tex" needed a design that could eventually be produced in quantity and made a standard issue.

Bo has seldom been known to turn down a challenge, especially when it was presented by an American fighting man. He started sketching and grinding, while Maj. Mehaffey was joined in his efforts at Quantico by Lieutenant Colonel Jordan, USMAC. During the next two or three months Col. Jordan and Maj. Mehaffey flew from Quantico to work with Bo on the development of their Marine Corps Airman's knife.

The effort quickly centered around a design taken from the lines and Bowie style of the Model 1 fighter. The blade was made deeper and thicker. The tang (the blade extension onto which the handle is fastened) was made a generous 7/8-inch deep and was left the full 1/4-inch blade thickness all the way through the handle. The brass double guard was made larger so that a pilot's gloved hand wouldn't slip over onto the sharp blade.

By March of 1954, the design was finalized and the prototypes were handed over to start the wheels of bureaucracy slowly turning. Bo was duly invited to bring his samples and talk about knives to this group of officers on the USMC Equipment Board in the spring of 1954. The knives and their maker received a warm and appreciative welcome from the brass.

It looked like a fine beginning. The Bureau of Aeronautics ordered 20 of the Airman's Model for evaluation while the ground pounders asked to borrow their model prototype for study. Then the roof fell in.

Lt. Col. Jordan and Maj. Mehaffey finished their tour at headquarters and were

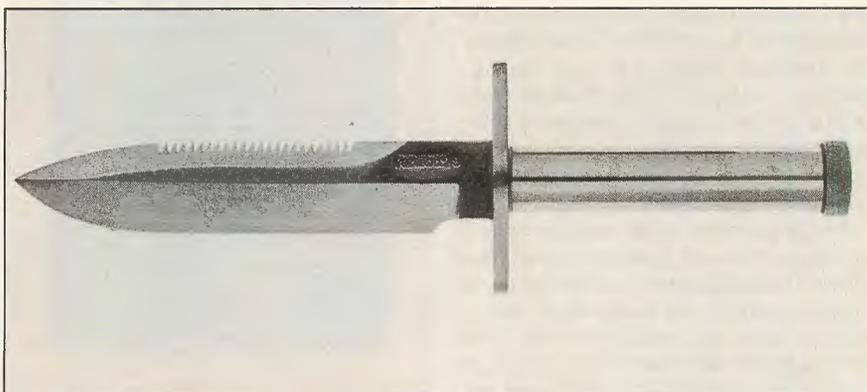
transferred elsewhere. At this time airmen were going into supersonic aircraft and the ground forces were exchanging their WWII leftovers for "new and improved" equipment. With the two champions no longer at court there wasn't anyone interested in mere knives. The whole effort went down the Washington drain.

While working on this strong, 10-inch-long airman's knife, Bo saw the possibilities of enlarging this design into one of the best heavy-duty, general-purpose, ground-forces knives that ever came down the pike. The pipe dream became reality and his creation has now become a rival with the Model 1 in popularity among goers and doers the world over.

Bo didn't have the time, money or patience to mount a lobbying effort, so he just added these two new knives to his catalog as Models 14 and 15 and kept on making top-quality knives for those who appreciated them. But there was no ignoring the fact that he had designed these two models so that they could be mass produced at low cost. The small Randall shop with a few craftsmen turning out handmade knives was never intended to be this mass producer. Even if

BELOW: A modern Model 18 Survival knife. This knife has a 7 1/2-inch 440B stainless-steel blade and an undersized handle that can be wrapped with whatever the user wishes. Photo courtesy of Randall Made Knives

BOTTOM: Model 17 Astro knife from the mid-1970s. It has black Micarta scales and a wrist thong. The original knives were made for the Project Mercury astronauts. Photo courtesy of Randall Made Knives



Uncle Sam wasn't interested, Bo wanted to do his best to lower the cost of these models to the servicemen they were intended for.

In 1955 a small cutlery manufacturer in Solingen, Germany was contacted about making machine-forged and production-ground blades. Erik Christians said yes and thus was born the "Solingen Randall." Only the blades and a few molded Tenite handles were made in Germany with the knives being finished in Orlando. These blades were of the same Swedish tool-steel as the Orlando handmade ones but they allowed the knife to be produced quickly and at a much-reduced price. These Solingen blade knives were made through the late 1960s and many were often carried by soldiers in Vietnam. In fact, the Vietnam War was responsible for bringing about the latest military type of Randall knife — the Model 18. This hollow-handle, sawtoothed-blade survival tool was a child of the helicopter warfare age.

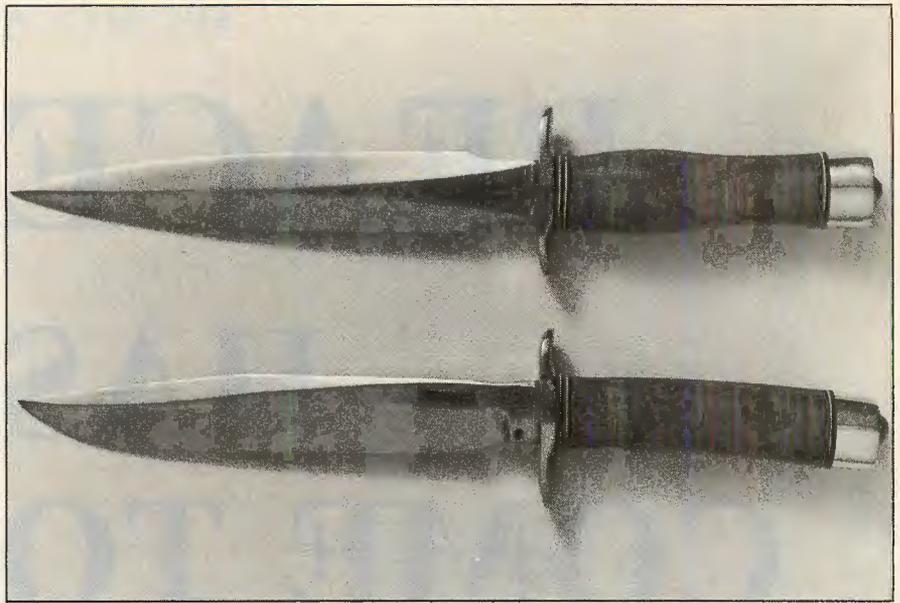
On 8 January 1963 Captain George W. Ingraham, Medical Corps, United States Army, wrote a lengthy letter to Bo from Vietnam. At that time he was attached to the 94th Medical Detachment doing Medevac work. He had become painfully aware that the crew of a downed chopper had some serious problems which needed to be solved fast. The first and foremost was to get themselves and everybody else out. He explained the modifications needed in the Model 14 in his letter.

"Into the top of the blade sawteeth should be cut or filed to cut aluminum, plexiglass, etc. [for use] in freeing personnel from aircraft wreckage." Then "the trickiest part of the modification" would be the hollow handle. The captain envisioned this handle compartment holding matches, water purification tablets, Dexedrine pills plus Demerol tablets for severe burns or other injuries. In his freehand sketch he showed the hollow handle closed by a threaded cap similar to the present Model 18.

The reasons behind the design of this airman's survival tool were well-thought-out by Capt. Ingraham. From the sawteeth to the items in the handle cavity and finally the use of the cutting edge of the blade for shelter construction or combat, his concept was excellent. With a knife strapped to your waist that included all of these features, you would always have a survival kit at hand if the shit hit the fan.

Bo liked the captain's ideas but at first thought he couldn't be of assistance. As he replied on 15 January 1963: "Your idea for the survival knife sure looks good. It almost makes me cry to have to answer and tell you that I (we) can't make even one for you." He went on to say they were over one year backlogged on their orders and that he didn't know how to put the proper sawteeth on the back of the blade, "but I do agree that they should be there," Bo wrote. Obviously this wasn't the end of this story.

Ten days later, on 25 January 1963, Bo wrote another letter to Capt. Ingraham which began: "Well!! I just couldn't resist



Model 2 Fighting Stiletto. This knife with a seven-inch blade was made in the 1970s. Photo courtesy of Randall Made Knives

the challenge you threw at me — especially since it got to keeping me awake nights. So!! I got my son [Gary] on it too — and we worked Sunday bringing the #1 prototype of the "Ingraham-Randall Attack-Survival" knife into being. Here's yours, the first and at no charge."

Bo went on to say that they were particularly pleased to have found a way to cut the sawteeth into the top of the blade "once we set our minds to it." For a final test of these metal ripping teeth "we took a garbage can lid [no plastic ones in 1963] and cut hell out of it without fazing the teeth at all."

These early Model 18s didn't have the present O-ring sealed, threaded buttcap because the Randall shop was not equipped to make them and/or thread the stainless-steel handle tube. Bo and Gary first tried bicycle grips as a combined closure and non-slip grip but found all of them too small. Motorcycle grips were too large so they settled on crutch tips. They worked . . . so well that it wasn't until 1974 that Randall changed to the present brass cap, which can also mount a half-inch compass on the inside.

The tubular handles of these knives were intentionally made undersized from the start because Bo intended the user to wrap it with whatever materials he wished to be part of the survival supplies.

The package included a second prototype Model 18 so that the captain could see how well they would sell — at a price of \$28.50. On 30 January 1963, Capt. Ingraham had received the two knives, tested his and was writing a reply to Bo. He reported that the sawteeth worked beautifully on the fuselage of a wrecked assault helicopter. Inside the handle he put a couple of fish hooks, a few matches, 12 water purification tablets, 10 Dexedrine tablets and 10 half-grain codeine pills. On the handle was wrapped one layer of monofilament fishing line. Over that

went a small guitar string to use in making snares for small animals. He would have preferred fine music wire but was limited by the availability of materials. Over that went a wrapping of surgical tape and the final layer was two regulation leather boot laces of black rawhide, the ends of which were made into a wrist thong.

Capt. Ingraham closed this last letter with a statement which many have since found to be the gospel truth. "I know that this knife will do the job if the time ever comes to 'lay my cards on the table'."

Bo Randall has no illusions about Model 18. Many times he has said that this hollow-handle, sawtoothed survival knife was never intended for infantry combat use. Models #1 and #14 were designed for that job. Model 18 is the best thing going to get you out of a downed aircraft and at the same time carry a few essential survival items to help save your life once you are free and clear.

As modern high-tech types, we have maintained one unbroken thread from our cave-dwelling prehistoric ancestors — the universal desire for a good knife. So it was with the first Americans to explore outer space — the seven astronauts of Project Mercury. They were to be computerized and rocket-propelled explorers of the heavens, but as men with that unbroken thread from the dim past, they demanded the best knife made as part of their very own "just in case" gear. They found what they were looking for at 220 Ivanhoe, the shop and residence of Bo Randall.

Early in December 1959 two men called upon Bo and proceeded to "talk knives." They were especially interested in very strong knives with blades about five inches long. After about an hour of knife talk, they identified themselves as L. Gordon Cooper Jr. and Virgil I. Grissom of NASA Project Mercury, two of our first seven astronauts.

They had weighed the factory-produced

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PEACE HAS COME TO RHODESIA

Zimbabwe is Still at War

by J.S. Beckman

IT doesn't take much imagination to guess the real power baron in drought-stricken, economically deprived, technologically anemic Zimbabwe. Any resemblance to Soviet influence in a country that prominently features a five-pointed red star on its flag and whose people call each other "comrade" isn't purely coincidental.

There could be a lot of finger-pointing at who was to blame for the present state of disarray. The guilty parties know who they are and have to live with their shamed consciences. Certainly the airmen, Selous Scouts, Special Air Service (SAS), Rhodesian Light Infantry (RLI), Rhodesian African Rifles (RAR) and others did their best — not to preserve "white" rule but to maintain order, a decent standard of living, and economic prosperity. But how can a small country, abandoned by virtually the entire world and with 60 percent of its borders bristling with Soviet-supported guerrillas and terrorists, stand alone? And so Rhodesia became a piece of history.

What has Prime Minister Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) done for the "people"? During a recent trip to Zimbabwe I found the following conditions extended throughout the country.

Possession of any camouflage clothing and kit, including T-shirts, uniform accessories, souvenir ammo or weapons retained by ex-Rhodesian armed forces personnel (or anyone else) from the pre-Zimbabwe days is worth seven years in the slam. So clever folks hide the goods. The paranoid ones burn them whenever they run across forgotten insignia and war trophies. (I'm surprised Mugabe's boys aren't out sifting ashes from *brai* [barbeque] pits and grills at night.) I was able to smuggle a Selous Scout beret and parachute wing insignia out, despite a fruitless body search and having my luggage ransacked.

A well-known surplus store had a government-sponsored pre-fire-sale fire, despite the fact that Zimbabwe could have used the business income. I guess my visit was about a year too late for "liberating" war trophies.

Harare (as Salisbury is now called) is a city of neurotic-to-paranoid white zombies. No offense, Harare people, but other than the South Bronx, where do you see white people walking through town with their eyeballs rolling 360 degrees like they're checking for snipers? They all looked beat — like slaves. Walk into a shop, and they



Swearing death to dissidents and political opponents in the Province of Matabeleland, Zimbabwe's Prime Minister Robert Mugabe harangues a government rally on his Soviet-assisted march to make his tribal dictatorship absolute rulers of what was once Rhodesia. Photos: AP/ Wide World

ONLY A MOVIE?

J.S. Beckman is a veteran of 14 years with Special Forces, serving on various Special Operations missions in southeast Asia in 1971-72. He is currently a major in the U.S. Army Reserves, assigned to Special Warfare Headquarters at Ft. Bragg. He traveled to Zimbabwe in 1984 as a tourist. He notes, "Things were kind of strange there. One night I was followed by the undercover police, who camped out on my doorstep. So I started talking to people and decided there was a need to express exactly what was going on in the country." At the present time, Beckman is the manager of worldwide operations of an armed forces motion picture command.



look drugged. They're drugged all right, but not from any Controlled Substances Act Schedule stuff. It's that fabulous group of comrades looking out for the masses, creating a marvelous lack of morale.

Perhaps the people closest to Harare will disagree. Their problem is that they are too close to the situation to size it up.

White population figures are rapidly decreasing. From nearly 300,000 at Rhodesia's zenith, the count, according to local sources, is running 125,000-150,000. With government restrictions closing doors on certain imports and regulating trade, white-run businesses are going broke or just flat closing. People clandestinely sell by installment, trying to liquidate as much as possible before leaving forever.

The fever gripping white Zimbabwe is well-founded. In too many instances, friends betray friends. The government quietly offers a 20-percent bounty on all illegal currency-changing transactions. For example, if you deal Z\$10,000 (about U.S. \$10,000) for equivalent Rands, and you are caught, the snitch gets Z\$2,000, you get three years in the slam, and Zimbabwe keeps Z\$8,000.

With this kind of atmosphere, very few

whites will impart personal information for fear of harassment, arrest or surveillance by authorities. A former Rhodesian Army trooper will not admit involvement in special operations, even normal operations, unless he knows you're no threat. Casual admission to former military anti-ZANLA/ZIPRA (Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army/Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army) campaigns could lead to problems. After all, ZANU runs the country — for now, anyway.

Any national leaving Zimbabwe may carry no more than Z\$300. That makes emigration a long drawn-out process. This limit is not just a posted rule; it's rigidly enforced. A tourist inbound must declare all funds.

Outbound it's the same, with a frisk and body search following passport control. I actually talked to piqued tourists who had just been relieved of undeclared currencies. A receipt is provided for claim submission, but that doesn't help if you're broke. Searches are seemingly well-orchestrated with wallets being emptied, pockets turned out, and body frisks performed to uncover smuggling. Hand baggage receives a thorough review as well. All checked baggage is subject to X-ray and, in some cases, ransacked.



Even my medical aid bag, though checked baggage, was thoroughly searched on a domestic flight. Certain prescription drugs are unavailable in Zimbabwe, despite claims of high-quality health care, so an aid bag becomes a lucrative target. Warning to all planning visits to Zimbabwe: Carry your aid bag in the cabin.

Police surveillance may not be common for all tourists; however, I was definitely on someone's "watch" list. Too bad I wasted their time.

Up front, the government actively maintains a strong wildlife-conservation program. Yet last year it culled 1,200 elephants. Okay, nature buffs, how many years will it take to generate calves to replace that volume? Obviously ivory is making a few "comrades" handsome bonuses.

The well-known African drought has hit Zimbabwe. Although the government has instituted programs to get around the lack of rainfall, farms are going broke. One farmer liquidated his cattle herd at 18 cents per pound, electing to take the loss rather than watch them die. The enormous Lake Kariba, measuring 5,180 square kilometers, is down 11 meters. Lake Robertson, with a capacity twice that of Lake McIlwane, is only 30-percent full. If the water now in both lakes were combined, its volume would equal just a bit more than if McIlwane were full. (McIlwane finally filled with water in 1985 after years of draught.)

Elephants roaming the Le Rhone Game Farm near the Zimbabwe ruins and Fort Victoria in Rhodesia days. Now the area has been overrun by poachers and the Le Rhone Chalets now deteriorate with the rest of Zimbabwe's economy. Photo: Ministry of Information, Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland

Colonial statues, including those of Cecil Rhodes, have been removed for "safekeeping."

Tourists are not exactly streaming into Zimbabwe. Kariba had a 25-percent occupancy rate and the famous, stately Victoria Falls Hotel, with a capacity of 350, had only 94 guests.

Prime Minister Mugabe stopped construction of an enormous conference center in Harare, designed to attract business and diplomats, when he found he was not going to be made president of the Organization for African Unity (OAU). According to a reliable source, cost of the skeleton to date is upwards of Z\$120 million. A magnificent hotel perched above Victoria Falls has remained closed due to rocket damage. Estimated reconstruction runs about Z\$8 million, according to a local source.

There's a dramatic change in the cost of living in Zimbabwe from that of the United States or South Africa. A decent two-bedroom apartment in Harare goes for about Z\$150 per month. What might easily be a

U.S. \$500,000 estate outside Zimbabwe can be purchased for U.S. \$20,000-30,000.

On the other hand, gasoline is over U.S. \$4 per gallon. Discounting any tax advantage and allowances, the tax rate for married and single persons making over Z\$17,000 is 45 percent. A TV and video-cassette recorder combo goes for Z\$6,000-8,000, due to the scarcity of luxury goods.

You can forget spare parts. I visited a dozen gas stations and at least six "spares" (auto parts) stores, looking for an automobile fuse. None were available. Even the largest car dealer for that particular model had none. Few if any spares, not just car fuses, are ordered with regularity due to import restrictions.

Renting aircraft is expensive. Try Z\$60 or more per hour for a two-seat Cessna 150 trainer held together with "chewing gum and bailing wire." Air navigational aids are primarily non-directional beacons (NDB) rather than Variable Omirange (VOR). The Harare VORTAC (VHF Omirange Tactical Air Navigation) is frequently out, so pilots accustomed to ILS/DME (Instrument Landing System/Distance Measuring Equipment) approaches can usually forget DME readings.

The Zimbabwe Air Force maintains a base at Harare Airport. Although there are other bases, I observed the following aircraft in the enclosure at Harare: one Canberra bomber, eight Dakotas and six or seven

high-wing twins, probably Spanish-built Casa Aviocars. An unexpected treat was the dropping of a 10-man stick of paratroopers from one of the aging Dakotas. Jump altitude appeared to be about 800 feet. The chutes were non-maneuverable, similar to the U.S. T-10. Located to the side of the air base, the DZ paralleled the runway.

Driving along the A-4 highway, built by South Africa during the war, I saw patchwork covering damage sustained by cratering charges and mines, especially between Masvingo (Fort Victoria) and the Beitbridge (near Messina, Transvaal) border crossing. Abandoned Land Rover armored cabs and burned-out vehicles, reminders of the recent war, lie here and there. Along the lower A-4, skeletons of bullet-ridden farmhouses parallel the highway. Anthills used for ambush cover are especially visible along the eight-foot-wide former main road.

"Men at Work" signs warn of nonexistent road gangs. Work crews can be seen, but they're normally squatting under the shade trees.

I followed a truckload of infantry for a short distance near Beatrice, south of Harare. No weapons were visible, but these boys had "Mean SOB" written all over them. They were probably off to kill "dissidents."

Dissidents, by the way, are generally the Matabele tribe members. Mugabe's boys are basically Mashona. According to one source, roughly 2,000 "dissidents" (men, women and children) were killed last year in Matabeleland. So it obviously doesn't pay to be elephant or Matabele. Either way you could get culled.

Now the *coup de grace*: On Wednesday nights Prime Minister Mugabe answers questions posed by parliamentarians and select government officials on live television as a public service. All questions are addressed to the house speaker, who calls upon the prime minister to provide answers.

Representatives snicker, laugh, and act like school children who have just played a trick on the teacher. Mugabe generally smirks and gives a meaningless reply to each question. He has two rhetorical tactics: circular rhetoric (avoiding the issue completely) or a statement that he is not familiar with the situation. Here are some paraphrased examples (Did you think I'd spend three years in an African prison by carrying out tapes of his speeches?):

Q: What is the government doing to strengthen the depressed hotel industry to recover reduced tourist occupancy?

A: Yes, well, every industry experiences a slump. You must understand these events are cyclical.

Q: What is the government doing to provide relief to farmers?

A: Farming is a business, and a farmer must be prepared to take the risk of failure. It's not up to the government to help businessmen — and that includes farmers.

Q: What is the government doing to offset the desert invasion?

A: (Laughing) I have never heard of a



TOP: Not quite the Arc of Triumph in France, this is Zimbabwe's humble monument to independence. The resemblance to the front gate of Chevy Chase's Wally World is striking.

ABOVE: Mugabe presented a more reasoned, reserved and polished persona when he appeared in the West for the first time as prime minister. This is Mugabe in a 1980 appearance on NBC-TV's "Meet the Press," while he was in the United States waiting for his new country of Zimbabwe to be accepted into the United Nations. Photo: AP/ Wide World

desert invading a country. The [member] must be misinformed.

Q: What is the government doing to eliminate the death sentence?

A: As long as we have to send our soldiers into the bush to kill dissidents, we cannot abolish the death penalty.

Q: ZAPU head Joshua Nkomo [leader of the Zimbabwe African People's Union,

and a Matabele himself] asks when the killing of Matabele women and children will cease.

A: (Poker face) I am not familiar with this situation.

Q: What is being done to eliminate incompetence and corruption?

A: Of course, the wrongdoers will be prosecuted, but I am not aware of any major problems in this regard. I believe [representative] is misinformed.

Q: What about the establishment of one-party rule?

A: I feel the best way to unify this country and create the right climate for growth is through a one-party democracy.

A few more questions and answers continue in this vein before "school" is dismissed for the day.

There is no doubt that Zimbabwe remains a beautiful country with an unbeatable climate. Wildlife abounds. Whether floating down the Zambezi River, gazing at Victoria

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M12

Bianchi's Holster for the 92SB-F

Text and photos by Peter G. Kokalis



THE king is dead. With much moaning and groaning, ranting and raving, thunder and lightning, the U.S. military's much-venerated sidearm — the Colt M1911 — has been deposed by the Beretta 92SB-F.

And now that we have a new service pistol, it requires a new tote bag. Like the old Colt .45, the M1916 GI leather holster also will be a tough act to follow.

The World War II variant, most of them made by the Boyt Co., is a classy looking rig. With its leather leg thong and a large "US" embossed on its flap, it epitomizes the 19th-century military holster. It provides a safe resting place for the least-used weapon in the infantry's armory. It serves its purpose and looks smart doing so.

But it hangs too low on the web belt. And on the rare occasions when the M1911 was required, removing the pistol from its holster proved awkward. The holster's brass rivets eventually turn to verdigris, a copper sulfate produced by chemical reaction with the leather's tanning acids. I spent many collective hours of my own military career with a toothpick trying to remove this foul green substance without smearing it onto the leather.

And no matter how much mink oil is rubbed into the holster, its leather eventually will rot and split, given the harsh extremes of military operational environments.

John Bianchi has been re-thinking military holsters for a long time. He began development of the unique M66 leather holster for the M1911 pistol in 1966. His ambidextrous innovation was introduced to the public in 1970, and is still available. The flap can be opened from either side. It can be fitted either to a garrison belt through 1¾-inch tunnels or to the standard web belt with a 2¼-inch snap-on belt loop on each side of the holster.

The U.S. Navy SEALs tested Bianchi's holster in 1980, but it was not adopted. Leather's durability and performance are less than ideal under 30 meters of salt water. It did lead to the MX82 holster, an interim version in leather and plastic.

Despite this minor setback, private funding for John's holster continued and Bianchi International finally struck the mother lode. Bianchi's military holster system has just been type-classified by the U.S. Armed Forces as the M12. The commercial version is called the UM-84 (Universal Military holster — 1984).

The Bianchi M12 system represents a quantum leap forward in pistol load-bearing equipment. Using state-of-the-art technology, Bianchi has created a military holster against which all others will be measured for many decades to come. The M12 features a 1050-denier ballistic-nylon outer facing. This facing covers a laminated, non-absorbent, 0.25-inch, No. 4-density, closed-cell polyfoam core with a 400-denier nylon parapack (parachute and pack cloth) liner. It weighs only 8.8 ounces, cannot be

Bianchi M12 holster with flap and Beretta 92SB-F pistol.

detected by infrared scopes and will float.

The outer layer, made of nylon ballistic fabric, may eventually be changed to polypropylene, which is far more resistant to stains, mildew and fading. M12 holsters for the Army and Marine Corps will be OD, those of the Navy and Coast Guard will be black. Other colors will be available. A blue version has been sold to the Italian government and a gloss white or black version has been developed for parade wear. The commercial holster is already available in camouflage. A desert-tan variant is under design. The General Officer's Model has a thin leather outer skin.

The polyfoam core is designed to take a permanent set after about one hour of use. Holsters supplied to the U.S. government will be shipped with a throwaway plastic insert in the shape of the Beretta 92SB-F. The polyfoam is now 1/8-inch thinner in the area of the plastic outer panel than the specimen I tested recently in El Salvador. This reduced the overall bulk by 1/4-inch and improved the fit.

The plastic outer panel is fabricated from a tough but flexible polymer. Along with the holster's other components, this panel holds up to a temperature range from minus 58 degrees F to 230 degrees F. It is also impervious to chemicals from jet fuel to insect repellent, outperforming the military specifications by some margin. The polymer panel has been stitched with sturdy nylon thread to the holster body.

A rubber disc bolted between the holster sides at the rear edge acts as a rest for the trigger guard. A one-inch nylon strap has been sewn inside the holster to cover the polymer panel's reinforcing rib. It also serves to retain a cleaning rod which rides inside a compartment molded into the reinforcing rib.

This cleaning rod represents one of my few criticisms of the M12 holster. It has been fabricated from black-anodized alumi-



M12 holster with shoulder harness which gave the author problems.

num. That's fine. But there's no provision for attaching the necessary brass brush and its thick handle frustrates any attempt to close the brass (black-oxidized) retaining snap. A plastic cleaning rod has been designed with a jag tip and self-tapping end to accommodate the necessary brush. The handle end is also thinner.

The M12's retention system is another key to its success. The usual belt slots have been cut into either side of the polymer panel for left- or right-hand attachment to the standard garrison-type belt. But a new Quick-Lock device permits the user to slip the M12 on or off the GI web belt in just moments. The stamped-sheet-metal Quick-Lock backplate fits into a set of vertical slots on the polymer panel — again cut on both sides of the panel for purposes of ambidexterity. A rectangular-shaped steel rod is hinged to the top of the backplate and folds over the web belt to be held at its open end by two hooks bent into the bottom of the backplate. The holster flap is attached to the Quick-Lock fastener by a steel-rod loop. Thus, when the fastener is moved to the right or left side of the holster, the flap is as well. The flap can be removed from the fastener if quicker access to the pistol is required. All of this means that the M12 can be worn on the right or left side, either strong-side or cross-draw, with or without the flap in place. The M12 rides higher on the belt than the old M1916 holster. It's just right, in my opinion.

The flap is held in the closed position by a U-shaped wire hook which slips under the polymer panel on either side of the holster. The hook is attached to an elastic band and nylon stop tape which prevents overstretching the elastic retainer. This locking mechanism is operated by pulling downward on a plastic D-ring fitted to the wire hook.

Other components in the M12 system in-

clude a hip extender, which has been designed for rappelling and airborne operations. It comes with a quick-release leg strap. An excellent chest harness, now called the XM13, is under development for armored-vehicle crews. But it has not yet been type-classified by the U.S. Armed Forces because it is being modified for arctic use.

A shoulder holster conversion unit also is available, complete with spare magazine pouch. I used this shoulder rig in El Salvador while in an A-camp near the Honduran border. It's a clever combination of a jigsaw puzzle and a straitjacket. A plastic strap assembly, fabricated from the same polymer as the holster's outer panel, replaces the flap and Quick-Lock fastener.

That's simple.

The nightmare commences when you attempt to adjust the 1.5-inch nylon harness straps with the rotating T-shaped ambidextrous converter. Even equipped with the illustrated instructions, rotating the converter 180 degrees counterclockwise, as indicated, just seems to compound the confusion.

After you've finally adjusted everything so the pistol's butt is no longer pointing to the rear, you'll find the entire assembly too bulky, the nylon straps twisted and bunched up under your armpit and the holster hanging far too low for this carry position.

I eventually gave up and reverted to carrying the M12 and Beretta 92SB-F on my web belt where it all belongs anyway. No wonder the U.S. government rejected the shoulder rig. It needs a major redesign effort.

There are three different commercial models of the M12. The UM-84I fits pistols with barrel lengths up to five inches, such as the Beretta 92SB-F, Colt Government model, CZ-75 and other pistols of this size. The UM-84II is made for pistols with barrel lengths up to four inches and will accept the Star PD and S&W M39/59 series, among

Continued on page 100



Spare magazine pouch fitted to opposing side of the M12 shoulder harness assembly.



M12 holster with hip extender and leg strap for rappelling and airborne ops.

POLISHING PUMP-GUN TECHNIQUE

Professional Pointers for Shotgun Shooters

Text and photos by Emanuel Kapelsohn

FROM the trenches in World War I and the jungles in Vietnam, to the police war against armed criminals in the United States, the shotgun is known as a fearsome weapon. Because of this formidable reputation many law-enforcement agencies and individuals use it as their back-up and even as a primary weapon. But for some reason many shotgun users devote little or no time to shotgun training. Why?

Many seem to feel that the shotgun's power and spreading shot pattern will make up for any lack of expertise on the part of the user. Regardless of how much awe it inspires, the shotgun, *like any other weapon*, is only as good as its user, and a modicum of training in technique is not only useful, but necessary.

Shotguns come in many different forms: single-barrel single-shot, semiauto, pump-action, bolt-action repeater, double-barrel over-and-under, and double-barrel side-by-side. But the shotgun that most military and police agencies have adopted, almost to the exclusion of any other action type, is the pump-action.

Many law-enforcement agencies have stepped up basic training in the proper handling of pump-action shotguns, but such combat shotgun

techniques should not be limited to law-enforcement personnel only. It should be delivered to *anybody* who handles the popular pump gun.

Weapon Condition

For military combat use, or in police use when the "enemy" has been engaged, it may be appropriate to carry the shotgun fully loaded and chambered, with the safety engaged: "cocked and locked," as the pistol shooters say. All the user has to do to fire is release the safety and pull the trigger.

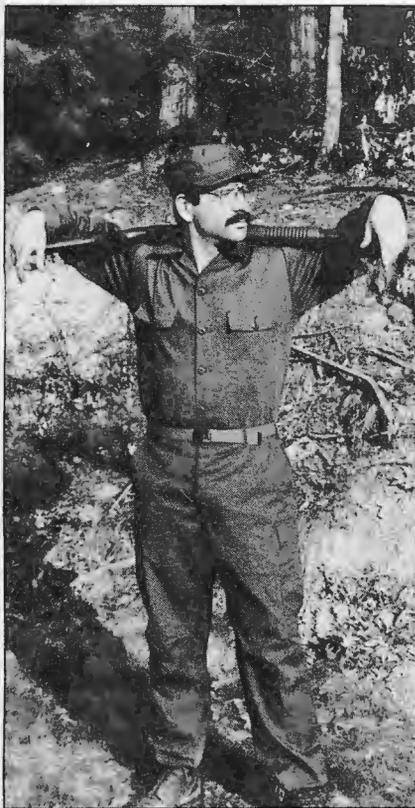
For most police, guard, and home protection use, however, where some degree of readiness can reasonably be traded off in favor of greater safety, the shotgun is better kept in cruiser-safe condition. This is so called because it is the condition commonly mandated by police departments for shotguns carried in the patrol cars. In cruiser safe, the pump gun's magazine is fully loaded, but the chamber is *empty, and the hammer has been dropped on the empty chamber*. The safety should be left "off."

To arm a cruiser-safe shotgun for firing, the user need only pump the action. With a little bit of practice, this can be accomplished within the same time it takes to point the shotgun at a target, so little — if any — time is lost in return for the safer mode of carry.

Agencies which require the shotguns to be carried with magazines loaded, but with the actions locked closed (hammer *not* dropped on the empty chamber), or with the safeties "on," or, worse yet, with *both* the action locked *and* the safety on, are placing too many impediments in the way of the shooter. In the stress of a violent encounter, the officer may remember all the steps he needs to take to arm his weapon, but the action lock and safety on most shotguns are neither large enough nor conveniently located to be manipulated surely and quickly. With winter gloves on, forget it. In this age of consumer protection we must remember that the ability to do damage is the essence of weapons, and if we try to make weapons *too* safe, they become useless.

Once they have mastered the technique of cycling the action while the shotgun is being raised into firing position, many shooters find the cruiser-safe mode *preferable* to carrying the shotgun armed and trying to release a small or poorly located safety under stress, especially if gloves are worn.

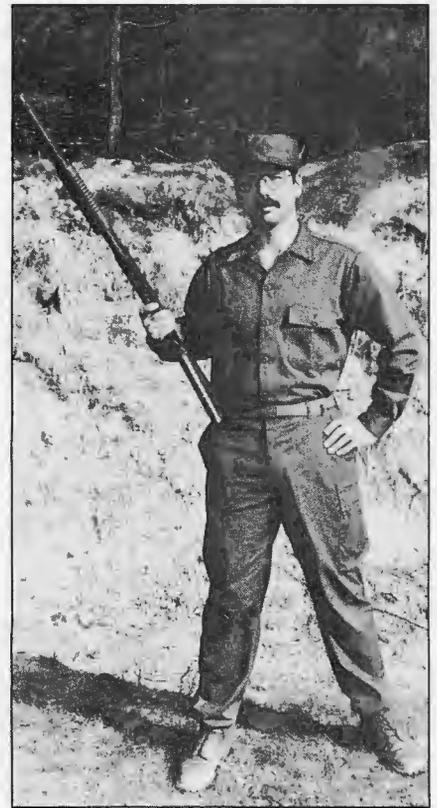
The cruiser-safe condition has several other advantages. The police officer who carries his shotgun in cruiser safe does not necessarily become point man of the operation, as he most assuredly will if his fellow



A casual carrying position may be suitable for bird hunting, but is slow into action, unsafe, and unprofessional in appearance for serious shotgun use.



The low-profile carry.



The high-guard carrying position.

officers hear him rack the action prematurely. Would *you* like to have a nervous shotgunner with a cocked 12-gauge behind *your* back going into a dark warehouse? In addition, if an attacker succeeds in wresting the shotgun away from the officer, the cruiser-safe mode may provide several seconds for the officer to regain control of the situation before the gun-grabber figures out how to make the shotgun fire. In the case of an officer who is also armed with a handgun, this is the time to use it!

Finally, if the shotgun is kept in cruiser safe until the officer is in the vicinity of the criminal, the sound of the shotgun being armed becomes a powerful psychological deterrent which would have been wasted if the shotgun had been armed upon being taken out of the police car a block away. Racking, or arming, the shotgun is something like yelling "Come on out, or we'll send in the dogs," preferably accompanied by eager barking in the background.

To put a shotgun in cruiser safe, simply load the magazine, open the action *slightly* to be sure the chamber is *empty*, point the gun in a safe direction, and pull the trigger. Leave the safety "off."

To reduce an already-armed shotgun to cruiser safe, pull the slide back slowly until the chambered round

Protecting the trigger guard in the low-profile carry.



just begins to nose out of the ejection port, then remove it completely with the tip of the right forefinger. Close the action, load the round you have just removed back into the magazine, check the chamber to be sure it is *empty*, point the gun in a safe direction, and pull the trigger. Leave the safety "off."

An alternative method of reducing an armed shotgun to cruiser safe involves pulling the fore-end *fully* rearward, catching the previously chambered round in the right hand as it is ejected, and turning the shotgun ejection port down to allow the new round, which has been released from the magazine, to fall out into the hand. The action is then closed, the rounds replaced in the magazine, and the process completed as previously described. The problem with this method is that on some guns, the second round is held securely by the shell carrier or lifter, and will not fall out of the ejection port. Try both methods on your own gun, and take your choice.

Carrying Positions

The old standby, of course, is port arms, but this becomes extremely tiring to the arms, occupies both hands, and has other disadvantages discussed below. For situations where there is no reason to believe the use of the shotgun is imminent, a better alternative is the low-profile carry, in which the cruiser-safe shotgun is

supported upright in the crook of the arm by the forefinger under the trigger guard, thumb over the trigger guard, and the fingers behind the receiver. The shotgun can be comfortably carried for hours this way. For police use, especially at night, a shotgun carried this way is truly low-profile, and may not even be seen by the neighbors down the street. And if the officer assumes a properly angled interview stance relative to an apparently non-threatening subject, a shotgun carried in this manner is difficult to grab and would not be much of an impediment to conversation as a shotgun held port arms between the officer and the subject being interviewed.

The opposite of the low-profile carry is the high-guard position, with the gun butt resting on one hip. The purpose of this position is to visually announce that you have a shotgun when a deterrent effect is sought. A roadblock is one common use of the high-guard position.

Probably the position which allows the greatest speed, short of having the shotgun already shouldered and aimed at the target, is Satterwhite Ready, popularized by the famed competitive and exhibition shooter John Satterwhite. In Satterwhite Ready, the shotgun is held in the same vertical plane as the shooter's line of sight. The buttstock, which is



Port arms.

Shooting from the hip should be avoided, as it produces erratic aim, poor recoil control, and slow cycling of the action for multiple shots.



down near the shooter's belt, is parallel to and touching the inside of his forearm. If the shotgun has already been armed, the shooter's forefinger (or thumb, with some shotguns) is on the safety. The shotgun butt is not underneath the shooter's armpit, but is slightly forward of it, so that it will not catch on his body or clothing when being shouldered. The muzzle, angled upward, is just below the shooter's line of sight. If the shooter is hunting for his target, he moves with the muzzle just below his eyes.

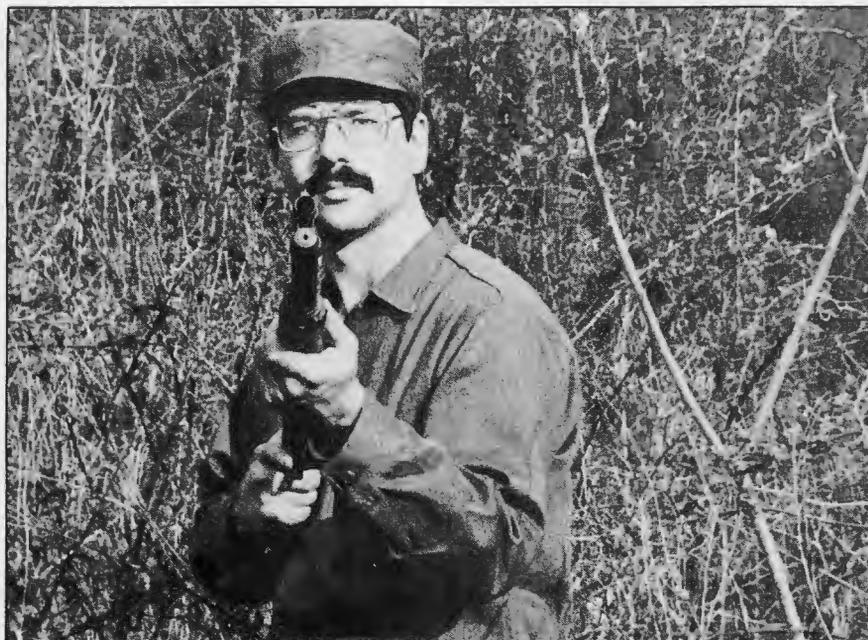
When the position becomes tiring, the weight of the gun can be supported by clamping the buttstock between the elbow and the side of the chest. If a possible target is in view but it is not appropriate to have the shotgun aimed, as may be the case in many police or guard applications, the Satterwhite Ready allows a lightning-fast firing stroke if necessary. The shotgun's front sight or muzzle is held on target (that is, on the line between the shooter's eye and the target), while leaving the subject relatively unthreatened.

Firing the Shotgun

From Satterwhite Ready, the

The underarm assault position is good close-range technique. Buttstock clamped between upper arm and chest and the weight-forward stance allows good recoil control.





ABOVE: Satterwhite Ready is an excellent position to use in combat shotgun operations. Gun in the same vertical plane as line of sight allows a lightning-fast firing stroke.



BELOW: Reducing an armed shotgun to cruiser safe: Remove shell by pulling back slide until chambered round noses out of ejection port but does not release a new one.

Short-stroking the pump gun generally results in fired shell becoming trapped in ejection port. Loaded round is released but unable to feed.



shooter simply raises the shotgun's buttstock to his cheek, simultaneously cycling the action if the gun is in cruiser-safe condition. Raising the right elbow creates a hollow between the shooter's pectoral muscle and the point of his shoulder, and it is into this hollow that the butt should be placed. Moving the butt farther out onto the shoulder joint itself will be painful. In mounting the shotgun from Satterwhite Ready, it is important that the front sight *never leave the line between the shooter's eye and the target.*

In other words, the front sight appears to stay on target at all times, simply moving forward along the line of sight. In this way, the shotgun can be fired the instant the buttstock touches the shooter's cheek. *The shooter's eye is, in effect, the rear sight of the shotgun, with consistent*

cheeking of the shotgun insuring proper elevation of the rear sight. Note that the head is not lowered nor the neck craned forward to meet the shotgun, but rather the shotgun is raised to meet the cheek. If the shotgun happens to have a rifle-type rear sight, as many military and police models do, consistent mounting of the shotgun insures that the rear sight will come up in close enough alignment with the front sight, target, and eye to allow instant firing when buckshot is used. The primary reason that Satterwhite Ready is so fast is that the shotgun is always in the same vertical plane as the line between the shooter's eye and the target and need only be cheeked to be fired. In contrast, a shotgun at port-arms position needs to be rotated horizontally as well as elevated, involving not only more time but more

opportunity for error.

At close range, say to about 10 meters, the shotgun can also be fired effectively from a lowered, unsighted position. But the so-called hip-shooting position is a poor one, and should be avoided. A proper underarm-assault position, with an aggressive weight-forward stance and the buttstock clamped between the upper arm and the side of the chest, provides much better aim, better recoil control, and better support of the gun for pumping the action. If the shooter positions his head directly over the gun barrel, rather than off to the side, the ability to point the shotgun quickly and accurately is improved.

The underarm-assault stance can be assumed quickly from either the Satterwhite Ready, or from a low-ready position with the buttstock under the arm and the muzzle lowered. This low-ready position is especially valuable for use in close quarters, such as when negotiating doorways and tight corners inside buildings, as the low-ready position effectively reduces the shotgun's clumsy length, prevents the barrel from preceding the shooter around corners, does not intrude on his field of view, and makes it extremely difficult for an attacker to wrestle the shotgun away from the officer without getting in the way of the muzzle. The advantages just described, by the

Continued on page 98

Continued from page 51

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intimidation against the defenseless *campesinos* and was not going to stand for it. He snatched the mike of a PRC-77 and called a cutter to cruise close to the coast. The 100-foot Cam Craft Point, bristling a couple clicks offshore with four .50-cal. machine guns, a 20mm cannon and an 81mm mortar, was a clear message to the Gs: A navy firebase could sail in any time with enough firepower to blast them to bits many times over. The villagers ran excitedly to the beach to see the gunboat. It was probably the biggest crowd at El Espino beach since thousands of Salvadoran and foreign tourists flocked to its gorgeous white sands before guerrilla terrorism scared them away.

Lt. Palacios and I sat with several commandos on a triangle of logs to eat lunch. Several half-naked children with bloated bellies, protruding ribs and gaunt eyes gathered around us. Like children everywhere, though, they were curious and playful. Plying the kids with crackers, C-rations and chocolates, the commandos asked them about the guerrillas as they gobbled up their surprise treats with big smiles.

"You have better weapons than theirs," mumbled one boy through a mouthful of crackers. "Their guns are dirty and beaten. Most of them don't wear uniforms either. They're bad people. Our mummies don't allow us to talk with them." Smart mothers. The guerrillas have a notorious history of press-ganging ten-year-olds like these into their ranks as cannon fodder.

A couple of boys came running. "Los guerrilleros are back!" they shouted out of breath. We slung on our knapsacks and sprung to our feet, tightly gripping our M16s. Lt. Palacios asked a couple of *campesinos* for confirmation. Yes, they answered, the guerrillas had returned to the bridge and were setting an ambush.

"Get ready for combat," Lt. Palacios warned me. We walked through a palm grove to an abandoned school a click from the bridge. On this one-room concrete building, too, the guerrillas had painted "Death to Orejas" — in other words, death to the children who just informed us of the rebels' return. Lt. Palacios deployed a dozen commandos with a 60 mike-mike here, then the rest of us converged on the bridge in two prongs: the burly Cadet Dheming advancing with his

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15 commandos from the southeast, and Lt. Palacios advancing with his five-man escort from the southwest. I stayed with Lt. Palacios.

Cadet Dheming's voice softly crackled over our tuned-down, squelched PRC-77. With binoculars, he spotted a couple of green fatigue-clad guerrillas hiding behind the far side of the bridge and warned us to beware. Cadet Dheming would have given his fancy new cammies for a telescope-mounted sniper rifle then. We crept through the bush hoping the soft rustle wouldn't give us away. My heart jumped into my throat with each snap and crack of the dry vegetation.

Bling! Bling! A nervous guerrilla sentry cracked off a couple rounds with his Galil. We flung ourselves to the ground and slithered onward through blinding, choking dust. A commando on the other side of the dirt road leading to the bridge pointed to the guerrilla positions. We were close, no more than 40 meters away.

"I want to get them alive," whispered Lt. Palacios.

Bling, bling, bling! The guerrilla *posta* fired another burst. This time a recruit prematurely fired back with his M79. If the Gs didn't know we were about to pounce on them before, they sure knew now. It was like a stone hitting a bee-hive.

Pockoom, pockoom, pockoom! The guerrillas unleashed a ferocious fusillade of FALs from a jungle-covered knoll just across the bridge. Hot lead whizzed over our heads, tearing at the brush. We fired back just as furiously. The crescendo of popping caps sounded like thousands of billiard balls colliding.

Lt. Palacios waved for our grenadier. Crocodile, as he is affectionately nicknamed, crawled beside his commander. The rough-and-tumble commando winked at me. He wanted to give the *gringo* a better impression of what a naval commando could do with an M79. Crocodile had a vicious bite, indeed. The young veteran blooped several high-explosive rounds exactly where Lt. Palacios wanted. **BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!** The HE silenced the Gs.

Advance, waved Lt. Palacios. The fearless lieutenant walked point in a crouch, firing short bursts everywhere the guerrillas could be. I was right on his ass, laying down covering fire when he changed magazines. The Gs opened up with another murderous volley. Back face down in the dirt, we doubled their volume of fire. Lt. Palacios and another commando ran to a wall jutting from a bridge abutment. I turned on my afterburners to stay on their heels.

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Trousers: XS(1), S(2), M(3), L(4), XL(5) Longs in S, M, L only.

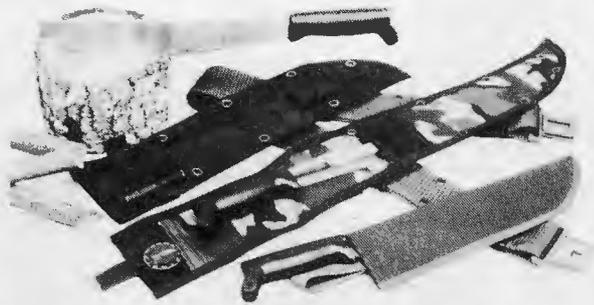
Colors: (1) Woodland Camo (2) SWAT Black (3) TAC-TEAM Navy Blue (4) Urban Smoke Gray

BRC, Combat Cloth Coat \$32.95 ppd.

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Our Exclusive Sheath provides greater wear flexibility and protection for your trusty edged tools. Internally lined with flexible plastic, covered with water-repellent, mil-spec packcloth. May be carried on regular belts. Clips not incl. Select for 5", 8", 12" and 18" blades.

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CJS12(), Commando Jump Sheath, 12" \$11.95

CJS18(), Commando Jump Sheath, 18" \$13.95

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Protects and conceals nighttime glow. Unique Velcro® doublelock band and crystal cover strap. Ideal for nightwork, hunting, and hard work. Measure wrist to nearest larger 1/4" mark for correct size.

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When it comes to the very best ammunition at very competitive prices, Hansen is second to none.

Kneeling behind the meter-high barrier, we banged away semiauto at the hill crackling with guerrilla gunfire, while Cadet Dheming crawled to the other abutment this side of the estuary and hurled a hand grenade under the bridge just in case a G lay in wait in the shallow water. Crocodile and a machine-gunner came running, huffing and puffing. "Cover me," yelled Lt. Palacios over the din.

Dat, dat, dat, dat. The M60 gunner kept the guerrillas' heads down with sweeping area fire, while the gutsy lieutenant charged across the stone bridge, shooting his M16 from the hip, to a road embankment on the other side. Cadet Dheming and a couple commandos crossed the bridge, then it was my turn. Crocodile, who had run behind the wall at the other corner of the bridge's entrance, smiled at me, as if saying, don't worry, I'll cover you. But Crocodile's blooper did not silence the Gs this time and I bolted across the bridge under fire, every second seeming like a minute.

The guerrillas realized they were being surrounded and fled. We took the next hill but could not pursue them farther because, according to Lt. Palacios, there was too great a risk involved in engaging a large

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PRE-WINTER SALE**



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

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

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



Military Goods Catalog - NEW 1985/86 EDITION!

Genuine military clothing, gear and equipment with an emphasis on camouflage. See details on these and many more related items. **\$2.00/each. Free with order.**

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

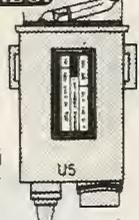
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Drill Instructor/Smokey the Bear Hat—Formally called the Campaign Hat, this is a really fine quality pressed felt headpiece. A hat with character. No one who wears it escapes a personality change. An uncontrollable urge to shout orders or heap abuses,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

**** EVERYTHING IN THIS AD ON SALE!!**
Deduct 10% from All Merchandise (except Strobe Light which is 25% Off) When Ordering!!

SUPER SPECIAL! \$10.00 OFF ANY STROBE LIGHT.
 Offer good for this issue of Soldier of Fortune only!!! To get sale price you MUST mention this issue of SOF. Offer good only thru Dec. 1985.

Distress Marker Rescue Strobe Light— This is a high intensity strobe beacon which penetrates rain and fog and is visible for distances up to 15 miles. Standard pilot survival gear, this light is about the size of a pack of cigarettes (1" x 2" x 4 1/2") yet it puts out a dazzling white flash (250,000 lumens) 50 times per minute for up to 9 hours. The unit is waterproof and shockproof. Sold complete with case and 1 battery. **\$39.50/each.**
 Replacement Batteries for Strobe Light **\$10.75/each**



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

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

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

Black Commando Dog Tag Set — (A Kaufman's Exclusive): 2 GI stainless steel tags specially treated to be non-glare flat black plus 2 black (4" and 24") ball chains **\$5.00/set**
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 No, we're not the cheapest. But you get what you pay for. If you order the cheapest you may wait a long time for delivery of something you may ultimately be unhappy with. If you order from Kaufman's you'll see why top quality merchandise and first rate service (with a Customer Service Department always available) will squeeze the most value out of every dollar you spend.



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

Specify:
 Sage Green or Blue Shell - Regular Length Only. Sizes: XS, S, M, L, XL . . . **\$46.75/each.**
 Black (nylon shell) or Camouflage (50% cotton/50% nylon shell) - Regular Length Only. Sizes: XS, S, M, L, XL . . . **\$48.75/each.**

New for 1985/86 Season!! Long Lengths in Flight Jackets - Add \$4.50 per jacket.

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



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



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

USAF Heavyweight Flight Jacket - Type N2B - This is the warmest flight jacket that the military issues. It features full pile hood which drapes over the shoulders when not needed. This is the cold weather version of the Intermediate Weight Flight Jacket - Type MA1 featured elsewhere in this ad. This jacket is designed for subfreezing temperatures. Waterproof and Windproof. S, M, L **\$87.75/each; XL \$95.75**

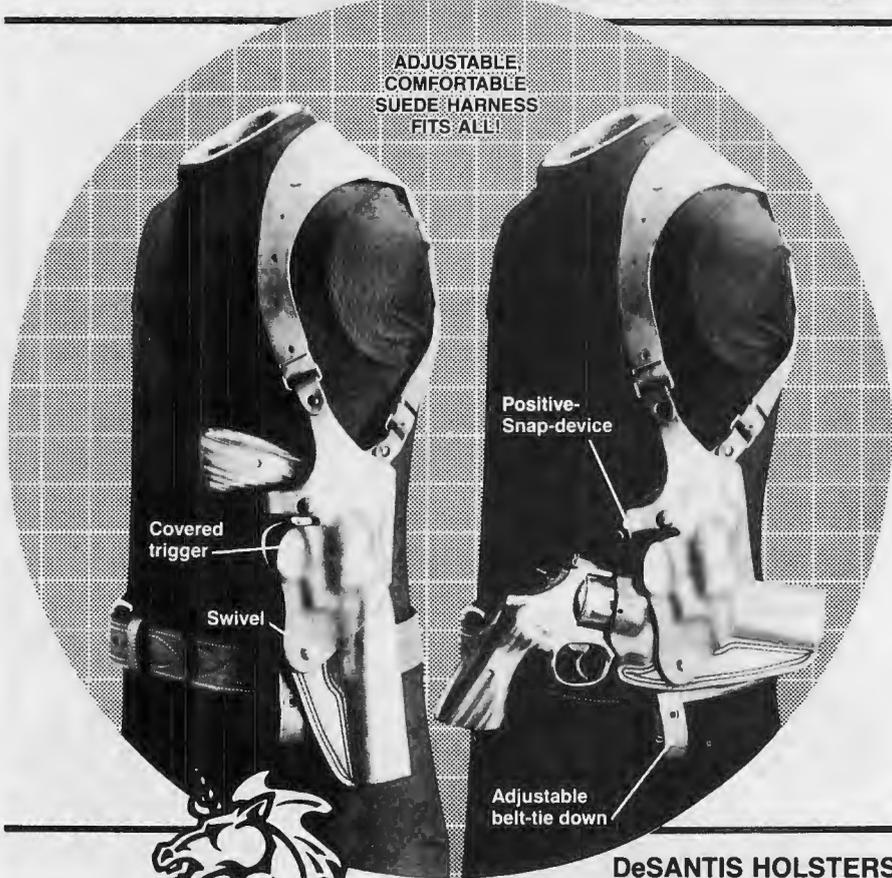


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enemy force away from our sea support.

"Put a, we didn't get them," sputtered the lieutenant who wanted to kill or capture the terrorists so bad he could taste it. "But we frustrated their ambush."

We kicked dirt into the shallow trenches and pushed over the barricades of piled rocks the guerrillas left behind, then rejoined the commandos at the school house. They anxiously awaited news of the firefight and complained about not being called upon to fire their mortar. Despite the fact that the combat was at very close range, they insisted that they could have rained shells on the guerrillas without hitting us. Frightened *campesinos* peered from their glassless windows.

"Don't be afraid, the fighting is over. We drove the terrorists away." The *campesinos* were grateful. We acknowledged their praise with waves, smiles and thank-yous.

It was a short walk back to the beach — or so it seemed. Everyone's thoughts were on the firefight as we radioed to be extracted. Around 1800 a 75-foot cutter cruised two clicks offshore. We popped yellow smoke to mark our location and an Avon rubber raft sped to the beach and started ferrying us to the ship. I boarded the first shuttle with seven commandos in waist-deep water and we hurtled through the rough sea.

It was dark by the time the last commando boarded the ship. We took a well-deserved rest on the deck, too tired to care about the vibration from its engines, and headed for La Union content, knowing we had demonstrated once again that the Naval Commandos could drive the guerrillas away from El Salvador's coasts any time.

Operation Esperanza was a success. ✕

DAYLIGHT RAID

Continued from page 41

one hundred yards behind our position sends everyone flat to the ground. Then another explosion — and another — rocks the earth.

Heavy artillery fire. An artillery strike from Kabul, less than five miles distant. The fort has called for supporting fire from the Soviets' big guns.

I have been most worried about attacks from helicopters, especially since we are so close to the capital. But the Soviets apparently think the Afghan soldiers in the fort are not worth the risk of losing a gunship. And not without reason.

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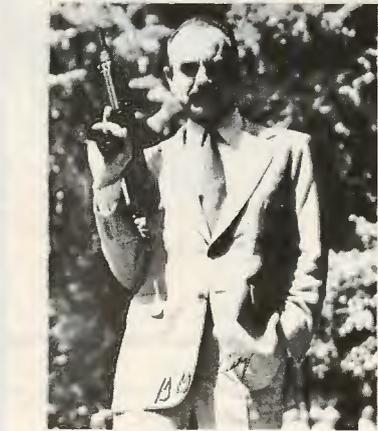
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 SF05-0978.....\$69.95



NIGHT WATCH
 Intruder detection system designed to alert you when someone has entered your area, campsite, home or farm. Once a tripwire perimeter has been established, you can relax. Comes complete with system black box, 8,000 feet of ultra-thin wire and earphone (used if you don't want the audible alarm). Two circuits 3x4x1 1/2". 7 ounces.
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GENUINE ISSUE MILITARY COT

This is the sophisticated new military cot. The bed is made of fully taped and reinforced olive drab nylon. The frame is extruded aluminum with smooth nylon end-caps. Don't confuse this cot with surplus cots of the past made of wood that rots or canvas that rots. NSN 7105-00-935-0422. 78x30x17". Folds to 37x9x4". Genuine military.
 SF05-0989.....\$99.50



G. GORDEN LIDDY POSTER
 A coy smile greets you as you unroll this beautiful full color poster of one of today's most controversial figures. Mr. Liddy is dressed in a business suit and appears to be ready to give the viewer the business end of an UZI. Autograph printed across lower portion of poster. 17x22".
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 For men who must live off the land and cope with any situation. 5 1/2" black blade of 440C Stainless steel. Blade is complete with saw, barbed wire cutter, clinometer and distress code. Knuckle guard on the handle. Endcap, which can be used as a hammer, also encloses a compass and hollow handle filled with survival necessities, including the morse code. Scabbard has hidden sharpening stone and screwdriver. Virtually indestructible.
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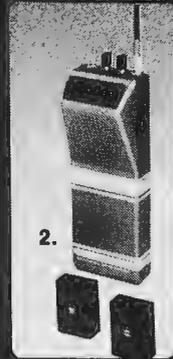
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The week before, two heavily armed Soviet gunships, an Mi-8 and an Mi-24 (NATO codenames Hip and Hind), had overflowed our base camp in the caves. Our doctor was standing in the mouth of one cave on their first pass and said he and the Soviet pilot in the Mi-8 looked each other clearly in the eye. The gunships grouped for a second pass. No doubt this one would not be as benign. As they approached, one freedom fighter scored a direct hit on the Hip with a SAM-7. It split in half in midair and plummeted to the ground. The Hind immediately broke off the attack. The Hip, apparently with its fuel tanks topped off and fully loaded with rockets, made a tremendous explosion that was heard 10 miles away when it hit. Its rotor head was the only piece left bigger than a typewriter.

So maybe we'll be safe from a helicopter attack today. Twenty shells later the artillery pounding stops, leaving a mosaic of craters but no casualties. Now tracer ammo from the post streaks red patterns across the Asian night sky. Some of the mujahideen units have already begun a tentative advance under the fire. We wait.

At about 2000, as I prepare to move forward with one of the recoilless gun crews, I receive a message that Haliq, my translator, is looking for me. I head for the rear. When I find him, Haliq is visibly upset. He and several others hover around the dark form of a man on the ground. I walk closer to look. I hear moans but no one speaks.

It is my friend, Usman, severely wounded about an hour before.

Haliq quickly fills me in. He, Usman and a few others were attempting to advance on the fort about an hour earlier when they were stopped by mortar fire. As they hugged the earth to escape flying shrapnel, it became horrifyingly apparent that they were hunkered down in a mine field. When the mortar fire lifted everyone began trying to retrace their steps in the dark.

Usman took one step and hit a mine. Haliq had carried him back to our lines.

Usman is conscious, writhing in pain. He looks at me and then quickly looks away. A fellow soldier knowingly pinches a shrapnel hole shut to try and help a sucking chest wound. Another compatriot elevates Usman's right leg, which is bleeding badly.

Struggling in the dim moonlight to assess my friend's wounds, I suddenly remember that I have the only flashlight in the group. I flick it on to examine what in the dark appears to be his right foot. Jagged white bone protruding from the bloody stump below his knee glares at me. His thighs are in shreds. I turn out my light and look away, up at the stars, as Usman's groans grow louder.

Haliq says a friendly doctor lives in a village near the caves, about two hours away. A two-hour walk to the doctor sounds bad by Western standards. In this war such a circumstance is considered good fortune. If we hurry, Usman might have a chance. Eight mujahideen are pulled off the line to accompany Usman. He is lifted onto a de-

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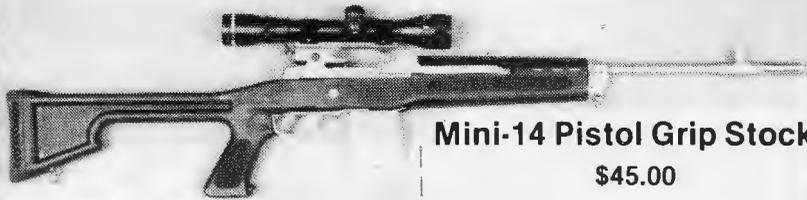
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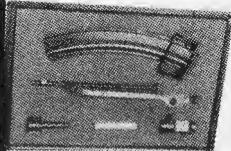
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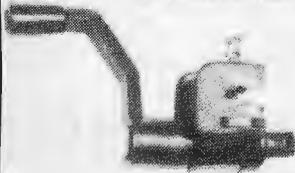
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tached door and the door is rigged across the back of a bony horse.

As we leave, we pass another small knot of soldiers crouched around a wounded friend. His abdominal wound is so horrible there is no hope. His friends are sitting in a circle, seeking to offer him comfort while he waits to die.

Our group moves away from the sounds of the continuing fight. As we cross a stream and top the opposite bank a mortar round explodes 100 feet or so to our right. Everyone hugs the ground, leaving only the horse and Usman standing silhouetted in the moonlight. We begin to pick ourselves up. We flatten again as we hear the *whicker-whicker* of another incoming round. It explodes about 100 feet to our left.

We are being bracketed and the mortarman is obviously finding his mark. We *must* move. We flog the beast carrying Usman's makeshift litter. We put ground behind us quickly, moving safely up the hill and into some rocks as more incoming rounds explode harmlessly behind us.

We reach the village doctor about midnight. He has few instruments and virtually no medicines. He does what little he can, trying to stem the heavy flow of blood. Usman has lapsed into shock. Our group waits quietly outside, praying, hoping, saying almost nothing.

Automatic weapons fire can still be heard from the direction of the fort as the sky over the hills above us pales with the coming dawn. Hope fades with the darkness that the mujahideen will capture their objective.

The young village doctor comes out. His frustration and sadness is obvious. He has worked all night on Usman. He tells us that there is nothing more he can do and now that Usman's only hope is to reach a Red Cross hospital on the Pakistani border.

Abdul Mohammed's men strap Usman to a crude litter and lash it to a fresh horse. Just that movement sets Usman's stump to bleeding again through the bandage. He groans, now in a shocky state of semi-consciousness. The doctor has no pain killers for the three-day trip through the mountains to Pakistan.

We set out and travel for 14 hours over uninhabited mountains with almost no rest. We all are determined that Usman shall survive. We occasionally stop to give Usman a respite from the torturous ride.

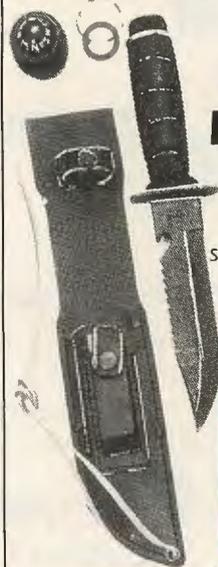
At about 2040 hours, Usman pushes himself up on his elbows and begs for us to stop so he can rest. The others tell him to hold on, we have almost reached our stopping point for the night. In his agony, Usman looks skyward and beseeches, "*Allah!*" His compatriots try to comfort him as we move on and I hear Usman cry out to God again. He then apparently loses consciousness.

We reach a mud teahouse at about 2100 and stop for the night. Usman has become increasingly weak and delirious. His litter is quickly lowered from the horse for the final time that day. While others wait with Usman, I take off down a hill to bring him water from a stream. When I return about 10

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minutes later, Usman's friends are giving him artificial respiration in an attempt to revive him. It is no use. He is dead. ✖

SEAL SAGA

Continued from page 55

Generally described, BUD/S is a progressive physical training program involving running, swimming, calisthenics, obstacle course and basic skills training. Officers and enlisted men are both subjected to the rigors of the three-phase program, striving to achieve the SEAL standard.

Phase One focuses on physical conditioning and basic skills. Students do calisthenics, weekly four-mile timed runs, two-mile ocean swims with fins, 3/4-mile pool swims without fins and run through the obstacle course — all must be accomplished within allotted times. Students are also instructed in small-boat seamanship. Then comes the period they all dread, the infamous fifth or "Hell Week" which dates back to earliest UDT training days at Ft. Pierce. A concentrated, continuous six-day ultimate test of mental and physical motivation, Hell Week allows the student little or no sleep. Teams of five or seven men conduct boat drills and other tasks which can only be accomplished through discipline and teamwork.

Classroom work is also part of Hell Week. Some students find this part to be even more excruciating than the field work. After the hours without sleep, heads begin to nod as exhausted students succumb to built-up fatigue. Those who fight the urge to give in will find themselves extending their limits. And just as they feel those limits might have been reached, it's time for a forced march.

Then it's on to the grand finale of Hell Week. Students wearing steel helmets must negotiate the water-filled demolition pits as half-pound charges of TNT are set off all around them. Those who survive move on.

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Students learn how to set charges and blow everything from beach obstacles to bridges. And physical training doesn't slack off either — it gets worse. The two-mile ocean swim with fins now has to be completed in 75 minutes, the four-mile timed run in 31 minutes and the obstacle course in 13 minutes. Toward the end of Phase Two, students plan and conduct a 20-day, realistic

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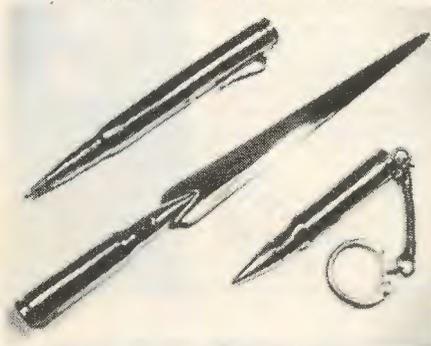
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parachute training at the Army Airborne School. SEALs may not always be able to swim to an objective and parachuting may be the next best thing. The scenario could be even more complex. A SEAL might find himself parachuting into the ocean at night prior to making a long swim to a clandestine intel-gathering mission. So at Benning, it's *Airborne All The Way*, running everywhere with Army and Special Forces students . . . to the jump tower and those five static-line jumps needed for qualification.

With jump school behind them, the SEAL-trainees who have managed to stay in the program are sent to either Team 1, 3, 5 or Swimmer Delivery Vehicle Team (SDVT) 1 on the West Coast or to Team 2, 4 or SDVT-2, East Coast. Since Underwater Demolition Teams were phased out in 1983, SDV Teams represent the latest stage in the UDT evolutionary chain. The delivery vehicle used to transport SEAL teams to and from a mission is a mini-submersible — so-called "wet" because operators wear SCUBA gear and ride in open cockpits. The SDV MK VII has a fiberglass hull and non-ferrous materials used for components to reduce acoustic/magnetic signature. It carries four combat swimmers with room for storing demo charges, etc., is 18 feet long, has a computerized Doppler navigation system, obstacle-avoidance sonar and can withstand ambient seawater pressures to depths of 500 ft.

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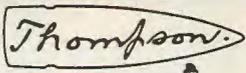
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sion. When it's all over, a few of the souls who successfully braved BUD/S will have failed to make it through STT. But those who do will have found a team home, a cohesive unit of Navy special warfare commandos who can get the job done by sea, air or land. They are now SEALs.

The multifaceted and worldwide nature of SEAL operational responsibilities require effective, ready-reaction sea-and-air support. Teams are provided organic boat support by Special Boat Squadron One's Special Boat Units (SBU) 11, 12 and 13 on the West Coast and by Special Boat Squadron Two's SBUs 20, 22 and 24 on the East Coast. An essential element of the specwar team, the Combat Craft crewmen of the SBUs primarily operate on the the 65-foot Patrol Boat, 36-foot Seafox specwar craft and upgraded PBRs (Patrol Boat, River). The SBU mission comprises insert/extract of SEALs, coastal interdiction, offensive strikes, raids, strike warfare against ashore/afloat targets, fire support, comms relay and Medevac.

The Seafox specwar craft is the SBU's newest acquisition. Its high speed, low profile and armament make it ideal for its primary mission of close-in SEAL insertion and extraction operations. Mounting .50-cal. and M60 .30-cal. MGs and the Mark 19 Mod 3 40mm Automatic Grenade Launcher, Seafox craft have recently seen duty during Operation Urgent Fury when three-man crews from SBU 20 clandestinely inserted SEAL Team Four personnel onto beaches near Pearls airport for a beach recon. Its larger, more heavily armed MK3 fast patrol boats used their 20mm and 40mm cannons as 11-man crews successfully interdicted and captured escaping Marxist militiamen. The PBs also mount an over-under 60mm mortar/.50-cal. MG, Mark 19 Mod 3 40mm Automatic Grenade Launcher and 81mm mortars.

U.S. Naval Reserve Helicopter Attack Squadron (Light) (HAL) 4 and 5 stationed at Norfolk, Va. and Pt. Mugu, Calif., respectively provide East and West Coast teams with special warfare helo support. The HAL-4 Red Wolves and HAL-5 Blue Hawks established in 1976 and 1977 revived the HAL-3 Vietnam close air support capability. Both squadrons fly the HH-1K gunship fitted with the M-21 weapons subsystem: two GAU-2B/A Gatling guns, two rocket launchers carrying seven 2.75-inch Folding Fin Aerial Rockets (FFARs) and two door-mounted M60 MGs. Additionally, the HH-1Ks are specially painted to minimize infrared weapons detection and carry the ALE-39 or ALQ-144 countermeasures system. Currently, all squadron crews are undergoing intensive training in use of Night Vision Goggles (NVG) that allow them to navi-

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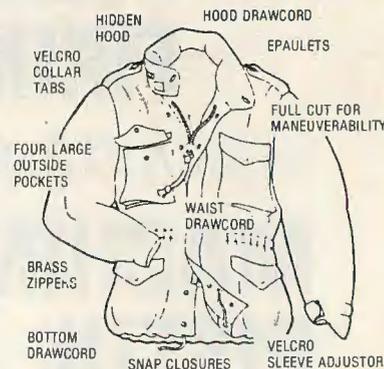
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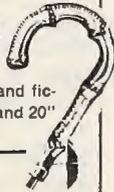
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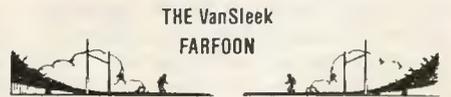
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figuration the Ultimax 100 falls just short.

To its credit, however, CIS already has stated its intention to implement modification suggestions from combat-experienced users. A concentrated effort aimed at such changes is necessary before the Ultimax 100 is ready for the front lines in its class. Some of my criticisms are being addressed.

There is great potential here — and at an attractive price.

SAR 80 Assault Rifle

Chartered Industries of Singapore's entry into the assault-rifle market is far more conventional in both concept and execution. Developed with an eye to cost effectiveness, extensive use has been made of stamped-sheet-metal pressings, investment castings and standard small components, such as rivets, pins and springs.

Under license from Colt in 1971, CIS began production of the M16 rifle to meet the needs of the Singapore Armed Forces. CIS began development of their own 5.56mm rifle by the mid-1970s, aiming for self-sufficiency and worldwide marketability.

About the same time, Sterling Armament Company, Ltd. in Dagenham, Essex, England — makers of the famous submachine-gun series (See "Sterling Investment," SOF, June '83) — developed an assault-rifle prototype under the auspices of their chief designer, Frank Waters (See "Sterling Gold," SOF, October '83). It was abandoned

in 1974, when Sterling reached an agreement with Armalite to produce the AR-18 with existing Armalite tooling.

Sterling's assault-rifle package was sent to CIS in 1977 for assessment. After testing and modifications, CIS purchased the manufacturing and marketing rights to the SAR (which then stood for "Sterling Assault Rifle"). After additional changes, an initial lot of 1,000 SARs (now the "Singapore Assault Rifle") were delivered to the Singapore Armed Forces in late 1980. Continued refinements to the second and third batches of 1,000 rifles each resulted in what is now called the SAR 80.

The SAR 80 is gas operated. Its short-stroke piston-action gas system, located above the barrel, is based in general on the system employed by the AR-18. The gas cylinder/regulator is like a hollow spigot. Fitted into the cylinder, after the short piston has moved rearward no more than half an inch, a series of holes in the cylinder is exposed and gas is evacuated. The piston and its extension are separate components. The piston extension is connected to a push rod which impinges directly upon the face of the bolt carrier. There is an adjustable gas regulator with four positions, 0 to 3. It's slotted and can be turned either with a tool or by hand. The cut-off position for firing rifle grenades is 0. The normal operating position is number 2.

There are two recoil springs and guide rods which fit into twin channels on top of the bolt carrier. The bolt carrier contains a removable inertial rod which acts as an anti-bounce device to inhibit firing out of battery. Using the extractor as one of the locking lugs, the eight-lug rotary bolt rotates by means of a cam pin projecting out of a cam path cut into the bolt carrier. Primary extraction takes place during the bolt's initial unlocking from the barrel extension.

A so-called bump-type spring-loaded ejector is employed. The spring-loaded firing pin has a separate retaining ring. Protruding from its channel and the ejection port on the right side of the receiver, just far enough to catch on every tree limb and snake in the bush, is the one-inch-long retracting handle. It should be angled upward so it can be more easily reached by the left hand. Held in place by the receiver wall, it can be removed only after the recoil springs and their guide rods have been withdrawn.

The stamped-sheet-metal upper receiver body has a more rectangular shape than its square-tubed AR-18 predecessor. It has been fitted with a strange, manually operated, sliding dust cover which protects only the retracting handle's rear slot. It does not cover the ejection port. The upper and lower receivers have been covered with an extremely durable wrinkle-paint finish over phosphate — in the Sterling manner. Excel-

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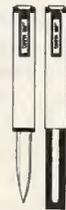


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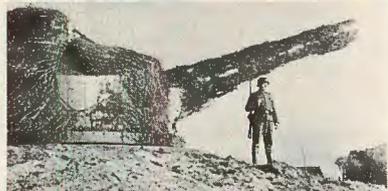
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lent for tropical environments, it is nevertheless unpopular in the U.S.

The trigger mechanism is part of the lower-receiver group, which is held to the upper receiver by two H&K-type pins. The rear pin was quite loose on the specimen I examined. These pins should always be inserted from the left side. The hammer is controlled not only by the selector lever but an auto safety sear. The safety sear is timed to permit release of the hammer only after the bolt is in complete battery. In the unlikely event of mechanical failure, the hammer will strike the rear of the carrier, dissipating its energy in pushing the carrier forward without firing. The SAR 80 fires from the closed-bolt position.

The selector lever is like that on the M16, but I found the SAR 80's to be a bit stiff. The firing positions are ergonomically correct. Rotate the selector lever downward, into the vertical position, for semiautomatic fire. Continued rotation in a clockwise direction will bring the selector around to the full-auto position. At present, there is no provision for the three-shot-burst mode.

The magazine catch-release button, located on the lower receiver's right side, has been taken from the Ultimax 100. It has been shielded, in the manner of the U.S. M3A1 submachine gun, to prevent accidental release of the magazines. Empty magazines fell freely away on one SAR 80 I fired, but not at all on another. There is a hold-open feature, but no release latch (there is none on the AR-18 either). If the bolt is rearward after a new magazine is inserted, the cocking handle must be retracted slightly and then released smartly to chamber a round.

The trigger is wide and smooth with a pull weight of about eight pounds. Single-stage and without slack, it's very crisp with no trace of creep. The trigger guard, a sheet-metal pressing, is welded to the lower receiver and cannot be removed for arctic use. The black plastic pistol grip is in the AR-18 configuration. Checkering has been added and the rear sling swivel relocated to the buttstock. Comfortable and providing the proper grip-to-frame angle, the pistol grip lacks only a storage compartment and finger swell.

The black plastic buttstock is also attached to the lower receiver. It has a rubber recoil pad, but no storage trap. The rear sling swivel is mounted to the bottom of the buttstock. It rotates 180 degrees, up and down only, and is quite noisy. A folding buttstock of the FN FAL type has been designed, but it is not in production.

Barrel length is 18.1 inches, which yields an overall length of 38.2 inches. The empty weight is slightly heavy at 7.5 pounds. The six-groove barrel has a right-hand twist of one turn in 12 inches for M193 ammunition. It is not chrome-lined. The front-sight protective ears are integral with the gas block and bayonet lug. The round front-sight post is of the M16 type and adjustable for elevation zero only. The barrel is fitted with an M16A1-type bird-cage flash suppressor.

The front sling swivel is located forward of the gas system. It rotates 360 degrees and is real noisy. The nylon-base, black plastic handguards are both provided with aluminum heat shields, but they still managed to overheat to the point of discomfort during my firing test. Only the upper handguard can be removed. Two spring-loaded rods fit into holes in the upper receiver. It can be disassembled with ease.

The rear sight's protective ears are welded to the upper receiver body. The flip-type peep aperture rear sight has been taken from the M16. Windage adjustments are made with a drum on the right side which can be turned after a detent has been depressed with the nose of a bullet. Each position on the drum moves the mean point of impact by 2.5 cm at 100 meters. The sight radius is 20.4 inches. Optical sight mounts have been standard on the SAR 80 since September 1984.

Field-stripping the SAR 80 follows a straightforward sequence. After removing the magazine and clearing the rifle, remove the front and rear take-down pins. They're not captive, so be careful you don't misplace them. After inspection and cleaning, set the lower receiver group aside. Depress the guide-rod block's spring-loaded detent and withdraw the guide-rod assembly from the upper receiver body. Slide the bolt group to the rear and pull out the retracting handle. The bolt group will then drop out the rear of the upper receiver.

Depress the firing pin and remove its locking pin. Remove the inertia rod and retainer. Remove the cam pin and pull the bolt away from the carrier. Push the upper handguard rearward and tilt it away from the rifle to disassemble. Push the piston extension backward, tilt out and then forward again to remove. Pull the gas cylinder away from the gas block and remove the piston.

Reassemble in the reverse order, making sure the small end of the firing-pin spring is inserted first and grips the firing-pin shoulder.

At the beginning of my 500-round firing test, I had one light hit which failed to ignite the primer. After I moved the gas regulator from the number 1 to number 2 position, there were no further stoppages. Highly accurate, the rifle is capable of excellent hit probability. With a cyclic rate of about 700 rpm, the rifle is easily controlled during full-auto fire sequences.

Experienced personnel will have no trouble in mastering the fire discipline required to produce consistent two- or three-shot bursts. After 500 rounds the gas system had produced only minimal fouling on the bolt. The ejection path is to the right and rearward about six feet from the rifle. The SAR 80 seems to be acceptably reliable and, at 8.5 pounds fully loaded, should certainly prove to be robust enough.

My major criticism of this system is the use of the wretched M16 magazine, which though ubiquitous, continually induces "bolt-over-base" stoppages in all weapons designed to accept it.

The SAR 80 sells for one-third less than

the cost of an M16 and almost two-thirds less than some European 5.56mm assault rifles. This should prove appealing to countries not propped up by Uncle Sugar. The Singapore weapons have great promise — provided they are modified somewhat to meet the realities of the killing field. ✘

BROWNWATER NAVY

Continued from page 37

was an old dead tree. I looked at it and didn't see anything out of the ordinary. When I turned away, two rounds went by the back of my head. I didn't know I'd been shot at.

The craftmaster ran out of the control room and knocked me down. I started to yell at him and two more rounds hit the side of the control room. The craftmaster grabbed the M79 and I got to the .50. Between the two of us, I'm sure we got them. There wasn't even much left of the tree.

When we got to Dong Ha, I took the mail ashore while they off-loaded the boat. When I got back to the boat ramp two snipers opened up on us from across the river. One sniper was spotted in a cemetery and the other one was in a tree near the river bank. We fired up the tree with our M16s and the craftmaster started dropping M79 rounds into the cemetery.

We winged the one in the tree, but he was up and running as soon as he hit the ground. He must have taken a dozen hits before he finally fell.

The craftmaster said he'd gotten the one in the cemetery . . . or he thought that he had. When the shooting stopped, a Marine from the ramp and I ran across the bridge to check the cemetery. As we came closer to the cemetery, our run slowed to a walk. What if he wasn't dead? What if he fired at us?

But my big question was, "What the hell am I doing this for? . . . I'm not a Marine!"

We'd last seen the sniper just 50 yards ahead us. I'd cover the Marine as he moved in, then he'd do the same for me. I looked back at the boat and could see the rest of the crew standing with their rifles ready to help. The world had stopped as far as I was concerned. My heart was in my throat and its staccato beat was deafening. With eyes glued to the tombstone where I was sure he lay, I moved on. A glance to the left to check on the Marine and then back to the tombstone.

I froze.

Charlie was up and firing at me. The muzzle flashes were hot and blinding, yet I felt so cold. It seemed to take forever, but I finally managed to return fire. It was like a volleyball game, he fired, I fired, he fired, I fired. My serve — I emptied the rest of the magazine into him. The rifle slipped from his hands and he just fell over. With all that I'd been told about the M16 I figured there would be pieces of him all over the place, but he just fell down.

It sure wasn't like playing Army as a kid. We use to shoot each other for hours. There was always a lot of screaming and yelling. After getting shot, it was mandatory that you write around on the ground.

I put the muzzle of my rifle against the base of the sniper's skull. The Marine stepped up beside me as I rolled the body over. When the body came to rest, my eyes riveted on his face. Part of his cheek was gone, along with his nose and right eye. The rest of his face was a mixture of dirt and blood. His lips were pulled back and his teeth were clenched. Just as I was feeling sorry for him, the Marine showed me the U.S. Government M1 carbine the gook had used on us. He was wearing a Timex watch and sporting a new pair of U.S.-made tennis shoes. So much for feeling sorry for him.

The female stevedores finished the off-loading as if nothing had happened and we headed back to Da Nang, staying the customary three miles off the coastline. All was dark and peaceful. The only noise was the drone of the engines and the waves brushing the bow of the boat.

I was on watch with the chief engineer in the control room. An hour out of Da Nang, we passed by a firefight on the shore. Red and green tracers flowed like a waterfall. Helicopter gunships screamed in and added even more color to the picture. That three-mile safety margin felt good.

Our destination finally loomed ahead, but as we pulled in, there was nothing but a darkened causeway to greet us. It was good to be home, though. Since my watch was to end as soon as we landed, I was ready for a good night's sleep. But the Operations Office had something else in mind for us.

Harbor security called us on the radio and told us that we had a load to pick up at the bridge on the Song Han river. The bridge connected east and west Da Nang. Orders are orders — we turned and started up the river. The craftmaster told me that the bridge ramp was where the Navy LSTs made their deliveries. The only load he'd ever picked up at the bridge turned out to be beer and a couple hundred pairs of paratrooper jump boots.

Oh, be still, my heart. With that kind of a load we could trade for a whole new boat and an all-female crew — topless. Paratrooper boots were good as gold and I prayed for them to be waiting on the dock for us. And I continued to pray until the bridge came into sight and I could see two LSTs moored at the ramp. The area was lit with searchlights and the forklifts were busy unloading the two ships. As the craftmaster slowed to make the turn toward the ramp, the first rocket hit.

It landed near the bridge, sending everyone running. The craftmaster rammed our boat into a sharp turn and got the hell away from the ramp. I sounded the Red Alert and the crew went to battle stations. I couldn't believe the shock wave the rockets made. After a hit a half-mile away, the pressure of the blast would roll over the boat a split second later. It almost took your breath

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away. The light flash from the explosion was a brilliant white light, or red, or orange. The colors changed every time something different was hit. I wondered what color a riverboat would give off.

Harbor Security called and said that they thought the rockets were coming from the east side of the river just ahead of us. They told us to stick to the east bank and try to locate the enemy's position and notify them. My .50 was on the wrong side of the boat to be used so I grabbed my M16 and headed for the welldeck. The craftmaster put us about twenty yards from shore and slowed the boat. Talk about sitting duck tactics . . . but it worked. We started taking small-arms fire from the darkness.

Everybody on the boat opened up. The craftmaster radioed that we had made contact and he requested ground forces and gunships. Several rockets landed in the river near the boat, giving us the ride of our lives. The boat pitched from one side to the other and the river water pelted the boat like rain. I kept firing into the darkness until I saw a winking muzzle flash and drew a bead. It wasn't long until my ammo was gone so I dashed back to the ammo locker. That's when the deck came up and hit me in the face. A rocket blast had brought the stern section of the boat out of the water.

I got to my knees, refilled my lungs and went to the control room. Harbor Security radioed that they had ground forces moving into the area and wanted us to clear out. The craftmaster kicked the boat in the ass and headed for the causeway.

It just goes to show you. You may think that missing a stint with a frontline infantry unit would be cause for some type of celebration. If you do, think again. I'd only been in-country for three days and already I had seen enough action to last a lifetime.

My remaining months in Vietnam were not quite as hairy. I spent them faithfully carrying out my division's motto — "They Shall Not Want." ✕

RANDALL KNIVES

Continued from page 59

knives and found them wanting, so they were now in Orlando to see Bo about hand-making the first knives to be taken into space. After the factory offerings had been rejected, Scott Carpenter suggested that Bo be contacted. Scott was a deer hunter of long standing and had his own Randall Made Model #3 hunting knife. After looking over Carpenter's prize hunting knife Cooper and Grissom decided to make a short flight down to Orlando.

The requirements they presented sounded pretty tough to combine into one relatively small knife. First, it could be no more than 10 inches in overall length. Second, and most important, it had to be very strong — strong enough to pry a hatch if it were jammed shut. If that prying didn't work, the

knife had to be able to cut, rip and smash through aluminum sheet, electric wires and/or electronic components to get them out of a space capsule damaged upon landing. After all of this work the knife they wanted must be sharp enough to cut away their heavy space suits. To top it all off they wanted a cavity in the handle in which a few small survival items could be stowed. No wonder the factory models had been rejected.

With respect to these basic requirements of size and strength Bo was far ahead of any other knife maker because he had been making the Model 15 Airman's knife for the previous five years. He immediately brought one out for Cooper and Grissom to examine. This was a pleasant surprise to them for they saw at once that here was the basis for their astronauts' special knife. The three of them began to discuss the modifications necessary to turn the Randall Airman's knife into the first knife to be carried into space.

To start with, the top edge must drop down from the spine to the point — like a drop-point hunting knife — and be made butterknife dull. This was needed so that if one of the men had to cut himself out of his spacesuit he could do so without injuring himself. Second, the guard, or hilt, must be made longer so that there was no possibility of a hand slipping over it while using the knife with pressurized gloves on. A cut pressure suit in space could really screw up a man's whole day. At the same time it was requested that the guard be made of stainless steel for added strength. Next, the tang was to be made wider with a cavity cut into it in the shape of a rectangular hole. The handle was then to be finished off with two side pieces — called scales by knife buffs — attached to the tang with screws. The inside of each scale was also to be hollowed out for extra storage capacity. The handle would be drilled near the butt for a wrist thong. To get the handle scales off for storing survival items in the cavity a key-style screwdriver was threaded on the wrist thong.

Sketches and notes were made at this brainstorming session. By the time they quit the three men knew that they had just designed the perfect knife to carry into space aboard a Project Mercury space capsule. The two astronauts went back to Langley AFB and Bo went to his shop.

Starting with existing Model 15 blades, the sparks flew at grinding wheels and files were given a real workout as Bo and a craftsman or two sought the proper combination of modifications necessary to fulfill these requirements. They sure didn't let any grass grow under their feet because, according to a note in the old Randall files, on 14 January 1960 one "Astro #15 knife with match insert, Lucite handle, no sheath" was sent to Maj. Gordon Cooper, NASA Space Task Group, Langley AFB, Virginia.

On 1 February 1960 M. Scott Carpenter sent an official letter to Bo thanking him for "the first copy of the knife you thought up

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for us." He wanted a sheath for this first knife, asking that it be a typical Randall-style sheath, with an outside pocket for a sharpening stone. The prototype needed some minor refinements and this became a good reason for Cooper and Grissom to make a number of flights to Orlando. In the process of design improvement these three men became good friends, and this friendship with Bo Randall extended to other members of the original seven.

On 28 June 1960 Bo sent a package to Capt. Gordon Cooper, NASA facility, Langley Field, Virginia. It contained a three-page letter, seven Astro knives with sheaths and names etched; two extra Astro knives and one Astro Doctor's Knife with a hook in the handle, plus some IXL scout knives, hones and 3/4-inch compasses. Each astronaut had his own personal knife with his name on it, plus a top-quality pocket knife. The doctor's knife was for Project Mercury sawbones Dr. Bill Douglas, and one of the extra Astros was for Shorty Powers. No bill for these knives was ever sent to NASA. This package and all the preceding efforts were Bo's personal contribution to America's man-in-space program. The "original seven" were truly appreciative as evidenced by letters in the old files.

Naturally, these first Astro knives became the proud possessions of the recipients and the design was accepted as the official Project Mercury knife. Starting with an order for 20 knives dated 6 July 1960, NASA purchased a total of 60 Randall Made Astro knives. It was a good thing that NASA did order these knives, too — it allowed the astronauts to choose which knife they took on their mission. They could use their own personal knife with their name on it, or a NASA one. Al Shepard decided to take a NASA knife with him in Freedom 7 and it went into 10,000 feet of water when his mechanical hatch dropped off the capsule while it was being lifted aboard ship by a helicopter. Gus Grissom left his own Randall Astro at home and another NASA knife went to the bottom when the entire capsule sank after his explosive hatch malfunctioned. To the best of the author's information, all of the original seven still have their own knives, except for one special case.

One day while Bo was working in his yard, L. Gordon Cooper drove up. He had recently set a space record with 23 orbits of this planet. The two men talked for a few minutes and then Cooper reached into a jacket pocket and brought out his Astro knife. He handed it to Bo and told him that he had taken this knife on his 23-orbit flight. He explained that because Bo had done so much for him and his fellow astronauts he wished him to have this one back as a personal thank you. Bo has said that as he stood there holding Cooper's knife, and looking at his smiling face, he almost wept. Of all the knives in his collection, this is the knife as far as Bo is concerned. It is kept in its own glass case in a place of high honor. And L. Gordon Cooper Jr. paid tribute to his feeling for the knife in a chapter of *We Seven*, the

book written by the Project Mercury astronauts themselves. This chapter is titled simply "A Sharp Knife."

Long before time was recorded, through now and into the future, knives have been, and will continue to be, a necessity to the adventurous. When that necessity was presented by American fighting men, W.D. "Bo" Randall Jr. always rose to the challenge, and his knives never let them down. He has the letters to prove it. ✂

BATTLE BLADES

Continued from page 16

just won't have.

At .178 inches, the thickest part of this tapered, springy blade is thinner than ordinary 3/16 bar stock. I've seen garbage cans made of heavier sheet. Then, to top it off, the blade carries the lightening fullers — misnamed "blood grooves" — that not only *don't* drain blood, they make an already-thin blade even thinner. Between the depths of the grooves, the Raider Bowie is .135-inch thick. Some pocket knives have thicker blades.

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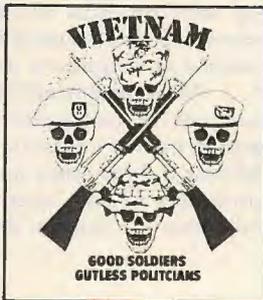
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sign. The high point and deep belly prevent effective thrusting. Its light blade denies the user power in a chop. And as the bent point on this specimen shows, the blade is simply too thin to take the torque and leverage that can be easily applied to a knife this long.

Nevertheless, if I'd been lurking through Pacific jungles with a K-BAR at my belt, I'd have envied the Marine with a Carlson's Raider Bowie. ✂

COMMAND GUIDANCE

Continued from page 2

train good soldiers. All he can hope to make by encouraging unrealistic ideas of his services is bad press, unnecessarily restrictive legislation, and — as Morris already said — corpses.

So what is Pat Schroeder going to do about this? She's going to shut down the mercenary schools.

Well, then, what is a mercenary school? Just like "mercenary," that requires careful definition. And if the witch-hunt doesn't write careful definitions and watch itself, the pursuers of "mercenary trainers" are going to find themselves treading on the Constitution ... again.

What to do? That's easily answered.

Let qualified professionals succeed and let amateurs fail. Cooper has more student applications than he can handle. So-called mercenary schools have gone up and come down like parachute flares over the last 10 years. Free enterprise will take care of everyone according to his deserts.

And what would be the benefit of an investigation? More publicity for irresponsible imitations of Ranger School. Creating a black market for "secret training" they now provide publicly. Giving mercenary schools a new lease on life just as most of them were going belly-up.

So if it's impractical to hound paramilitary schools, how are we going to counter their potential for changing used-car salesmen into terrorists? ... What potential? Out of the thousands of international crimes against peace committed since World War II, how many have involved graduates of any "mercenary" school? One ... maybe. And

did they learn their techniques from that "mercenary" school? Most certainly not.

Thus, is it reasonable to assume that an investigation of these camouflaged group-therapy sessions will do nothing more than create reams of free false advertising, waste taxpayers' money and have no effect on the incidence of terrorism?

Of course. ✂

AIR APACHES

Continued from page 45

Apaches dispatched 24 strafers from all four squadrons to intercept it. The planes checked out the Pescadore Islands en route, then proceeded to the coast of China near the city of Amoy. The weather had cleared somewhat but visibility was still poor with haze lying over the sea as Captain George Musket led the 501st Squadron and the Group into the search zone. They turned southeastward past Quemoy Island and began searching along the rugged, island-dotted coastline.

Just after 11:30, Musket spotted two frigates steaming north-northeast at almost the exact spot that intelligence had predicted. While the six planes passed to their starboard, the two ships made a right turn and lined up almost perfectly so that the B-25s could strike both in a single attack run. Musket, flying #572, led his two wingmen, 2nd Lieutenants Richard C. Lathrop and James N. Harrah, across the first warship with their nose guns blazing. Bombs splashed into the water all around it but no hits were scored. The three planes headed for the second ship, leaving small fires burning on the aft superstructure of the first ship from their strafing.

After lashing the second ship with a fusillade from the nose guns, Musket skipped a bomb off the water and onto the deck where it exploded, wrecking the deck housing, destroying the funnel and killing about a dozen Japanese sailors who were crouched behind the superstructure.

Lieutenant Ollie Hatcher, leading the 501st's second flight in #571, turned wide of the first flight to open up more distance between the attack runs, then sped toward the first frigate with his wingmen on either side. Nine bombs splashed into the water around the ship and one of Hatcher's bombs exploded along the stern, opening up a large hole in the side. The warship came to a stop and diesel oil began pouring from her ruptured seams.

The 499th Squadron, coming up next, also turned wide, then split into two three-plane flights. Captain Newton E. Wiley, flying *My Duchess*, rolled out of his turn and headed for the first frigate which was dead in the water. Both Wiley and 2nd Lieutenant Theodore C. Bronson scored near misses on the already doomed vessel.

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Within three minutes the frigate rolled over and sank.

Lieutenant Lester Morton led his flight against the second ship. Two of his three bombs went long, but the other one was a direct hit amidships near the water line. During the sharp turn to begin the attack, 2nd Lieutenant Louie A. Mikell, piloting *Ruthless Ruth*, switched from Morton's right to his left wing, crowding out the other wingman, Lieutenant Francis Thompson, who didn't drop any bombs. Mikell's first bomb was a near miss which probably damaged the stern.

In the aftermath of Morton's attack, the second frigate began taking water through a huge hole in its starboard side. The 498th Squadron raced in to attack but found only sinking ships and scores of Japanese sailors struggling in the water. One of the engines on #005, piloted by 2nd Lieutenant Charles E. Myers Jr., was shot out as he flew it over Morton's victim, which soon rolled onto its side and sank. Myers salvoed his bombs and set a course for Laoag Airdrome on the northern tip of Luzon, about three hours' flying time away. Shortly after leaving the target he picked up Lt. Bronson of the 499th as an escort.

The rest of the 498th Squadron proceeded to strafe and bomb the Japanese survivors in the water. As Captain Frederick F. Smith passed over the second frigate in plane #305, his automatic tail camera recorded

one of the most famous photographs to come out of World War II. With bullets and bombs splashing into the water around the capsized ship, about 80 of its crewmen could be seen clinging to its sinking hull or swimming in the water around it. The Army Air Forces' classified intelligence magazine *IMPACT* published the photograph under the caption "The Air Picture of the Year."

With the two frigates neatly disposed of, the hunt for more targets was now on. It seemed likely that more ships were obscured in the low-lying haze and 1st Lieutenant George R. Schmidt, bringing up the rear with the 500th Squadron, swung around the area where the two frigates were sinking, then flew up the coastline a few miles. Seeing nothing, he decided the two frigates must have been ahead of the main convoy and reversed the Squadron's course and continued searching southwestward at a thousand feet, past the area of the earlier encounter.

The gray sea was empty for the first ten minutes. But suddenly, through the murk, he glimpsed the dark shape of another ship steaming on the same course as the two warships. Through low broken clouds, Schmidt led the six Rough Raiders down in a diving left turn to pick up speed, approaching for a three-quarters rear attack on the target. This would be far safer than a full broadside attack in the event the vessel turned out to be heavily armed. Over the

intercom, Schmidt alerted his tail gunner, Technical Sergeant Lee M. Brown, with the order, "Get yours guns ready, Brownie!" Schmidt's wingmen, Forward Observer Van Scoyk and Lieutenant Joe Herick, dropped a few yards behind and spaced themselves about fifty feet off his wings. As the unsuspecting B-25s raced at the gray outline on the water, the sky ahead suddenly filled with black explosions. Schmidt's worst fears came true — the ship steaming through the haze ahead was not the merchantman, she was another warship.

Flying on Schmidt's right wing in #193, a plane borrowed from the 498th Squadron, Van Scoyk saw the mass of gray sparkle with flashes from bow to stern and a few seconds later a solid curtain of flak seemed to appear magically between him and the target. Off Schmidt's left wing, Lt. Herick was so unnerved that he suddenly dipped his plane, *Seabiscuit*, a few feet and passed below the other two planes, coming back up in formation 50 feet off Van Scoyk's right wing. The three strafers, with the second flight of three in trail thirty seconds behind, seemed to be flying directly into hell.

Schmidt bore in on the gray hulk through a hail of tracers and exploding shells which threw up large geysers in the water around him. Seven hundred yards short of the Japanese destroyer, Schmidt pressed the firing button for the nose guns, squirting out a couple of bursts to find the range. Dead on, he held the button down and began walking the rudder pedals, slewing the plane from side to side to rake his tracers across the target.

An instant later a 20mm tracer shell smashed through the windshield on the copilot's side and exploded, splattering hot metal and burning phosphorus inside the cockpit. Schmidt felt a stinging sensation on his face and neck but kept his attention on releasing his first bomb, a 500-pounder with a four-second delay fuse. It skipped once and exploded in the water short of the ship. A second bomb was a direct hit on the aft section and a third exploded in the water directly alongside the ship, opening up the seams.

Van Scoyk, following off his leader's right wing, released two bombs which exploded harmlessly in the water. Herick, meanwhile, had taken a direct hit by a 40mm round through the windshield. Sergeant Brown, from the tail of Schmidt's aircraft, saw the flash of the explosion inside the cockpit and watched as a bomb fell away from Herick's plane. The nose dipped and the plane winged over and smashed inverted into the water a couple of hundred yards from the Japanese ship. All aboard must have died instantly.

The attack by the following flight was ineffective, but 2nd Lieutenant Samuel W. Bennett's photos showed the devastation caused by Schmidt's bombs on the aft section of the ship, which was beginning to burn.

As the 500th Squadron pulled away from the target, Schmidt's crew began to look to

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their wounds. Schmidt himself had small splinters of shrapnel imbedded in his face and neck. His co-pilot, 2nd Lieutenant Roger H. Lexall, had similar injuries to his left arm. Forward Observer Neal Ryan, now the squadron navigator with well over 100 missions to his credit, called Sergeant Myron Mauldin, the turret gunner, over the intercom, "Hey, can you get some of this hot iron out'a me?" Mauldin's reply broke the tension, "To hell with you! Come pick it out of my ass!"

One of the pilots in the second flight had forgotten to open his bomb bay doors in all the excitement and Schmidt tried to get him to make another attack. But the crews were reluctant to run the gauntlet of flak again and he finally led them out of the area.

The 498th Squadron, meanwhile, was flying south down the coast in loose formation drawn by the radio chatter from the 500th Squadron planes. Lieutenant James Manners began to feel uneasy when he looked to his right and noticed activity on a Japanese airfield which was only a couple of miles inland.

The Japanese destroyer came into view within minutes, still heading north under a full head of steam despite Schmidt's attack. At this point, Manners decided to pull off Captain Albin V. Johnson's wing because the Squadron Leader was adjusting his throttle settings so frequently that it was hard to stay in good formation. Manners tacked onto Captain Smith as they approached the destroyer, which in the meantime had swerved to the northwest and was laying a dense screen of smoke from its stack.

Seeing the smokescreen, Manners called Johnson on the radio, "Let's go in from the stern through the smokescreen." Johnson replied, "Okay, space yourself and follow in at 15-second intervals after me."

But to Manners' surprise, as the formation overtook the ship from behind and slightly to the east, Johnson and his other wingman, 2nd Lieutenant Robert G. Neal, flew wide of the smoke, turned and headed in for a broadside attack on the ship. As the squadron leader went in, he called for covering fire, saying that his nose guns wouldn't fire. The short-bowed destroyer suddenly ceased making smoke and a hail of flak rose to meet the advancing B-25s.

Capt. Smith and Lt. Manners turned left to position themselves in the smoke as Johnson, followed by Neal, crossed the warship several hundred yards ahead of them.

One of Johnson's two bombs exploded directly on the stern of the ship. The flak gunners also scored and Johnson's crippled plane pulled away from the target and began a steep climb to a thousand feet with flames trailing from the left nacelle and bomb bay. It leveled off for about 15 seconds before descending quickly to the water where it ditched under full control in the rough seas about two miles from the destroyer.

Second Lieutenant Richard L. Ranger, Smith's other wingman, got crowded out but Capt. Smith and Lt. Manners followed

the track of the swerving destroyer and released their bombs as they swept the length of the warship from stern to bow, their bombs exploding in the water around the destroyer which was burning fiercely from Johnson's direct hit. The two strafers took violent evasive actions for the next two miles, then swung back to look for survivors of the downed plane.

Johnson's plane sank within seconds but Smith reached the site just before it disappeared. The navigator, 2nd Lieutenant Robert C. Ferris, saw the life raft deployed and a man in the water behind the wing with his Mae West inflated and surrounded by a pool of yellow dye marker. The man waved with both arms as the B-25 roared over. When Manners flew over a few seconds later, he saw only an oil slick and inflated life raft with flames licking around the edges.

The Japanese destroyer was now dead in the water with its guns silent and fires burning on the deck. The 498th didn't stay around to watch its demise, however. As Manners flew southward, then turned to position himself for a strafing run on the battered hulk, he spotted two Japanese fighters 500 to 1,000 feet above him and approaching from a distance of two miles. A third fighter was flying just above the surface of the water off to the right.

Manners tried to warn his crew of the enemy presence, but they had their head sets switched to the interplane frequency and

couldn't hear him. After sending his co-pilot, 2nd Lieutenant Robert W. Hawkes, back to warn them, Manners broke radio silence to warn the squadron of the danger. He then fired two short bursts from his nose guns across the path of one of the fighters to further alert the other B-25s. One Japanese fighter later made a firing pass on Lieutenant Kuta of the 501st but broke off at long range when the turret gunner began firing.

Smith and Manners dropped to the wave tops where they opened the throttles and raced for home. Along the way they caught up with Lt. Myers and his escort. The four planes made it safely to Laoag, Luzon, where they set down on the emergency strip without a drop of gas to spare.

After the B-25s departed, the captain of the destroyer *Amatsukazi* ran his ship aground in shallow water to keep it from sinking. This was the same ship which was probably responsible for shooting down Lt. McGuire in Yulin Bay on 30 March. The long journey back to Japan to be refitted with a new bow would never be completed. The crew abandoned ship and the *Amatsukazi* was bombed to junk by Japanese planes on 7 April.

It was the next day before 5th Air Force could conduct a search for the survivor from Capt. Johnson's crew. There was no sign of the missing man, but numerous Chinese junks were seen in the area and it was thought that he may have been picked up by one of them. Chinese fishermen did, in fact,

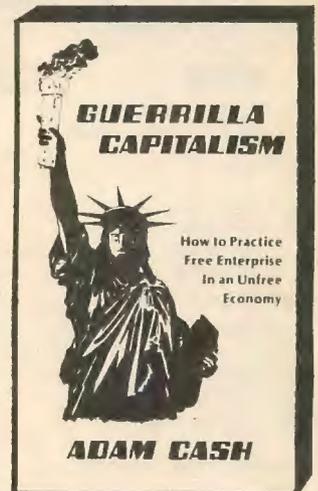
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find the navigator, 1st Lieutenant Robert T. Snyder. His body was found on 21 April, floating a few miles from the crash site near the town of Tung Shan. His identification and remains were eventually recovered by American authorities.

Another body washed ashore on the beach at the village of Ku-Lei and was buried nearby and forgotten. In February of 1946, one of the villagers noticed a small boy playing with a dog tag about a hundred yards from where the body had washed ashore ten months earlier. Investigating further, he found it carried the name Albin V. Johnson. Since a reward of 100,000 Chinese Nationalist Dollars was being offered for information leading to the discovery of missing American personnel or war dead, the incident quickly came to the attention of local authorities. The body was exhumed and taken to Tung Shan where it was later turned over to an American recovery team.

Following the battle on 6 April, the Japanese convoy route across the South China Sea shut down and the 345th moved to Clark Field and shifted its emphasis to the destruction of industry and the transportation system on Formosa. By June that island had been isolated and its war-making capacity severely curtailed.

In late July, the 345th moved on to the recently captured Ryukyu Islands where it took up residence on Ie Shima, a tiny island off the west coast of Okinawa. From there

the unit immediately clamped an aerial blockade around the southern islands of Japan, sweeping the seas for Japanese shipping and pounding inland targets on the island of Kyushu.

When Japan announced its intention to surrender in mid-August, the 345th Bomb Group — the indomitable "Air Apaches," — was chosen to fly the escort mission for the Japanese peace emissaries which General Douglas MacArthur summoned to Manila to negotiate the subsequent surrender aboard the U.S.S. *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay.

At the conclusion of hostilities, the 345th had been credited with sinking 260 Japanese ships totaling nearly 200,000 tons, as well as destroying 260 enemy planes on the ground and another 107 in aerial combat. This was accomplished at the loss of 177 B-25s and just over 700 airmen dead from all causes, including 580 killed on flights. After the war, the 345th was deactivated, and, after a five-year reactivation in the late 1950s was deactivated again, closing forever the history of one of the U.S. Air Force's most illustrious units.

The full story of the "Air Apaches" can be found in the recently published book Warpath Across the Pacific, which is being hailed by reviews around the world as the finest history of an air unit ever written and one of the finest aviation history books in many decades. The massive 448-page volume is based on over 400 interviews and research in archives throughout the world.

The book is illustrated with nearly 750 maps, photos (many in color) and aircraft profiles. Warpath Across the Pacific can be ordered direct from the publisher for \$64.95, plus \$2.00 shipping (Colorado residents add 3.5 percent sales tax): International Research and Publishing Corp., Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 3334, High Mar Station, Boulder, Colorado 80307. The author will personally autograph your copy if requested. ✕

PUMP-GUN TECHNIQUE

Continued from page 69

way, are the same ones which the assault-firing position has over the shouldered position — reduced length, enhanced field of vision, and better ability to maintain control of the weapon. Contrary to popular belief, the assault position offers very little, if any, speed advantage over the shouldered position for the shooter who has practiced both, and the increased accuracy provided by the shouldered, sighted position dictates that it should be preferred except when conditions specifically require the lower position.

The pump shotgun is designed to be cycled *hard* and *instantly* upon firing, without lowering the gun from the cheek. Mastered, the pump can actually be cycled and fired *faster* than most semiautomatics will allow. At the very least, the cycling time can be reduced to the point where it is no hindrance whatever to the speed with which the shotgun can be fired effectively, because the cycling of the action takes place during the weapon's recoil.

Malfunctions

The better examples of pump-action shotguns are remarkably reliable weapons, a major reason for their selection by police and military alike in preference to existing semiautomatics. In fact, two of the three most common stoppages experienced with the pump-gun are shooter malfunctions rather than weapon malfunctions. Regardless of which party is to blame, the shooter must be able to reduce the stoppage and get back in action without delay.

Failure to pull the fore-end back forcefully enough can result in the short stroke or short shuck, the most common malfunction of the pump-action shotgun or, more properly, of its user. The short stroke usually results in the empty shell being trapped in the ejection port, while a new round has been released from the magazine but cannot be



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Speed-load by rolling the shell into the empty chamber from underneath receiver, then sliding forward to close the action.

chambered. To clear this stoppage, pull the slide fully to the rear, sweep the trapped shell out of the ejection port if it doesn't fall out by itself (this can usually be done with the left hand while the right hand remains in firing position), close the action, and fire.

Another possible stoppage is caused by the shooter's inability to pull the slide rearward, due to an oversized shell in the chamber, a rough or dirty chamber or action, or an action frozen in cold weather or rusted shut. The expedient remedy is to strike the buttplate of the shotgun straight down hard onto the ground or against any solid surface while pulling rearward on the fore-end. If the action is locked closed, the shooting hand must also hold the action lock depressed while performing this maneuver. This is a drastic remedy, and very hard on the shotgun, as it can generate enough force to break wooden stocks or bend action bars, but in an emergency the possibility of damaging the shotgun may be preferable to the certainty of being killed if you cannot get the shotgun working again fast.

The least common pump-gun stoppage is caused by the shooter's failure to push a shell being loaded into the magazine far enough forward to engage the shell stop, resulting in the shell slipping back out of the magazine tube to lodge inside the receiver between the shell carrier (lifter) and the underside of the breechbolt. Some shotguns, notably the S&W 3000 and the newer production Remington 870s, have sufficient internal clearance that the action can be cycled right over the trapped round without losing continuity of fire. In many other models, the action will be jammed tight. If the buttstock-strike malfunction clearance does not work, the trapped shell must be pushed back into the magazine tube by inserting a knife blade, screwdriver, key, or similar object along the side of the shell carrier to press forward on the base of the trapped shell. Some pump shotguns

are even manufactured, or customized, to provide a slot in the center of the shell carrier for this purpose. Even so, the operation of clearing a shell trapped in this position is hardly suited to the heat of combat, and a far preferable solution is to learn to load the shotgun properly to avoid the problem altogether.

Speed Reloading

A major problem with the pump-action shotgun, especially for military use, is that its last-century design permits its tubular magazine to be loaded only one round at a time. Until the box-magazine-fed CAWS (Close Assault Weapon System) becomes a reality, the shooter's ability to keep his shotgun loaded will be a skill worth practicing.

The pump-gun user should be thinking "shoot one — load one." In other words, for every round fired, a new round should be stoked into the magazine at the earliest opportunity. Spare ammo should be carried where it will be easily accessible to the weak hand, which can stuff rounds into the loading port while the strong hand maintains a firing position. This can be done with the gun still shouldered, or even at a dead run if necessary. Care should be taken to push the round fully into the magazine so it engages the shell stop and does not cause the stoppage described above.

In the event that, through neglect or necessity, the shooter fires more shells than he reloads, the metallic "click" of the firing pin falling on an empty chamber will indicate that the need to reload has become imperative. The fastest way to get a round chambered in most pump guns (the bottom-ejecting models being the exception) is to leave the action open (slide rearward), and grasp a round of ammunition with the left hand so that it lies across the two middle fingers, where it is held in place by its nose and base being pressed between the sides of the index and little fingers, respectively. Holding the shell in this manner, the left hand moves underneath the receiver, and rolls the shell by feel into the ejection port. The left hand then slides forward, grasping the fore-end and closing the action. The shotgun can now be fired immediately if necessary, or the left hand can proceed to reload the magazine. Note that the shell does not need to be inserted into the chamber, but simply rolled into the ejection port, since the shell carrier will align the shell with the chamber when the action is closed.

Properly mastered, the pump-action shotgun is a formidable weapon within its limited effective range. But for the

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shooter who has not taken the time to learn to use it properly, it may offer only a false and dangerous sense of security. The choice is yours. ✕

ZIMBABWE

Continued from page 63

Falls or meandering through the spectacular parks, Zimbabwe is unforgettable.

Since the transition to Mugabe's popularly elected government, the country has attempted to pull itself together. Unfortunately, in haste to run the country, ZANU has purposefully or ignorantly ruined the economy. Zimbabwe can be a strong nation, but it needs outside investment and assistance. The United States cut its aid to Zimbabwe by 50 percent last year and may reduce it further in the face of Mugabe's desire to establish a one-party government.

It is hoped that this situation will change for the better, soon. If not, Zimbabwe will become another irreversibly crippled economy. As a consequence of its incapacity to compete and deal with Free World economies, another government and country will slip further into the Soviet orbit.

Author's name changed to protect friends in Zimbabwe. ✕

BIANCHI HOLSTER

Continued from page 65

others. The UM-84III has been designed specifically for the Heckler & Koch P7/8/13 pistols.

The retail price of the UM-84 holster is \$38. The shoulder harness assembly is available for another \$18 and the hip extender is priced at \$9. Further information can be obtained from Bianchi International, Dept. SOF, 100 Calle Cortez, Temecula, CA 92390.

The M12 holster is an impressive offering and a ringing tribute to the free enterprise system. It complements an equally impressive pistol. Big-bore fetishists really should try to sleep more peacefully, comforted with the knowledge that our opponents parade through the streets, from Moscow to Managua, armed with pistols no more powerful than the Makarov (9x18mm) or the new (and even punier) PSM (chambered for a bottleneck 5.45mm cartridge) — in cracked and aging leather holsters. ✕

IN REVIEW

Continued from page 26

touched upon in Young's book, however, but this is its sole flaw.

What Bocca and others should have

realized was the Legion's tradition of contemptuously and successfully defying political shifts and defeats in the field to fight another day in another war. The trend toward international terrorism has shown the need for special shock troops to combat kidnappings, assassinations, invasions, takeovers and hijackings, and while this situation unexpectedly gave the Legion a new lease on life, the Legion can also lay claim to being among the first in the field in the annals of such troops.

As Erwan Bergot — the author of the Legion history that appears at the beginning of this study — points out, the *Legion Etrangere* began in political strife. The Orleanist monarch King Louis-Philippe founded it in 1831, partly to employ the ex-soldiers of all nations involved in the Napoleonic Wars that were then flooding into France, and partly to have ready troops to send to fight an unpopular war in Algeria. Thus it was, in 1961, that the Legion had turned full circle in history.

In this well-written volume, the reader will find chronicled all the engagements that made the Legion famous: Constantine, Ischeriden, Magenta, Coulmiers, Apka, the Dardanelles, Tiz-routine, Bir Hakeim against Rommel's Afrika Korps, and the most famous of all — the Battle of Camerone in Mexico in 1863, where six Legion survivors out of 65 men fixed bayonets and charged into a 2,000-man Mexican Army.

Readers of this book will be surprised to learn of some of the famous men who served in the Legion: American composer Cole Porter, author Arthur Koestler, three French Princes, two Bonapartes — even one of Benito Mussolini's renegade Fascist Ministers.

The enduring public image of the French Foreign Legion is of a safe haven for criminals of all nationalities. But because of the current rise in European unemployment, the Legion can pick and choose its members more carefully than it did in the past.

Today's Legionnaire signs a contract for five years and may find himself serving at headquarters at Aubagne, France, in Corsica, North Africa or in French Guiana. Trained as paratroopers, jungle fighters, desert warriors and survivalists, the Legion last went into action in 1978 at Kolwezi in southern Zaire, and also suffered casualties as part of the peace-keeping forces in Beirut in troubled Lebanon more recently.

Those who love the legend, glamour and mystique of the Legion will cherish this remarkable book, for it's all here: the sacred white *képi* headdress of each Legionnaire, bewhiskered "Father of the Legion" General Rollet, the Monument to the Dead, the flags,

regiments, marching songs, customs, medals, patches, weapons, uniforms, and most of all, the deeds of these fighting men — all volunteers from every nationality on earth.

The gratitude of every reader for such a monumental study must go to author Young, whose original intention was to write this book in 1960. An attack of malaria thwarted his early efforts, but in the early 1980s, Young petitioned President François Mitterrand to let him undertake the task. The Legion, too, granted him access to its bases, its men and its milieu.

But perhaps the Legion wrote its own best tribute in 1928 when it placed a plaque at the entrance to a tunnel it had just carved out of solid rock through a hillside, 200 feet long, 25 feet wide and 10 feet high — with picks, crowbars and shovels alone: "The mountain barred our way. The order was given to pass, nonetheless. The Legion carried it out." ✕

BULLETIN BOARD

Continued from page 6

One Judiciary Committee staff member told SOF that the bill language is "intentionally vague."

To the Senate's credit, it did pass a measure that reduces restrictions placed on the interstate sale of handguns by the 1968 Gun Control Act. However, other bills pending in Congress would ban "armor-piercing ammunition." The House versions — H.R. 4, introduced by U.S. Rep. Mario Biaggi, D-NY, and H.R. 13, sponsored by U.S. Rep. Jack Brooks, D-Tex. — would seriously regulate the manufacture and importation of armor-piercing ammo. The Senate version is S.104. The basic problem with all the bills, according to the National Reloading Manufacturers Association, is that they make no distinction between steel-plate armor such as is on a tank, and body armor such as made from synthetic fibers. Thus a broad range of ammunition could be affected.

Write or call your elected members of Congress — both in the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate — and let them know what you think. Another Bulletin Board item, "Stand Up, Be Counted," tells you how to do that.

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honored to play host to some distinguished visitors recently. Dr. A. Qayum Kochai, an exiled member of Afghanistan's diplomatic corps who has served as his homeland's ambassador to several nations, and his colleague, Abdul Halim Shams, were honored guests at a steak dinner reception in Boulder at the home of Robert K. Brown, SOF's publisher and president of Omega Group. Kochai and Shams, accompanied by noted members of the Afghan community in nearby Denver, were representing the Afghanistan Foundation, Inc. Their aim is to keep the murderous Soviet tyranny being inflicted on their homeland in the

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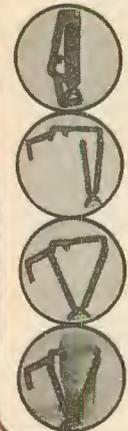
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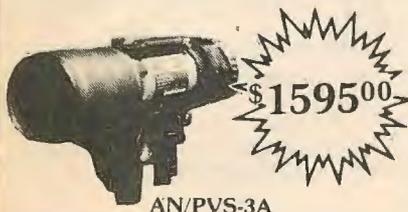
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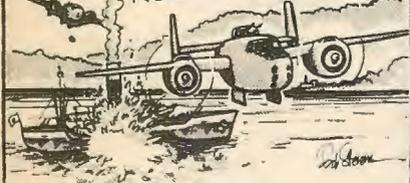
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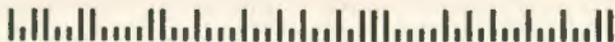
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