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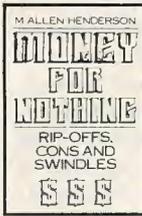
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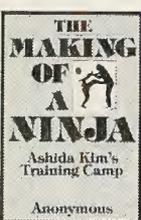
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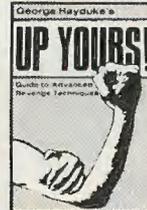
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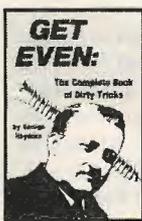


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# COMMAND GUIDANCE

by Robert K. Brown

ONE issue never fails to get my attention: the courageous thousands who struggle alone against all odds in the fight for liberty. These are by definition noble people, those who sacrifice all to stand against tyranny. They need our help. The history of struggle for liberty in the United States demands it.

Tyranny wears many disguises. But once unmasked, communism's brutal ugliness has inspired more and more people to fight human oppression. As communism spread across Asia, into Africa and Latin America, so too have resistance movements risen to its ruthless challenge.

While Kremlin proxies never lack the instruments of terror, the unsung champions of human liberty often do without even basic necessities. But the Pentagon simply can't help in every brushfire war.

Thus private sector assistance like that from *Soldier of Fortune* has become all the more crucial.

In the recent past, the CIA has usually been assigned by Uncle Sam to help anti-communist resistance movements. Unfortunately, their success rate is unimpressive. Loyal allies in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos were finally cast by the Agency into the growing void. Then there was the botched attempt to stave off communism in Angola, Cuba's Bay of Pigs, the embarrassment of the Allendé assassination in Chile and now the frustrating fight to oust the Sandinistas in Nicaragua.

Although CIA assistance to Nicaragua's anti-communist rebels was limited in the last two years, the Agency has again assumed a

leading role in that war. Based on their prior performance in Nicaragua, however, there's no reason to believe the CIA will improve on its past performances.

As in Indochina, the CIA left no contingency plan to keep freedom fighters on the Nicaraguan warpath after the Agency pulled back the first time. Supply lines failed, equipment broke down and operations ground to a virtual halt. The rebels have yet to come up with a plausible political plan to implement if they ever win the war.

The Agency insists that it can handle paramilitary training and political planning. Yet its record in Nicaragua is dismal. They had to

recruit Latins from other countries to mine Nicaragua's harbors and fly many of the rebel aircraft.

Much of the efficiency in small-unit ops finally acquired by the contras came, not from spooks, but from private-sector trainers. Might we not all be better off if the CIA stuck to gathering intelligence and left military training to military professionals?

The plus side is that Nicaraguan freedom fighters have held on, in spite of CIA assistance rather than because of it. Certainly a key to their survival during the hiatus of U.S. support was private sector aid. Another glimmer of hope lies in the news that Special Forces trainers will be used. But as in El Salvador, their presence will be severely limited.

So qualified private sector aid is vital. Not to fight, but to teach, to preserve hard won wisdom and put it to good use. Let us not again waste talent and dedication as in Vietnam, especially in our own backyard. ✕



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**COVER:** Hollywood is trying to get it right. This time, it's on the set of TV's popular *Miami Vice*. They're still missing the boat in their portrayal of typical vice cops, but they're trying to break that trend, at least as far as the hardware is concerned. SOF examines the state-of-the-art firearms being developed for *Miami Vice's* upcoming season. Look for coverage on page 40. Photo: Gamma-Liaison

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## MIA ID RESCINDED...

The Armed Services Graves Registration Office (ASGRO) officially rescinded the "positive identification" of Air Force Captain Thomas T. Hart III, table navigator aboard an AC-130 that crashed at Pakse, Laos, in December 1972. SOF detailed the Hart case in its July issue in an article titled "Missing in Action: Skeletons in Uncle Sam's Closet." Mrs. Anne Hart challenged the "positive identification" of skeletal remains after they were examined by two independent forensic anthropologists. Both scientists said the bones could not be positively identified as her husband. She also obtained several intelligence documents indicating her husband survived the fiery crash of the Specter-17 gunship. The results of SOF's investigation into this and other MIA cases were turned over to the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Investigations and the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs. Their probes continue as ASGRO rescinded its identification of Hart. Watch future issues as the sad saga of government deceit on the POW/MIA issue continues to unravel in the pages of SOF.

## HONOR ROLL...

El Salvador/Nicaragua Defense Fund contributors:

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# BULLETIN BOARD



Jeff Cooper and Robert K. Brown (left and center) discuss passage of the Volkmer-McClure Bill with U.S. Rep. Larry E. Craig (R-Id.). Cooper and Brown, both members of the National Rifle Association Board of Directors, were in New Orleans for the NRA annual convention.

## INTEL UPDATE...

Our readers will recall that last month SOF gave the world a glimpse of the Soviet PKPE-1, a new multiple grenade launcher designed to be used as an airborne weapons system. Well, we made a mistake. The system is *not* spring launched as we reported. Rather, it is blown out of the tube by a charge, much like a mortar. Experts who examined the PKPE-1 agreed that this new Soviet weapon was probably based on the Franco-German MW-1 multipurpose aircraft weapons system which uses an explosive charge to fire the weapon. Upon further examination, SOF found that the PKPE-1 copied more than just the design of the MW-1 — it also copied the firing system.



## CHEVRON MAY LOSE DOD \$\$. . .

The House Armed Services Committee has voted overwhelmingly to prohibit the Department of Defense from purchasing petroleum products from companies producing oil for Angola's communist government. Howard Phillips, chairman of the Conservative Caucus, Inc., called the vote "a clear signal to U.S. corporations that American taxpayers . . . will not be placed in the position of indirectly subsidizing the Soviet Union's efforts to crush the pro-Western, anti-communist resistance of Dr. Jonas Savimbi and bring all of sub-Saharan Africa into the Soviet colonial empire." Chief among these corporations profiting from the communist stranglehold on the Angolan people is Chevron-Gulf. Help end this injustice by boycotting Chevron-Gulf products and lending your support to: **Gulf Out of Angola Project, The Conservative Caucus, Inc., Dept. SOF, 450 Maple Ave. East, Vienna, VA 22180.** Write, or call (703)893-1550 for more information.



Hac Ban Cam, center, interprets as U.S. journalist Rod Norberg interviews a communist "student" activist in Vientiane, Laos, in 1974. Hac, now 31, was captured by the communists on 19 December 1975, and spent most of the next 10 years at Phongsale in a prison camp 30 miles south of the Chinese border. She escaped 1 July 1984, and walked 500 miles south into Thailand, where she was imprisoned again for not having papers. The story has a happy ending, however. One of her letters miraculously reached Norberg in the United States, and she was able to travel to Paris, where Norberg met her in mid-July. Stay tuned for more about this courageous lady.

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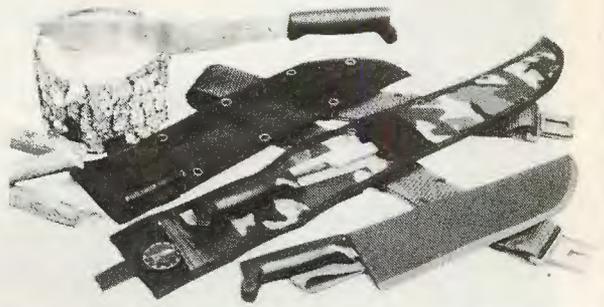
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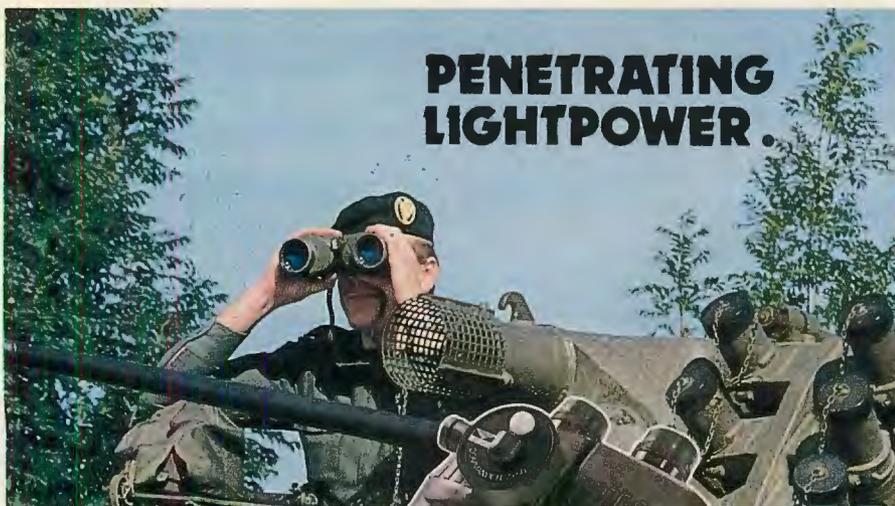
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## STEINER BINOCULARS



SOF apologizes to combat artist Keith Ferris for neglecting to credit his fine work, "Forget Me Not," which was used to illustrate SOF's recent article about the Army's Central Identification Laboratory in Hawaii (See SOF, July 1986, page 33.) Many readers wrote requesting information on how to obtain a print of "Forget Me Not." The limited edition 19x28-inch print sells for \$100 each. A portion of the funds from this print goes into a scholarship fund to provide educational benefits to the children of fighter pilots who lost their lives in Vietnam. Make checks payable to: Red River Valley Fighter Pilots' Association, c/o Keith Ferris Galleries, 50 Moraine Rd., Morris Plains, NJ 07950.



SOF staff member John Metzger does his dead-eye best at the Boulder Rifle Club in a recent combat pistol match sponsored by the International Practical Shooters Confederation. Metzger did well in the B Class, second only to Fritz Borchardt, who led the *Soldier of Fortune* shooting team and the entire field in his class. Additional congratulations are in order for Fritz, who won a slot to the IPSC Nationals in Dallas.

## VIETNAM VET SAVES BABY...

Uncommon valor and determination were displayed by James Patridge, a 38-year-old Vietnam veteran living in the Chicago area. A one-year-old girl fell into a family pool and was pulled

Continued on page 98



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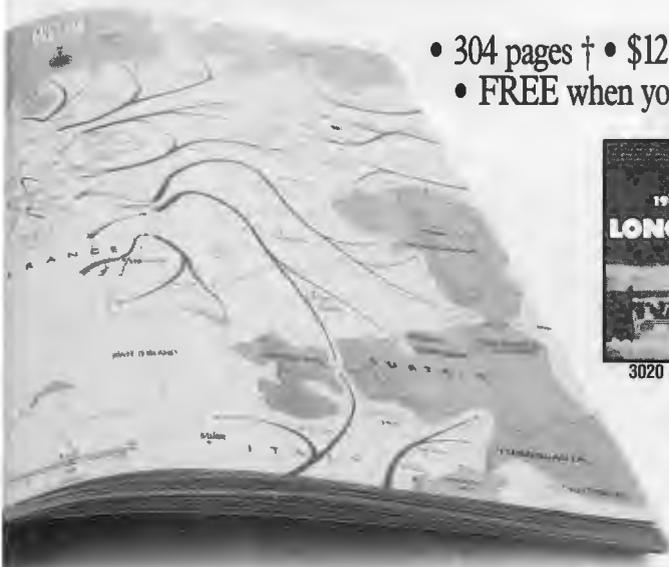
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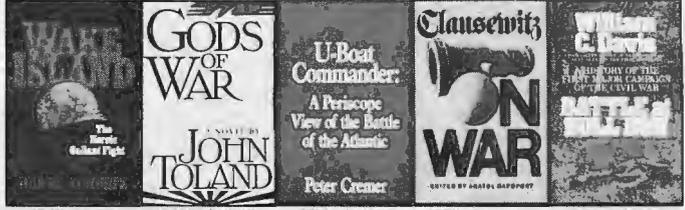




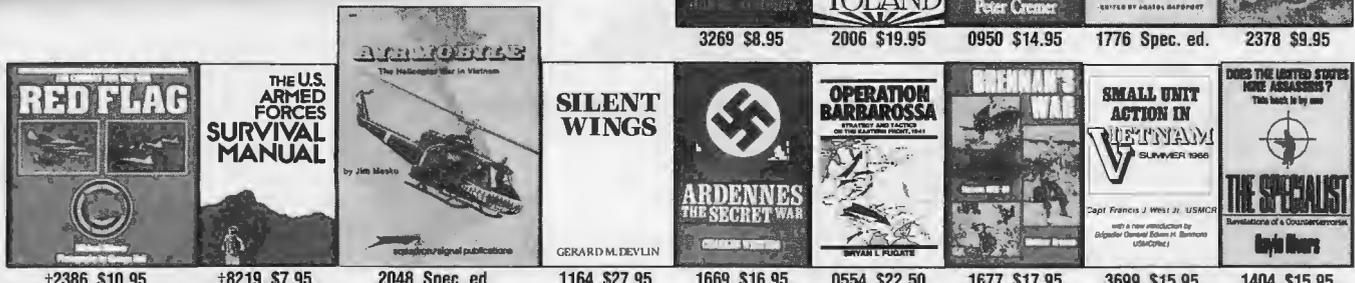
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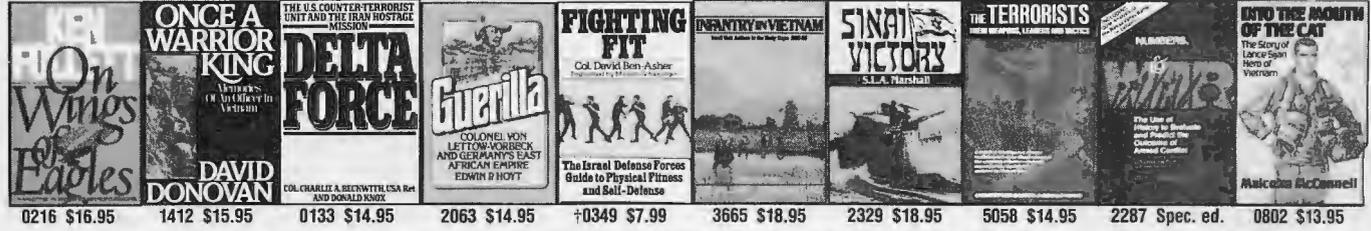
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## MOVE OVER, BOULDER...

Sirs:

I read with great interest SOF's series on the so-called peace movement ("Terror in Boulder," April '86 and "Peace Frauds," May '86). But the college town of Ann Arbor, Michigan, has just passed an ordinance opposing our foreign policy in Nicaragua. Like Boulder, they also have a sister city in Nicaragua. They even plan to host Sandinista officials. So move over, Boulder, yours isn't the only circus in town.

M.R. Sinicki  
Saginaw,  
Michigan

After sitting through a presentation on Nicaragua by a self-proclaimed socialist here at Cal State University, Fullerton, I am finally compelled to send money to the freedom fighters in Nicaragua. I learned that the Sandinistas were wonderful, there are no terrorists in Libya or Managua, and that Jonas Savimbi is the Antichrist. However, I was encouraged by the fact that only two students were in attendance, myself and another pro-contra student. The rest must have come down from Berkeley.

Sean Robinson  
Fullerton,  
California

According to the 11 May 1986 Rocky Mountain News, "Many political activists in the thick of the recent demonstrations at the University of Colorado are not students at the school, police and court records show." We'll bet the same thing is true in California.



## FLAK



## LIBYA'S TERROR NETWORK...

Sirs:

As an adjunct instructor who teaches international terrorism at a good-sized university, as well as being a terrorism consultant, I wish to heartily compliment SOF and the reporters who contributed to the August 1986 Libya Special. The data presented on both Khadafi and Jalloud was extremely accurate and to the point.

Lawrence J. Martines  
Flagstaff, Arizona

Governments, as with people, can be known by their friends. The ties between rulers of Nicaragua and Libya were reaffirmed when Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega communicated with Libya's Muammar Khadafi. "My brother, given the brutal terrorist action launched by the U.S. government against the people of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, I wish to send sentiments and solidarity from the FSLN National Directorate and the Nicaraguan people and government..."

We must protect the peace and security of this hemisphere.

D.L. Jones  
Norfolk, Virginia



## KEEPING THE MIA ISSUE ALIVE...

Sirs:

I commend Jim Pate for his accurate and courageous exposé of the Central Identification Laboratory in Hawaii ("Missing in Action: Skeletons in Uncle Sam's Closet," SOF, July '86). Those of us who suffered unnecessary pain because of the spurious identifications hope that the CIL procedures will be more closely monitored and staffed by qualified anthropologists.

I resent our government's "killing" my husband, Major Hugh M. Fanning. We have proven, thanks to the efforts of doctors Michael Charney and Clyde Snow, that Hugh's purported remains cannot be biologically identified. We have also proven, thanks to John Rogers, member of the ASGRO board (Armed Services Graves Registration Office), that no documentation was provided by the Vietnamese concerning the recovery of Hugh's remains. They were simply a left-over set after Hugh's bombardier-navigator's remains were biologically identified. Intelligence reports (which were never shared with me the 17 years during which he was unaccounted for) state that one man died in the crash while the other was taken captive.

I hope your readers feel as I do — that we have given our do-nothing government officials long enough to solve this problem. We'll make greater progress if we ask our senators and congressmen to support concurrent Resolution 129, sponsored by Bill Hendon of North Carolina which asks that an independent commission be established to examine the live-sighting reports and determine a plan of action.

Kathryn Fanning,  
Wife of Major Hugh M.  
Fanning, USMC,  
Lost 31 October 1967,  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

An excellent hit on CIL-HI. I called Betty Bartels, a regional coordinator for the National League of Families and informed her of Mr. Pate's rundown on the Army coverup. She said she would pick up a copy.

Not until the last American POW is returned home to American soil will the lady called Liberty stand for freedom. Support the National League of Families, 1608 K. Street

Continued on page 101

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Case Size:  
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Two Limited Edition Ka-Bars, honoring  
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*You went into Boot Camp a boy. You reached deep down inside yourself to find the guts to endure. You came out a man . . .*

When the American cause is threatened, the order goes out, "Send in the Marines!" To forge our boys into Leathernecks the Corps uses a hammer and anvil it calls Boot Camp. America owes much to it.

Now, to honor Boot Camp and the men who are the "First to Fight", The American Historical Foundation and Ka-Bar Knives are proud to bring you the Boot Camp Commemorative Ka-Bars—one for Parris Island and one for San Diego Recruit Training. But only 2,500 of each are being made.

If you or a family member made the grade in Boot Camp, this is a trophy of that important passage to manhood.

For Collectors, important qualities make these knives valuable centerpieces of any collection. The edition limit is low—only 2,500 of each, individually serially numbered—and each is a real battleworthy Ka-Bar made by the original maker of America's most famous fighting/utility knife.

Patriotic Americans who proudly salute the U.S. Marine Corps—and those who shared the challenge of Boot Camp or Basic Training in the other services—will also quickly reserve these museum-quality knives.

### Memories—In 24-Karat Gold

Everytime you glance at the blade, memories will flood back of the 45-second haircut . . . P.T. . . mess duty . . . guard duty . . . rifle range . . . hand grenades . . . pugil sticks. These activities, and others, are forever captured in glistening 24-karat gold banners across the gleaming, black blade.

The DI's "Smokey Bear" hat and the insignia of the CO and DI are there, too, in 24-karat gold, along with their crossed swords.

If you wish, we can personalize your Ka-Bar by engraving your name, serial number and other information, such as platoon and training dates, on the blade reverse.

### A Genuine Ka-Bar Collector's Item

Yes, each is a genuine, battleworthy Ka-Bar, made by Ka-Bar Knives, the company that made the originals for the Corps in World War II. Being a genuine Ka-Bar

guarantees its value. Being a special, Limited Edition Ka-Bar assures its collector interest.

Only one out of every few thousand Marines who graduated from Boot Camp and Collectors can own one, as only 2500 of each are being made. So each will become a valuable collectors item.

Each is issued exclusively by The American Historical Foundation, with active-duty, retired and prior-service military men as Members in 29 countries around the world. The Foundation's serial number registry system guarantees the strict edition limit, which further assures the collector value. Each is engraved with the serial number on the blade and accompanied by a Certificate of Authenticity.

Marines and Collectors who reserve both Ka-Bars will receive matching serial numbers, if they act in time.

### Serial No. 1 to Parris Island and San Diego

Serial No. 1 of each Boot Camp Ka-Bar has been presented by the Foundation to the Commanding General at Parris Island and San Diego Recruit Training Depots, respectively, for permanent display to honor the men who are forged into Marines through Boot Camp.

The custom bladesmiths at Ka-Bar Knives are hand-picking only the finest blades for these commemoratives.



San Diego Recruit Training Commemorative Ka-Bar

Each battleworthy blade is mirror polished through many steps—and finally by hand. Only after passing inspection by the Chief Knifsmith's critical eye is it ready for selective plating with genuine 24-karat gold. From this point, each blade is handled with gloves, as the 24-karat gold plated, highly-collectible, straight-pattern cross-guard is fitted in place.

The genuine cowhide leather grip is carefully pressed into place, hand fitted, hand polished and hand waxed for lasting beauty. Then the knifsmith insets the Marine Corps scarlet-and-gold, fired-enamel medallion into the presentation face of the grip.

Next, the Ka-Bar craftsman affixes the 24-karat gold plated butt, a special three-rib design created just for this edition to further enhance the beauty and collector value. Finally, the Chief Knifsmith sights down the blade and inspects this special Ka-Bar in all particulars. When it passes, it is serially numbered on the blade reverse and matched up with its numbered Certificate of Authenticity, ready to be delivered to you.

### Display Case Available

A furniture finished hardwood case is also available so you can proudly display your trophy on a desk, shelf or wall. With an acrylic glass lid, it makes each Ka-Bar a visible symbol of your pride in the U.S. Marine Corps—and protects the knife from dust and unauthorized handling.

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You may easily place your reservation with a small deposit, and credit cards are accepted. Use the reservation on this page or call toll free, 1-800-368-8080. With your reservation, you will also be made a Member of the Foundation and periodically receive interesting, military-history information.

Satisfaction is guaranteed, and there are no shipping charges.

Other commemorative Ka-Bars have been quickly sold out and have increased in value as collectibles. Take prompt action now, while this important opportunity is briefly available. Turn back the clock. Goodbye youth. Hello manhood.

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- San Diego Boot Camp Commemorative
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- I wish to pay (or have charged to my credit card) the balance due . . .
  - in two monthly payments of \$75 each.
  - in full.
- My payment in full (or credit card authorization) for \$195 per Ka-Bar is enclosed.
- I wish to reserve the optional display case with sliding acrylic glass lid at \$29.
- Also, please send the Engraving Form so my knife can be personalized, at \$20 per Ka-Bar for this service.

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

**T**OMAHAWK . . . Images of wild Indians bent on scalping everyone in sight. The tomahawk — a cave man weapon in its crudest forms — was used by the first inhabitants of this country, and later by some of the white men who drove the Native Americans from their land. But despite the romantic notions of “the noble savage” and his stereotypic weapon, the tomahawk’s use as a weapon was limited.

The tomahawk’s reputation as a weapon is largely undeserved, one that began to develop in pulp novels of the 18th and 19th centuries, a sensational myth later carried over into early Hollywood westerns. A tomahawk will chop with limited effectiveness. And for all you Fess Parker fans, don’t go out and burn your coon skin caps. Yes, you can throw a tomahawk and stick it in a target.

These aren’t necessarily good criteria for an edged weapon, though. So it would be useful to examine the tomahawk, what it is and what it isn’t.

The tomahawk is a primitive weapon. The inhabitants of North America lived in a stone age culture until Europeans spread the use of iron and steel tools across the continent. Metal tomahawks were an immediate success as a trade item. The efficiency of metal tools over stone implements greatly impressed the Indians.

Indians adopted the tomahawk as a weapon not so much for reasons of martial efficiency, but more because of their personal beliefs about battlefield honor. The swaggering *machismo* of today’s Rambo-mania would be nothing new to the Indian warrior. Proving courage and honor governed every aspect of his daily life, including the way he fought his enemies. The greater his risk, the greater his honor. Killing an enemy with a tomahawk put a warrior at greater risk than killing from a distance with an arrow. Killing the enemy was not as important as the style with which the battle was fought. If the warrior could bring disgrace on his adversary in the process, so much the better.

It was considered dishonorable to let an enemy touch you with his hand or something in his hand. Touching the enemy and escaping unscathed was called “counting coup.” Scalps were visible evidence of touching the enemy, a symbol of honor and courage for the tribe and the individual, one of disgrace for the vanquished enemy. Because the white man killed at a distance with a rifle, he had no honor in war in the eyes of the Indian.

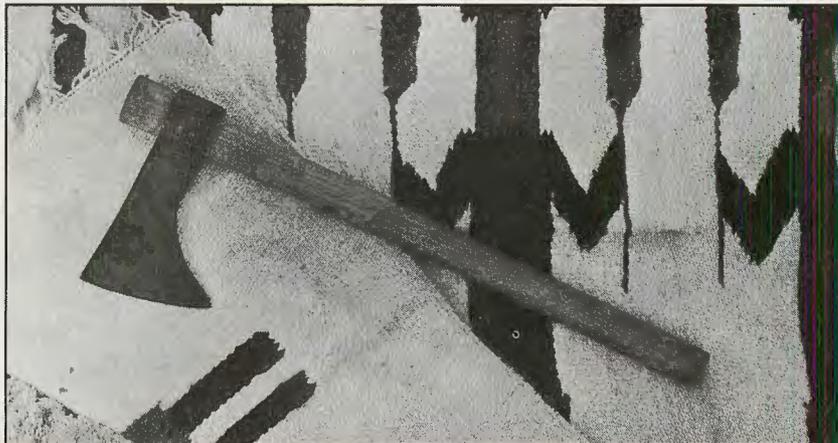
The palefaces weren’t interested in putting themselves at greater risk. But all early explorers and many later ones carried muzzle-loaders that were cumbersome and slow to reload. Car-



# BATTLE BLADES

by Bill Bagwell

## Tomahawk Tradition: Good for Counting Coup



**Despite its romantic reputation as a popular weapon from the days of mountain men and wild Indians, the tomahawk should not be used as your primary-edged weapon. But they are fun, useful and inexpensive. Photo courtesy Atlanta Cutlery**

rying a tomahawk at least put them on a parity basis with the Indian in hand-to-hand fighting. The sword was clumsy to carry and unwieldy when fighting in close quarters. Rogers’ Rangers chose the tomahawk over the sword in the French and Indian War because of its inherent advantage as a close-quarter weapon. The tomahawk later would see very limited use as a weapon in World War I trenches and among commandos in World War II and Vietnam. (See “Vietnam Tomahawk: Hatchet Teams’ Ultimate Accessory,” *SOF*, November 1985).

Europeans favored the tomahawk as a trade item because the demand by Indians made it profitable. It was a crude implement that could be cheaply made by moderately skilled labor, but traded for valuable animal furs. Typically it was traded without a handle, making transport easier. It served as a conventional tool to white settlers, or as a weapon to the Indian, who would “customize” it with his own magic and highly decorative handle.

Early mountain men chose the

tomahawk as a backup weapon to their long rifles. But it soon was replaced by the bowie knife, which not only served as a good chopping weapon, but also was effective for slashing and stabbing, as well as having a backstroke capability. The bowie soon was replaced by the revolver as the backup-of-choice.

The tomahawk’s biggest advantage today — possibly aside from psyching out an opponent who no doubt will wonder what kind of Neanderthal, knuckle-dragging bad-ass fights with a small ax — is its entertainment value. Plainly put, they are fun to throw. Mountain man rendezvous and black powder competitions often have tomahawk throwing as a sideshow attraction. There is something particularly satisfying about hurling a tomahawk to bury itself with a resounding thud in a board or log. The more serious practitioners like to spice the pot. Throw the ‘hawk and make it stick in a playing card? You bet. Or call your shot: handle up, handle down, or handle sideways.

While throwing the tomahawk has an inherent entertainment value, forget about it in combat. It’s extremely difficult to throw with consistent accuracy when you’ve paced off the distance to a stationary target. If the

*Continued on page 79*



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**B**AYONETS are beautiful — at least from the standpoint of a combat soldier. And they're very useful little items, too. Since the advent of short, relatively fragile assault rifles, however, practical emphasis on the bayonet has been on the decline in most Western armed forces. Its many detractors say that it is an anachronism, good for nothing but opening C-Ration cans. With MREs now in use even this purpose is no longer required; bayonets are now totally obsolete, so the argument goes.

The Russians don't agree with this theory and neither do I. Many years of combat experience — recent ones at that — have proven to me that one of the most useful pieces of equipment an infantryman can carry is a good bayonet.

Its original purpose, that of enabling the soldier to continue fighting even though his rifle is empty, is still valid, although less so than in the past. In these days of 30- and 40-round magazines and basic combat loads of five hundred or more cartridges, it's a rare occurrence for even a guerrilla fighter to run out of ammo. Still, the possibility exists that a rifleman could be surprised by an enemy at close range while changing magazines; a bayonet used to good effect would be a lifesaver. Much better than some vaguely remembered hand-to-hand combat drill in my opinion.

Another use involving the insertion of steel into one's enemy is to test whether a supposedly dead foe is in fact dead or merely shamming. I would be truly amazed if even Rambo could take an inch or two of blade in the buttock or calf without flinching or displaying some more violent reaction. As we all know, it's not a good idea to search bodies without first making sure that they are dead. If circumstances preclude putting an extra bullet in, then the tip of a bayonet will do nicely as a test.

There are a few physical advantages to having a knife at the end of a rifle barrel that are real but seldom considered. During an assault or fire-and-movement, the infantryman is continually jumping up and down as he advances from one bit of cover to the next. Often, he is not able to hit the dirt exactly as taught in basic training, and sometimes he trips or is knocked off his feet by explosive blasts or shell fragments. These non-prescribed contacts with the ground can cause a muzzle to swallow a big bite of earth with disastrous consequences on the next shot. A fixed bayonet prevents this by keeping the muzzle clear.

Another physical advantage is related to the tendency of most soldiers to fire high during an assault because of rapid, heavy breathing and stress. A



# COMBAT WEAPONCRAFT

by Bob McKenna

## Battle Over Bayonets



**Charlie Company Ranger sergeant explains the AK — complete with permanently affixed folding bayonet. Photo: Dept. of Defense**

fixed bayonet helps counter this tendency by adding a little extra weight to the business end of the rifle. It's always better to fire low than high, as there is still a chance of getting a hit with a ricochet, and on rapid fire the recoil of the rifle will raise the next shot anyway.

During counterinsurgency operations there are almost always times when suspicious haystacks, thatch roofs, piles of rubbish, trap doors or other potential hiding places have to be checked. Using a knife on the end of your rifle to separate the thatch or lift the trap door gives you the option of firing immediately should a target be exposed, while the sharp edge at your muzzle helps prevent the target from pulling your weapon out of your hands. And once again, the bayonet keeps the barrel clear of debris. These searches should, of course, be conducted by teams rather than single troopers, but the advantages of using fixed bayonets still apply.

There are also psychological advan-

tages to the user of a bayonet, more in some societies than others. In Africa, for example, black troops and guerrillas much prefer to have bayonets fixed, or extended in the case of the ubiquitous SKS and Type 56 rifles. Whether or not this has anything to do with their tradition of assagais and throwing-spears is open to conjecture, but it is certain that it makes the soldiers feel better and intimidates military opposition and civilians alike. In our own society as well, the act of "fix bayonets" has a symbolic and heroic connotation — the "over the top and get 'em, boys" syndrome. Also, those of us who have done Army or Marine basic training surely remember the aggressive spirit inculcated during hours and hours of slash and parry.

It's been a few years since anyone has done a bayonet charge, but that tactic achieved surprising results in the past and probably will in the future because of the psychological effects on attacker and defender. The thought of cold steel sliding into your guts is more horrific and real than the thought of a bullet doing the same — perhaps because you can see the steel coming.

The intimate brutality of bayonetting innocent men, women, and even babies was well understood and often applied by the terrorists who now form the government of Zimbabwe (previously called Rhodesia). That brutality was often used to dispose of so-called "sell-outs." This was usually done at public meetings to intimidate villagers into supporting the communist cause,

### FROM THE SHARP END

Bob McKenna is a well-traveled professional soldier who has more than 16 years of active military service in Africa, Central America and South-east Asia.

*Continued on page 79*



**O**N 13 June 1986 a group of deeply concerned and committed firearms collectors and dealers met in Houston, Texas, to establish and organize the National Firearms Association. Their mission: To represent the interests of the collectors, shooters, importers, manufacturers, and dealers of Title II firearms and their semiautomatic counterparts in the wake of the recently passed Volkmer-McClure Firearms Protection Act.

According to the new act, possession or transfer of machine guns not registered on the BATF record books prior to 19 May 1986 is prohibited. Thus the inventory pool of available Title II firearms has been frozen, presumably forever. Although 94,000 new machine guns were registered before the deadline, tens of thousands of applications were disallowed and a number of Title II manufacturers went deep six. Some of them chose to violate the law, attempting to paper nonexistent weapons. But more than a few applications were rejected for unfinished receivers that, combined with parts kits, would have resulted in an arrest by BATF agents if they were offered for sale in parking lots.

Requirements seemed to vary with the whims of local BATF enforcement officials who proved their consistency by being consistent. Some insisted that at least the retracting handle slot be cut. Others stated the ejection port had to be punched as well, and a few went so far as to say the weapon had to be totally completed before it could be registered. Yet one prominent Title II manufacturer had tens of thousands of unfolded sheet-metal flats approved, apparently the BATF caving in to fears he would sell them on the open market if they refused to classify them as Title II firearms.

And what has this done to the market, at least temporarily? HK94s converted to MP5 configuration are now commanding \$2,000-\$2,700 each. Converted UZIs go for a minimum of \$2,000. Numrich Arms' Thompsons sell for \$1,500. Very soon, machine guns will be toys for the rich alone.

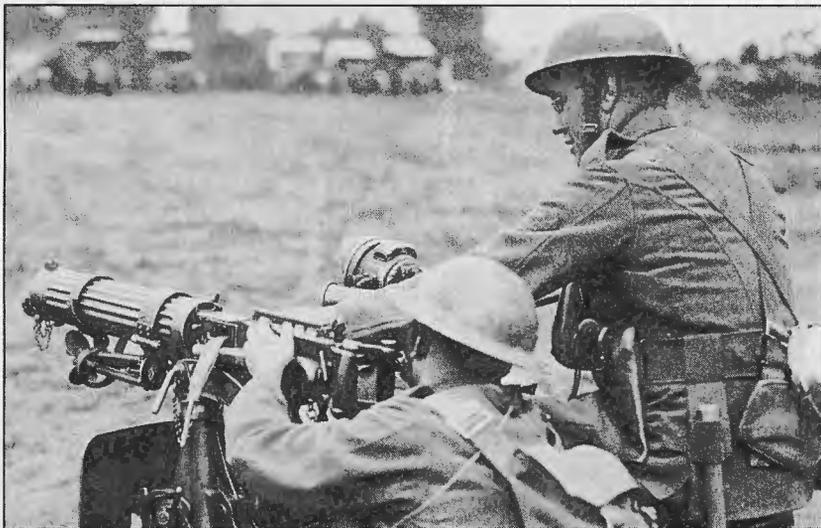
So, you have your machine guns and you don't care about acquiring any more. Semiautomatic counterparts of military small arms are the next targets. Legislation goes into the congressional hopper every session to completely ban semiautomatic rifles with pistol grips or ban firearms capable of using a 20-round box magazine. It won't stop. They'll keep gnawing at our Second Amendment rights every time we doze off for as much as a split second. Besides beating your fists against the wall, what can you personally do about this steady reduction of your inalienable rights? You can join



# FULL AUTO

by Peter G. Kokalis

## Title II Deep Six



**Machine gunners take aim at anti-gun efforts to ban legal automatic weapons. Photo: Imperial War Museum**

the rest of us in the National Firearms Association.

Present at the recent meeting was Neal Knox as well as three National Rifle Association representatives: Jim Baker, director of NRA-ILA's governmental affairs; Andy Kendzie, of NRA's public affairs division; and Herb Chambers, NRA Texas field representative.

The NRA has received a great deal of flak from uniformed zealots shooting their mouth before they know the facts about the machine gun portion of the Volkmer-McClure Act. In truth, NRA most certainly did not "sell us out," nor cut any deals with our common enemies. They were as shocked and dismayed by what was done by Congressman William J. Hughes (D-NJ) and Congressman Charles Rangel (D-NY) as we were. Let's all remember, however, that Title II firearms owners represent but a very small portion of the law-abiding gun owning public. The deed was as unacceptable to the NRA as it was to both you and I. As a demonstration of their support, Jim Baker has invited the National Firearms Association to propose the NRA's official position regarding Title II firearms, which will be printed in the *American Rifleman*.

There are four broad, interdependent divisions within the National Firearms Association. The membership committee, of which I am a member, has been charged with the responsibility of identifying, contacting and enlisting both members and financial support needed to develop a viable organization. We need a cash flow of at least \$150,000 per year to operate and staff an effective lobby effort.

Manufacturers should be prepared to donate \$1,000 per year to help us turn this mess around. Class 3 dealers and advanced collectors must be willing to contribute at least \$250. That's just \$50 more than you pay each year to renew your Class 3 license. If we fail to get your support, within a very short time there will be few reasons remaining to justify an extension of your license. And, from those of you out there with only a MAC 10, we desperately need broad-based individual support to the tune of a minimum of \$15 per year. Unless you prove willing to forego those spare magazines or boxes of ammo in order to donate \$50 to the National Firearms Association, within a year you might have nothing to stuff them into. And that goes in spades for all of you with nothing more than a semiautomatic HK91 or SKS — you're next on the endangered species list. We need your participation immediately, if not sooner. Send your

*Continued on page 93*



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**PEACEKEEPERS AT WAR: A Marine's Account of the Beirut Catastrophe.** By Michael Petit. Faber & Faber, Dept. SOF, 50 Cross Sreet, Winchester, MA 01890. 1986. 230 pp. \$17.95. Review by G.B. Crouse

**T**HE U.S. Marine Corps' mission in Lebanon was doomed to failure from the beginning. As part of a multinational peacekeeping force, their task was to stand around and hope that the various warring factions would put down their arms and go home. That hope went up in smoke when the Battalion Landing Team headquarters disintegrated into a pile of rubble, the result of a religious fanatic's suicide bomb.

**Peacekeepers At War** is only the second book to be published about the Marines in Beirut. It was written by a Marine, but unfortunately the reader doesn't get the story from the front lines; Petit played no part in the action. Author Petit was a clerk-typist with the headquarters element of the MAU (Marine Amphibious Unit) at Beirut International Airport from May to November 1983. In his capacity as a clerk for the operations section of the MAU staff, Petit was not directly involved in the fighting going on around him. He never fired his weapon, was not assigned to patrols or outposts, and made only infrequent trips outside the airport compound. So instead of learning about indirect-fire attacks directed against the line companies (which are mentioned only in passing), the reader instead gets descriptions of policing the area in anticipation of visiting VIPs, laundry detail, ironing the secretary of state's uniform, and an injury the author sustained on his way to the latrine after dark.

If the author's purpose was to disclose the story of the Marine involvement in Lebanon, as he states, then the book falls dismally short of its target. His periodic personal observations about the political situation in Lebanon, the Israeli involvement, and the motivations and decisions of his superior officers who directed Marine efforts on the ground add little to the historical record. Most disappointing, however, is the fact that **Peacekeepers At War** does little to educate the informed reader — especially one looking for an account of the fighting from a participant's point of view.

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**THE GREEN BERETS AT WAR.** U.S. Army Special Forces in Southeast Asia. By Shelby L. Stanton. Presidio Press, Dept. SOF, 31 Pameron Way, Novato,

## IN REVIEW



**CA 94947. 1986. 360 pp. \$18.95.**  
Review by F.C. Brown.

**A**MONG military enthusiasts in general, and Vietnam vets in particular, the name Shelby Stanton needs little introduction. Stanton burst upon the Vietnam literary scene in 1981 with the publication of his authoritative *Vietnam Order of Battle*, (U.S. News & World Report Books), which was well received by scholars and casual readers alike. Following a three-year hiatus to complete the massive *Order of Battle: U.S. Army, WWII* (Presidio Press), he returned to a Vietnam theme in 1985 with the publication of *The Rise and Fall of an American Army*, (Presidio Press), an objective battlefield history of U.S. units in Vietnam which played to extremely favorable reviews.

Stanton's latest offering is **The Green Berets at War**, which provides masterful insight into U.S. Army Special Forces operations in Southeast Asia from 1956 to 1975.

Written in easy-to-read but well-documented style, the book opens with the creation of the first A teams in Japan in 1956, and goes on to detail early Special Forces operations in Indochina, beginning in 1957.

Moving into the 1960s, the border campaigns in which the Green Berets played such a prominent role are

documented in excruciating detail, and new insight is provided into some of the better-known battles, such as Lang Vei and Ben Het.

Considerable space is devoted to a number of Special Forces operations — Kham Duc in 1968 and the Seven Mountains campaign in 1968-69, to cite two examples — which have either been glossed over or ignored in previous texts.

New information is also provided on classified operations run into Laos and Cambodia (and points beyond) by the ultra-secret Studies and Observations Group (SOG), a unit composed in the main of Green Berets serving on detached duty.

Of particular interest is the appendix of Special Forces (including SOG) personnel listed as missing in action — with full particulars on the incidents leading to their disappearance.

**The Green Berets at War** successfully combines scholarly research with high adventure, and belongs on every vet's bookshelf. Very highly recommended.

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**THE STRAW GIANT, TRIUMPH AND FAILURE: AMERICA'S ARMED FORCES.** By Arthur T. Hadley. Random House, Dept. SOF, 201 East 50th St., New York, NY 10022. Hardcover

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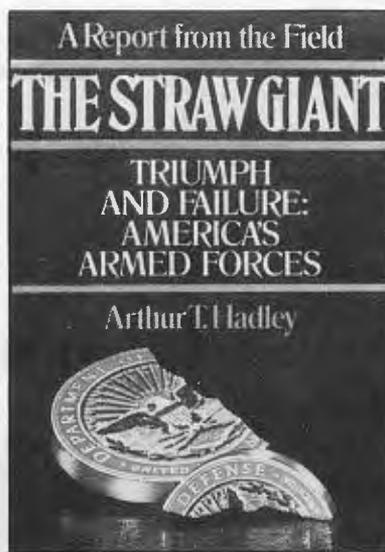
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**19.95. Review by G.B. Crouse**

**T**AKING shots at the Defense Department these days requires a little standing in line. Books such as Edward Luttwak's *The Pentagon and the Art of War* (SOF, Jan. '86, In Review), and *Military Incompetence* by Richard Gabriel are just two recent examples. The Defense Department seems to invite abuse; it would be impolite to refuse. Whether it's revamping strategic policy, increasing operational competence, restructuring the Joint Chiefs or holding the line on expenditures, everyone has something to say. While different writers have diverse viewpoints on what's to be done, no one argues that problems exist in America's military machine.

**The Straw Giant** is the latest attack on America's defense establishment. Arthur Hadley, a journalist with 30 years of defense reporting experience, starts out with a look at the failed Iranian hostage rescue mission — an operation symptomatic of many of the inherent weaknesses in the Department of Defense. Fiction could not have provided the author with a more perfect example to illustrate his case; no aspect of the mission was safe from the DOD monster.



Had bad luck and mechanical failure been the only obstacles to a successful mission, it may still have ended in failure, but to fail in such a spectacular fashion required much more. And Hadley identifies the six areas he believes to be at the root of current problems: Inter- and intraservice rivalry, flawed organization, supply versus combat acquisition imbalances, separation of the military from the elite of America's intellectual and business communities, and overcontrol. It's

what the author calls KAFCA — Keeping the Able From Contributing to the Action.

Innumerable examples support Hadley's case. The near catastrophe of our initial response in Korea, U.S. failure in Vietnam, bombing of the Marine headquarters in Beirut and the invasion of Grenada (where our victory seems to have occurred through the grace of God and little else) — are all replete with examples of these flaws. Hadley convincingly contends that these problems, alone or in combination with one another, have been responsible for America's less than dazzling military record since 1945.

The problem here, however, is not what Hadley says but rather what he doesn't say: He doesn't recommend many solutions. Where Hadley and other critics need to concentrate more of their efforts is on providing ways to tackle the problems they all agree exist. Despite that, anyone interested in military affairs — be it a member of Congress voting on defense appropriations or a concerned citizen — will find **The Straw Giant** well worth reading.

The truth isn't very pretty but without reform, prospects for the future are even less so. ✕

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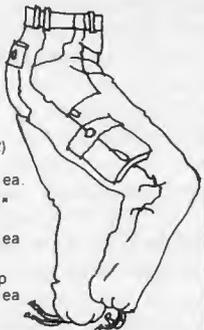
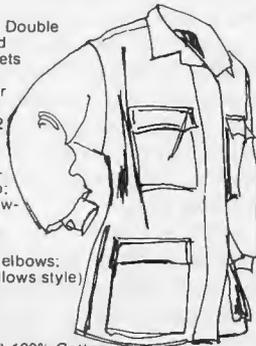
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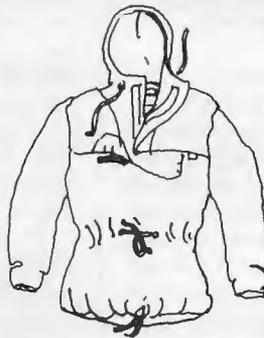
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**O**N 30 April 1975, I stood at the corner of Le Van Duyet Street watching the NVA rumble in on their trucks and T54 tanks on their way to the center of Saigon. At that point I knew I had to get out of town or be killed because of my loyalties to the West during the war. I had to lose myself as soon as possible to survive.

After saying goodbye to my parents I wandered around Bien Hoa for a while and then remembered an old friend from 3rd Mike Force living in Vung Tau. Tuyen was once a fisherman who became a radio man during the war. He might be able to help me.

Vung Tau had once been a beautiful sea province with an exquisite panorama. But when I arrived I felt sick. Every street corner was lined with trash, including piles of uniforms from various units, combat boots and papers. The market and all the shops were closed. The entire town looked deserted except for the grinning NVA soldiers standing guard. Tuyen's house was equally deserted. His neighbor told me he had taken his family on their fishing boat and sailed out to sea a couple of days ago. I had missed my chance.

I boarded a bus back to Bien Hoa. As I wondered what my next alternative was, someone grabbed me. I jumped about 10 feet thinking it was my end. Then I recognized it to be Sergeant Major Dao, whom I knew at Dong Ba Thin airborne training center, 40 miles south of Nha Trang. I told him my problem and he took me home to his family. Dao had retired from the army six years earlier. Now he lived quietly with his family on a farm at Lam Son.

Dao concocted the story that I was the son of a friend from Da Nang who had lost his family during the recent evacuation from the combat zone. I soon became a familiar face amongst the villagers and was treated as a member of Dao's family. Several months later, I married Dao's daughter, The, and became a true family member.

Christmas, 1976. More than a year went by after the fall of South Vietnam. The country had a new face; not the beautiful one that the communists promised to the people but a horrible, disfigured one. The ARVN officers had been sent to re-education camps, and their families sent to new economic zones where they died of starvation



# I WAS THERE

by Giang Bang La

## Escape from Vietnam



**SOF staffer Giang Bang La fires a Swedish M45 submachine gun in 1969 in Vietnam near SF camp A-334 in III Corps then commanded by Publisher Brown. Giang served as Special Forces combat interpreter between 1965 and 1971.**

and sickness. Their homes were confiscated and distributed to the NVA officers. People suspected of working for the CIA in Saigon disappeared. Revenge, miserable deaths, and secret arrests gave the South's people the greatest panic they had ever known. Churches and pagodas were put under NVA control. Religious leaders were arrested and charged as being CIA agents. More and more people came home jobless because they were the South's people, and therefore untrustworthy. For days, convoys of molotovs and trains loaded with rice, medicine, television sets, bicycles, motorbikes, sewing machines, air conditioners, and construction equipment from American offices and base camps, headed North. Saigon, the capital of the South, the Pearl of Southeast Asia was dead. Restaurants and night clubs were closed. Ky Son Blazart and the Tu Do Hotel were adorned with the clothes and underwear of the NVA's male and female soldiers.

I knew that sooner or later Charlie would discover my lie to them. A yan-

kee dog like me would not have the honor to get one of their bullets through the head. I would have been given a most painful way to die. So my new father-in-law and I had to plan our family's escape quickly. We decided that he and his family would move to a farm at Lam Son near the sea. There they would build a fishing boat. My wife and I would stay in Bien Hoa to lessen the neighborhood suspicion. Phase one had begun.

From 1979 to 1980 I was an ice cream vendor in Bien Hoa. In that year, the South Vietnamese people's opinion changed from fear to hate. Everywhere I went — on trains, buses, open markets, and coffee shops — people told insulting and humorous stories about NVA soldiers and the government. Assassinations of some of the NVA's high-ranking officers occurred and thousands died on the South China Sea while seeking their freedom in other lands.

By January 1980, our fishing boat was ready, and we began gathering provisions: food, water, oil, gasoline, weapons to defend ourselves, a sea pilot and driver. To avert suspicion we kept a constant schedule of going to sea early in the morning and returning with fish at sunset at Phuoc Hoa harbor. In September 1981 we were

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ready to sail out. For 20 days we hired three sampans to recon all branches of the Lam Son river leading to the mouth of the sea.

After gathering enough information about the local coast guard, we decided to escape on 1 October 1981. At 0600 on that day, our people arrived from Vung Tau and Saigon and rendezvoused at three houses at Lam Son which we had paid \$1,500 in gold to rent. They came in groups of three to five at different times disguised as Lam Son residents.

At noon we started to move our people down to the riverside. Twelve waiting sampans took us onto the river. At 1800 we were all boarded. I took command of the movement and was the last man to leave shore. Finally, darkness completely covered the mountains, hills and villages, and we headed for our first set of concentration points three miles toward the mouth of the sea and one mile apart. Six sampans met at each point.

By 1900 we were at the rendezvous points and our recon sampan flashed the red electric torch to signal that the "the way is clear, proceed to boarding point." We arrived at 2300; the big boat arrived at 2330. All of its lights were out, as it slowed and headed to the mouth of the sea, and at a slow

cruising speed we boarded our people — all 57 of us.

At midnight, mustering all available speed, we headed toward the high seas. At 1000 on 2 October 1981, the radar station left by the U.S. Army was just a speck on the horizon behind us. We threw away our fishing net and fishing equipment to gain more speed. The sea was rough and the wind was gusting to 60 miles per hour. Almost everyone got seasick including the pilot and driver. Then the sea got worse and I thought our boat would capsize and we would all drown. Our little boat danced in the waves until 3 October when the sea was calmed.

When we finally recovered, our pilot spotted an approaching light from a ship. Checking our location, he said that we were within a few miles of Con Son Island. Foreign ships never came this close; it had to be the communist coast guard.

As the ship's light became bigger and bigger we made the decision not to fight. We were 57 including women and children with only two M16s and a couple of grenades. Then through the wind came a faint Vietnamese voice over the intercom: "We are a German ship. We will save you." My head seemed to explode, and as it neared I could hear more clearly, "This is a

West German ship, the *Cap Anamur*. Are you refugees?"

As I yelled, "Yes!" the tears swelled in my eyes. Our captain maneuvered us alongside the ship, and the Filipino crew hoisted us aboard.

On 3 October 1981 we were greeted with a new dawn of freedom on the deck of a free nation's cargo ship. One month later we were in the Palawan Vietnamese refugee camp in the Philippines. And thanks to the business card that Col. Brown gave me in 1969 when I worked for him, I was able to contact him in Boulder, Colorado where my family and I now live under his sponsorship.

When I was interviewed while I was still on the ship, two Dutch television reporters asked me if the communists were really so barbaric. My answer was that tens of thousands of Vietnamese people were trying to escape from Vietnam on little wooden fishing boats, daring sea storms, starvation and pirates. My people have chosen possible death on the South China Sea rather than live with "good people" like the communists.

May God use us Vietnamese, saved from death on the sea, to let the free world know the horrendous cost of communist domination. ☘

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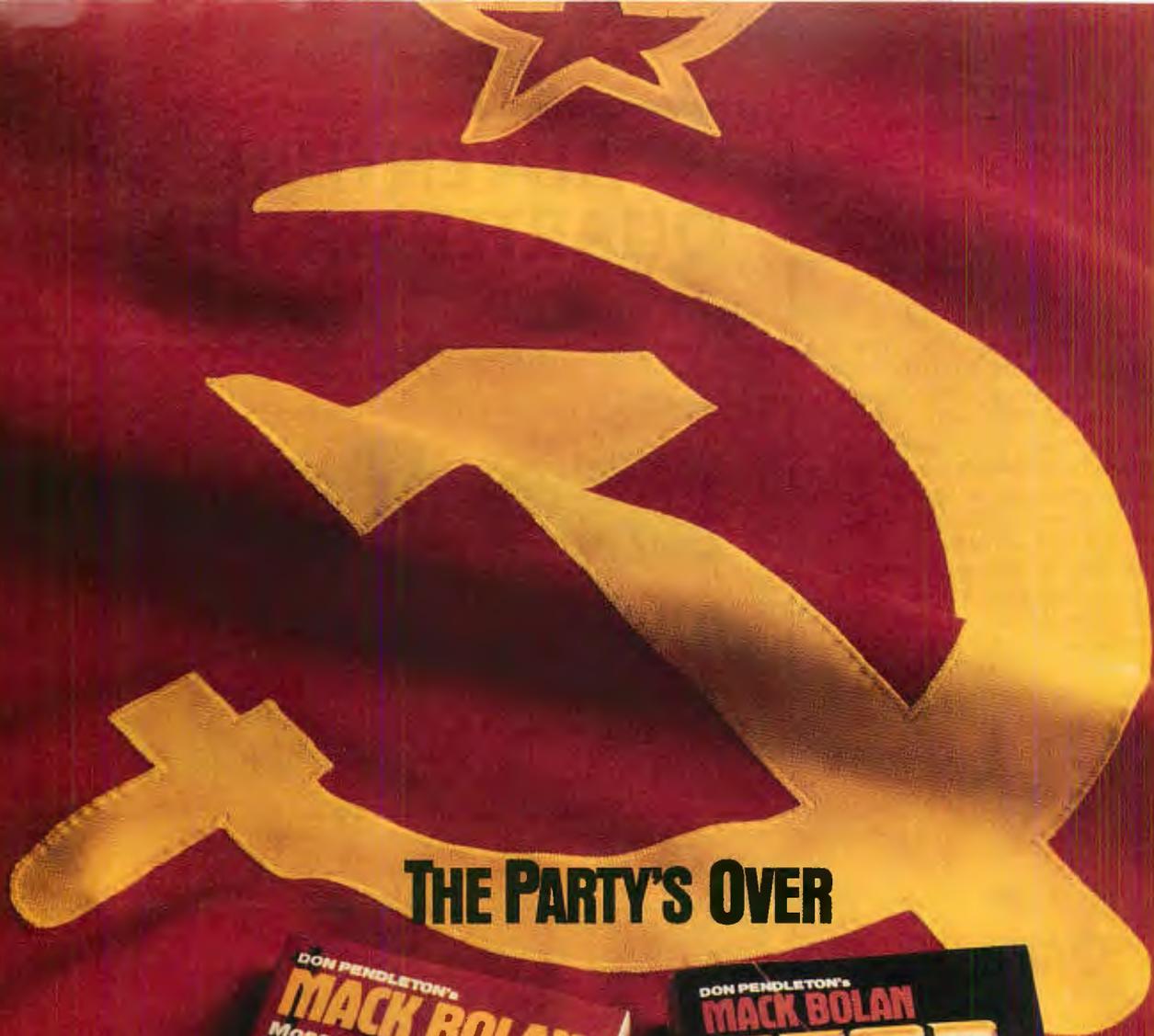
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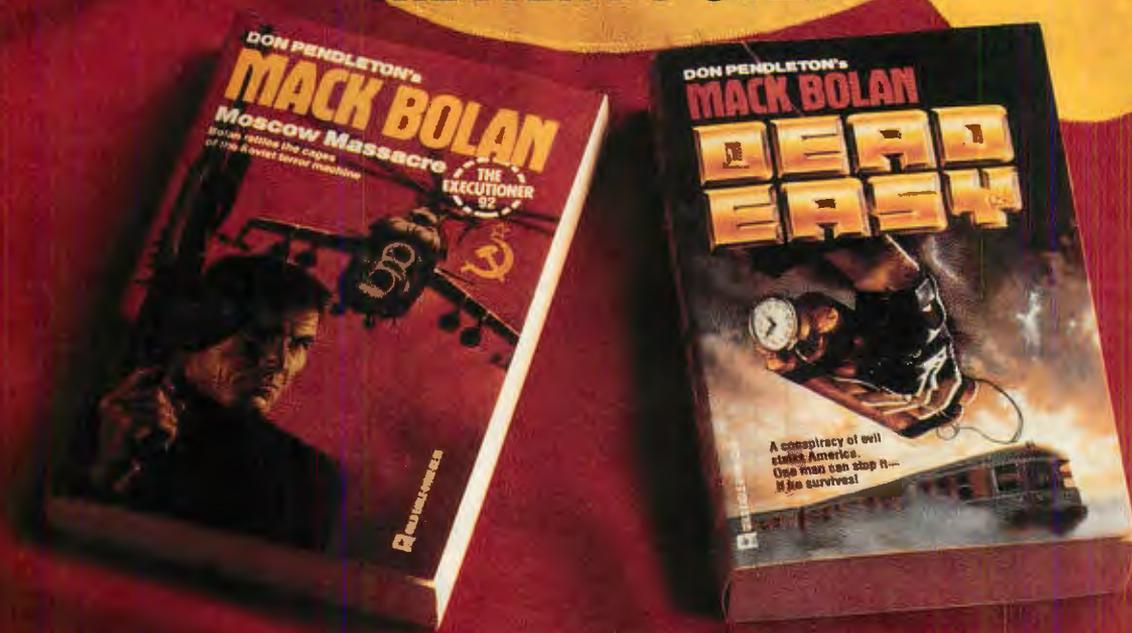


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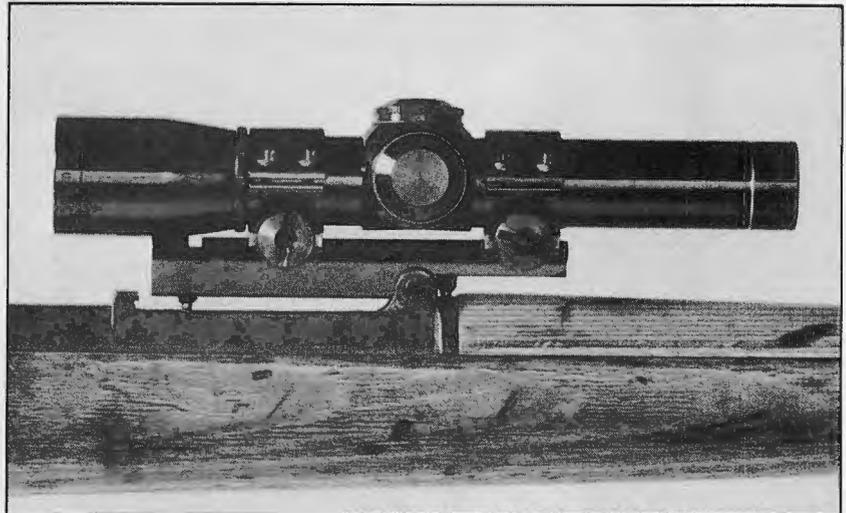
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# A WINDY CITY WELCOME

Photos by Joe Smoljan

“**T**OGETHER then. Together again!” That was the theme for Chicago’s welcome home parade for Vietnam veterans. Less than 100,000 marchers were expected, but over 200,000 showed up, including General William Westmoreland and entertainer Chris Noel, whose voice is familiar to thousands of listeners to Armed Forces Radio in Vietnam. The throngs of veterans were welcomed with tears and cheers, *chieu hoi* (open arms) from young and old, as they marched from Olive Park and the Navy Pier through the Chicago Loop to a grand finale at Grant Park. It was a long overdue day of pride, valor and brotherhood. ✕





SOLDIER OF FORTUNE MAGAZINE

**SOF**  
The Journal Of Professional Adventurers

# CONVENTION

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**Combat Weapons Expo '86** — This year's exhibition promises to be bigger and better than ever. In addition to the weapons, vehicles, equipment and militaria displayed at the Sahara Space Center, conventioners will also have the opportunity to witness live-fire demonstrations during Saturday's exciting range program. (\$3.50 daily admittance; \$10 Demonstration pass to nonconventioners.)

**Seminars** — SOF's seminars have gained a reputation as being both informative *and* entertaining. As a registered conventioner, you won't want to miss this year's program, including these highlights: (\$15 fee per seminar to non-conventioners)

- MACV's Special Operations Group
- Soviet Combined Arms Forces
- ComBloc Small Arms
- Combating Counterinsurgency Warfare
- International Terrorism: Facing the Threat
- Plus many more!

---

**3-Gun Match** — Competitive shooters from around the world gather for this prestigious event held at the Desert Sportsman Rifle and Pistol Club. Skills with handgun, rifle and shotgun are tested, and participation is by invitation only. Registered conventioners can view all the action from Wednesday through Friday. (\$5 daily admittance range pass to nonconventioners.)

---

**Firepower Demo** — Ken Hackathorn will orchestrate this exciting event featuring Peter Kokalis' famous machine-gun "Mad Minute" and John Donovan's explosive finale, plus a few new surprises that promise to make the '86 Demo the *best* you've ever seen! (\$10 Demonstration pass to nonconventioners.)

---

**Pugil Stick Tournament** — You won't want to miss the fun and excitement at poolside Wednesday through Friday nights when would-be bayonet battlers walk the plank. A \$5 donation entitles anyone to join the fun, and may the best man (lady?) win! (Registered conventioners only.)

---

**Knife Fighting Class** — We tried this for the first time last year, and participation was great. Learn all the basics, as taught by Cold Steel's Lynn Thompson. This is a full participation class, with expert instruction. Classes will be held on Thursday, Friday and Saturday. A \$5 fee will be charged to cover expenses. (Registered conventioners only.)

---

**Operation Headhunter** — This grueling cross-country obstacle course pits the individual against nature, requiring skills in land navigation, rappelling, climbing and endurance running. If you've got what it takes, write: ALECTO Group, P.O. Box 253, Elkhorn, NE 68022.

---

**Rappelling Classes** — For both the beginner and the advanced, Fritz Borchardt is once again offering his basic and tactical courses for those interested in acquiring this important operational skill. For more information, write: Fritz Borchardt, P.O. Box 548, Nederland, CO 80466.

---

**Ride and Shoot** — The *ultimate* convention activity. Ride a combat dune buggy and spray the enemy with a real M60 machine gun. If you remember the "Rat Patrol," this is your chance to live your fantasy. Due to the limited schedule available, you must preregister. An additional \$75 fee is required. Send your name and address along with your check for \$75 to: SOF Ride & Shoot, P.O. Box 693, Boulder, CO 80306. (Registered conventioners only.)

---

**Jungle Walk** — Stalk hidden targets along this alley of death with a combat shotgun. Twelve targets test not only your shooting skills, but your fieldcraft and powers of observation. Stop the clock with a head-on bayonet charge! A \$5 donation is required, and shells may be purchased on site. Details will appear in the Official Directory which you will receive at the Convention. (Registered conventioners only.)

# SOF

# SOF CONVENTION

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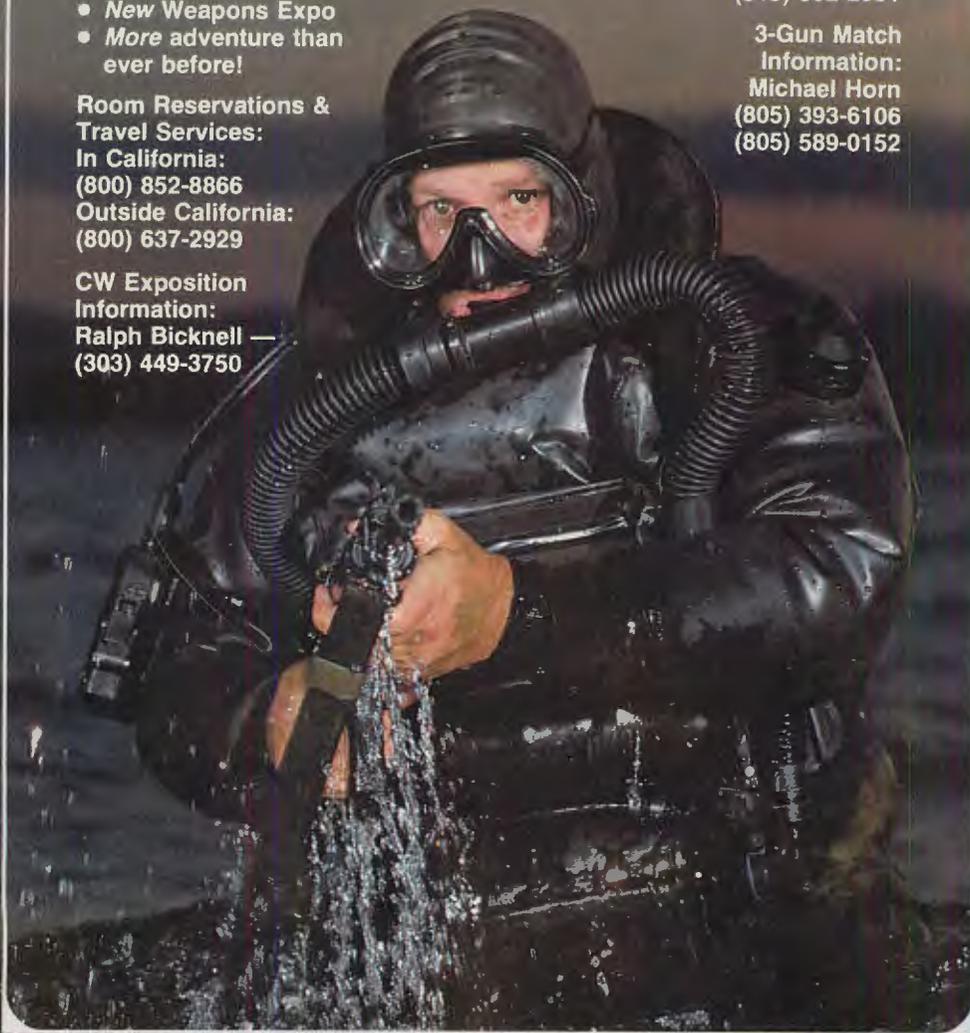
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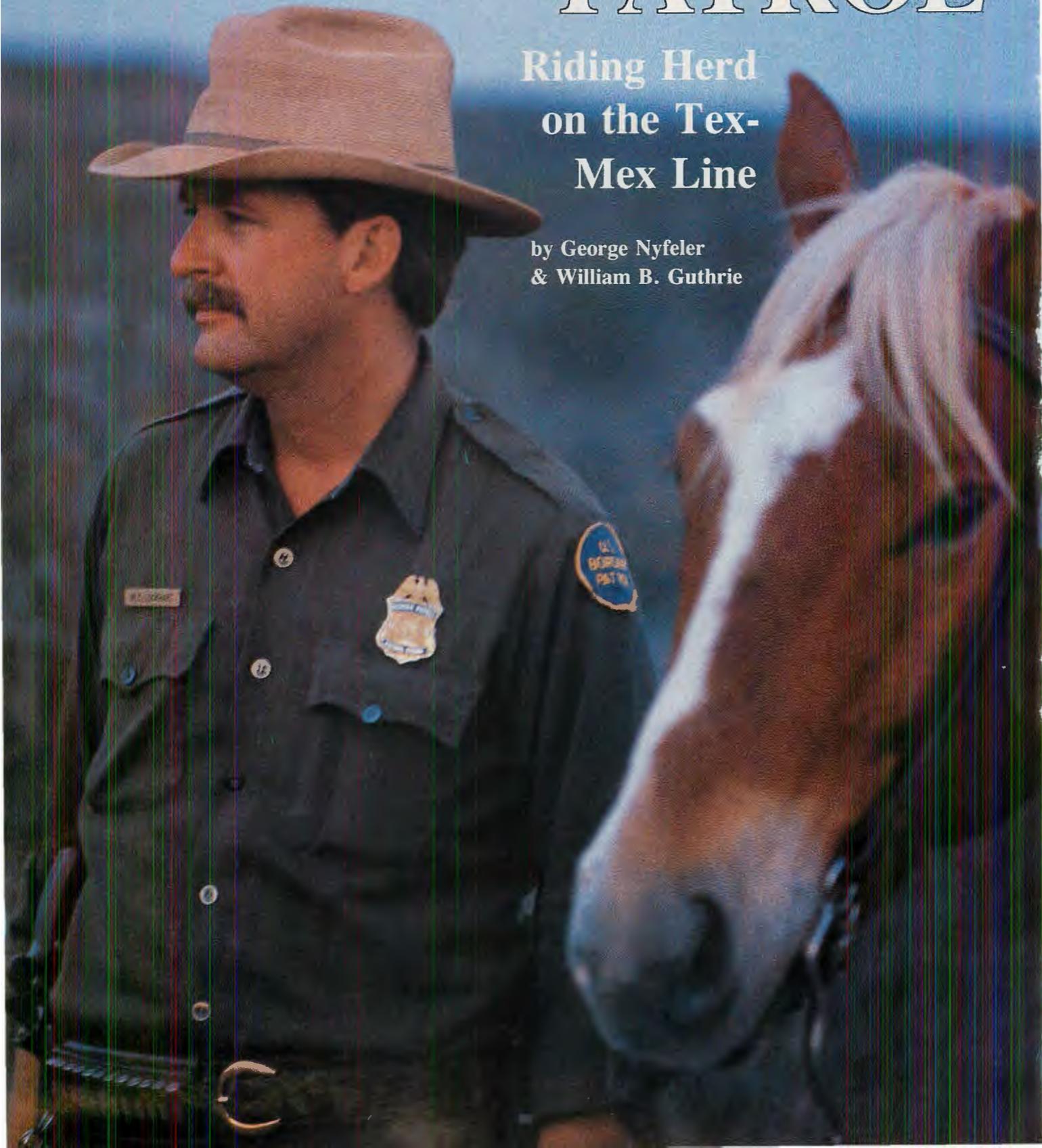
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SOF LAW ENFORCEMENT

# U.S. BORDER PATROL

Riding Herd  
on the Tex-  
Mex Line

by George Nyfeler  
& William B. Guthrie



**E**YES unaccustomed to the moonless dark and dense cover tried to pierce the cane thicket at the slow river's edge. We peered until every scintilla reflected by leaf or water from the few house lights over in Mexico turned into a refugee trying to sneak into our territory. Only water gurgled and moved, and we began to quietly move away from the river with Border Patrol agents David Scherzer and Glenn Simpson.

"When they cross, they'll be easy to see," whispered Simpson.

"Yeah," Scherzer breathed agreement, "They come in bunches, wading if the water's low, or hanging onto empty bleach bottles . . . sometimes even on cheap vinyl rafts." Scherzer chuckled soundlessly

when he mentioned the raft.

"What's funny about rafts?"

Simpson snorted as Scherzer began to answer: "Old Glenn over here jumped from a tree into one of those little rubber rafts full of illegals a couple of weeks ago . . ."

"I couldn't let them get away!"

"Shhh. There they are," a smudge mid-stream resolved itself into an oscillating chain, "Get down!"

Scherzer waved Simpson upstream, dashed, hunched over, through a gap in the cane and hissed, "Lie down right there, and don't use your flash."

We lay silent for 15 minutes. "Hear anything?" Wagging heads answered. We rolled out of the cane and quietly walked

back up the slope to the bench where we'd last seen Simpson.

Scherzer waved us back and signaled for cover and stillness with a hand flattened toward the ground. Five dark men shambled toward us on the narrow path. We tensed for the moment of confrontation and then relaxed, seeing that the fifth *mojado* was Simpson.

Three short, thin men and one little boy stood quietly in the starlight. They looked a little frightened, but mainly they were tired, cold and disappointed. At least they were dry, since Simpson had followed the sympathetic Laredo policy of allowing swimmers to change their clothes before arresting them. Pistols still holstered, the agents

## BORDER PATROL PATOIS

*The small size of the Border Patrol family and its specialized mission create the need for new terms, new definitions for older terms, abbreviations and translations of necessary Spanish and English idioms. These are the most common elements of the miniature dialect the Patrol has developed over the decades. (Don't forget: "J" in Spanish-language loanwords is pronounced as "h.")*

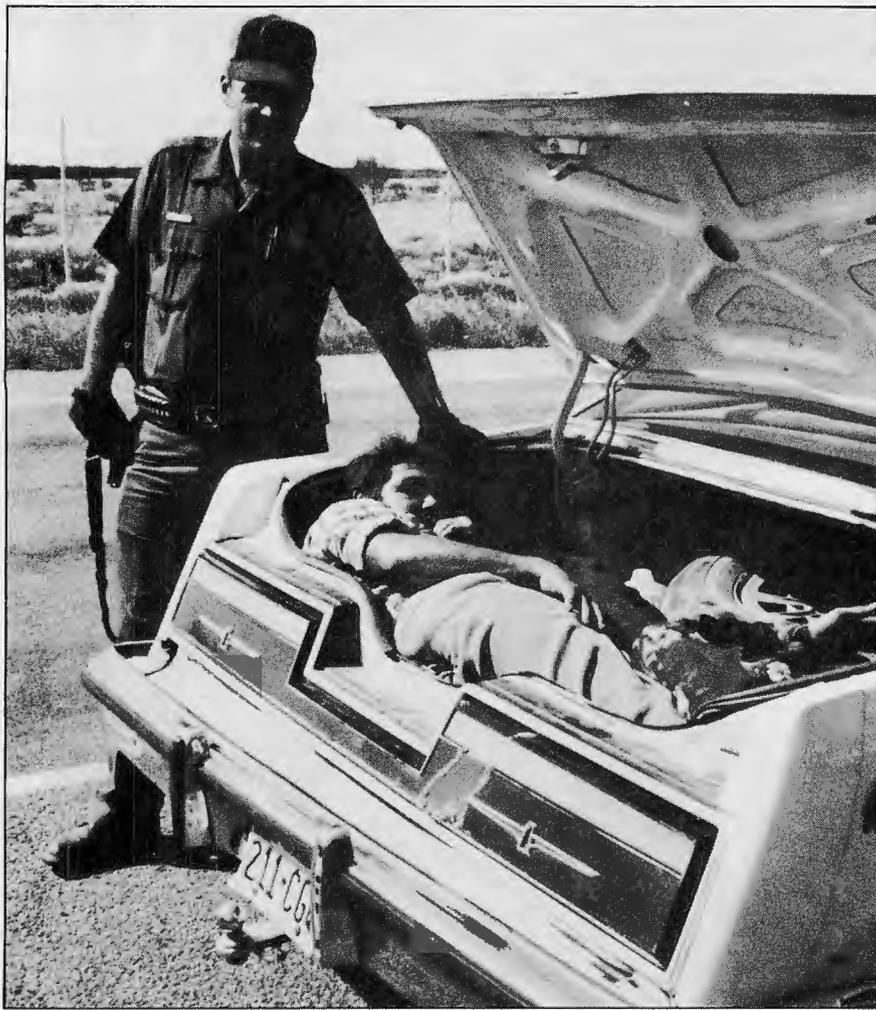
- Brush crew: Tracking patrols.
- Coyote: Border slang for a smuggler who specializes in people, borrowed from Mexican-Indian folklore.
- Cut sign: Verb meaning to track or discover tracks of undocumented aliens traveling across the brush country.
- Drag: Pulling a harrow, or even bedsprings on a chain, along a fenceline or highway shoulder to obliterate old tracks and soften the dirt to take the imprint of new tracks.
- Detail: Temporary assignment, usually to accommodate extra workload.
- Gringo: Anglo-American, adopted from Mexican slang.
- Jacal: Brush shelter built for shade or protection from weather.
- Migra: Mexican abbreviation of *la migracion* or immigration. Refers to all Immigration and Naturalization Service officers, but especially to the Border Patrol.
- Mod squad: Urban plainclothes Border Patrol unit for finding illegal aliens trying to disappear into the border community.
- Mojado: Spanish translation for "wet." Sometimes shortened to "mojo," though this form is little used since the 1950s.
- Norteamericano: Anglo citizen of the United States of America.
- OTM: Other Than Mexican. Along the southern border, OTM is applied to all non-Mexican nationalities of illegal aliens. No counterpart such as "Other Than Canadian" has been reported on the northern border.



Patrol Agent B.J. Adams herds illegals across the girders under the railroad bridge between the U.S. and Mexico. Photo: Glenn Simpson

- PA: Patrol Agent, the official name for a member of the Border Patrol.
- PI: Patrol Inspector, the pre-1970 official designation of Border Patrolmen.
- Puente: "Bridge," the one across the Rio Grande.
- Rinche: Mexican transliteration of "ranger," originally applied to Texas Rangers, but now used for both Rangers and Patrol agents.
- Sign cutters: PA patrols following tracks (sign) of illegal aliens.
- Sendero: "Path" in Spanish, any man or animal track across the brush country. Wets usually favor those following high ground or fencelines.

- Tank: Dirt-dam rain catchment reservoir which is often the only reasonably reliable source of water in the arid borderlands, also called a "stock tank."
- Tonk: Slang of unknown origin, meaning "wetback."
- Trique bags: Pack, knapsack, bag or satchel for carrying food and gear. Patrol borrowed term from Mexicans.
- VR: Voluntary Return, applied to all apprehended aliens without other criminal record or charges, who are willing to be reinstated to their nation of origin. Also used as a verb, meaning to transport back to the border, as in, "I VR'ed seven wets last night."
- Wet: Short for the older "wetback," originally referring to undocumented aliens who swim the Rio Grande, now used for all Mexican illegal aliens, regardless of method of transportation.



marched stooped and sober IAs up the hill into the sparkle of power station security lights and over to dark vans waiting to hold the night's bag. Other agents had gathered from their beats, bringing their catches and we loaded sad refugees into the vans. The half-dozen agents and drivers stood chatting and smoking in the 0300 breeze, cooling off from another long, 100-degree day.

"Do you process them now?"

"Nothing to process," one of the drivers answered, "there aren't any OTMs. If we had a Salvadoran or Colombian we'd be up all night with him debriefing and filling out paperwork."

Agents checked in by radio and notified the dispatcher we were headed to the bridge with a load. Laughter leaked from the two vans and the carryall as younger Mexicans began to make faces and signals at each other between vehicles. We piled in and began the short drive to the middle of town. By the time we arrived at the parking area just upstream from the bridge, a half-dozen patrol vehicles were already there disgorging probably 30 illegals, all cheerful to see they were being thrown back across the border without any trouble.

We sauntered down the street with a couple of agents and watched from a short distance to make sure they all went through the port of entry. All in all, it had been a good night. High water and news of the big haul the night before had kept most would-be

**Anything that crosses the border that can hold people, will hold people. Car trunks are routinely inspected at both ports of entry and checkpoints. Photo: Glenn Simpson**

immigrants on the right side of the river.

Body counts aren't the business of the Border Patrol, but raw numbers show how hard their job is getting. The U.S. Border Patrol's Southern Region, which stretches from eastern Arizona to north of Miami, had apprehended 35,614 illegal aliens in the first 17 days of February, 1986. Half a ton of cocaine had come from just one truck recently stopped by Border Patrol agents. Casualties were mounting, too. A customs agent had been murdered on the Papago Indian Reservation near Nogales and shooting reports were being filed on a weekly basis from Chula Vista. This tidal wave threatened to submerge any effort at controlling immigration or drug importation into the United States.

SOF's tour of Border Patrol operations had begun with a briefing by Southern Region assistant regional commissioner, Border Patrol, J.W. (Bill) Carter. The tall, lanky third-generation Border Patrolman (his grandfather joined the Patrol in 1923) explained that this paramilitary service is under Immigration and Naturalization Service — the people who process *legal* alien entry — and finally answerable to the De-

partment of Justice. Only 1,350 sworn officers of this agency bear the primary responsibility for controlling illegal border crossing and smuggling in the critical and high-traffic Southern Region.

Southern Florida is more infamous for its drug traffic, and there's more violence in Southern California, but the hotspot for the trade in human souls is the Texas border with Mexico. According to the tally board hung on the waiting room wall of the Laredo Sector office, roughly 45 duty agents — 15 working each of three eight-hour shifts — had caught 827 illegal aliens in the Laredo Sector, alone, on 19 February 1986. SOF reporters arrived the next day.

"We're being overwhelmed," stated Laredo Sector CO Larry Teverbaugh. "Up till recently, we were overloaded, but holding our own. We have excellent cooperation from other law enforcement, good community relations, and good combined operations, with foot, vehicle, horse and air patrols. But there's little we can do against numbers like these."

Teverbaugh had the figures, strategies and deployment of his operation at his fingertips, but had to break the briefing for an unusual ceremony. Patrol Agent J.S. Treviño was being presented a plaque for outstanding achievement. No, it wasn't for dragging smugglers to justice, though he'd done enough of that. Officers of the Shrine of *los dos Laredos* — Laredo and its sister border town of Nuevo Laredo — and a representative of the Mexican consulate were honoring Treviño for his works of charity. He had sponsored over 50 burned and crippled children from Mexico and the U.S. for treatment in U.S. hospitals.

"The Shrine is his second career," Teverbaugh bragged after the delegation had left.

"People don't have a very clear idea of what we do out here," Teverbaugh complained. "Part of that comes from the old popular image. Movies generally haven't improved it. Needless to say, that Jack Nicholson movie, *The Border* didn't help."

"We didn't have anything to do with that movie." E.M. "Sonny" Orsack, patrol agent in charge of the Laredo North station had just joined us in Teverbaugh's office, and he wanted to set the record straight. "Today's Border Patrol agent is top quality. His training is demanding, his hours are long, his work is hard, so he has to be good. If you're used to conventional law enforcement, you're going to be surprised. We can get you on a patrol right away."

In popular mythology, the Border Patrol has been clannish, xenophobic and inclined to shoot first and ask questions later. But the new Patrol is more than professional . . . plus they're outspokenly sympathetic with their quarry. Break-time talk was full of observations on the average wage and government-controlled price of tortillas in Mexico, as well as the world oil glut and the Mexican national debt. New generation patrolmen benefit from their generous and complex view of the refugee problem. We

saw none of the "us vs. them" mentality that sours many urban duty police. And the young patrolmen know who their real enemies are, too: smugglers.

Smuggler is a generic term and contraband varies with the smuggler's class and clout. Peons swim with people, padrones fly cocaine and heroin, nearly everybody dabbles in marijuana in ounces, garbage bags or truckloads, and nearly any smuggler will smuggle nearly anything if there's money in it. The problem with smugglers is that at any one moment Mexican and U.S. authorities, and other smugglers may be hunting them. Darwinian pressure makes them wary, evasive, defensive and disposes them toward being armed.

"The smuggler stands out from the illegals if you look for him: He acts different," Scherzer had warned as we drove toward our riverbank beat. "If we apprehend illegal aliens on the river tonight, the illegals will be docile and resigned. And that's what gets you in trouble. After the first few months on duty you get used to catching 10 — or even 40 — aliens. And when you catch 'em, you say: 'You all get over there and sit down.' And they all shuffle over to where you pointed and they sit down. After a couple of years the last thing that crosses your mind is the gun on your hip. That's fine until you accidentally corner a smuggler.

"By the way, that's the residence and HQ of one of the biggest smuggling families in town." Young Hispanic men and women lounged in the yard and on the balconies of a multi-story stucco house still under construction. As we drove by, they yelled and grinned and waved. Everyone else on the street had assumed a studied look of unconcern as soon as we turned the corner. For

**Being the biggest weight and volume carriers across the land border, tractor/trailer units are always prime targets for Patrol spot-checks. Photo: Glenn Simpson**



**Motorbikes have recently been added to the Patrol's TO&E. Photo: Glenn Simpson**

them the Border Patrol carryall seems not to exist, despite the ruckus.

"This is a bad neighborhood."

That neighborhood was poor, crowded, and close to the bridge and the river. The river, of course, is the thing. The Rio Grande rises in the San Juan Mountains of Colorado, where it is nothing but snowmelt running a rocky course. After it has watered the orchards of the archbishop of Santa Fe and the ancient fields of the Pueblos, the Rio Bravo del Norte — as it is called in Mexico — loses significance as geography and becomes perhaps the world's sharpest, steepest and deepest boundary between economic systems.

On one side the average person earns \$12,000 a year; on the other he earns \$1,800. On one side his infant child has a one percent chance of dying before its first birthday; on the other the child's odds are nearly six times worse. On one side his savings will diminish in value by less than 10 percent per annum; on the other inflation may steal half his few hoarded pesos in a year. It's easy to see why many Mexicans see the Rio Grande as a golden wall, rather than a source of irrigation water.

Passing into the promised land is important, because if a poor Mexican mother can bear her child in the United States, that child is a citizen of the world's richest country. The Mexican's plight is little different from that of a Nigerian, but Nigeria isn't separated from the United States by a hundred yards of fresh water, and Mexico is.

A Nigerian would have to secure air or sea transport to put himself in a position to be smuggled into the United States, but most Mexicans need only walk north. Once they reach the river, there are a number of possibilities: walk, wade, swim, float, climb under a bridge, hop a freight, hide in a truck, secure falsified papers.

The availability of these avenues makes

Laredo the hub of the region's smuggling business. A railway bridge, two motor vehicle bridges and an Indian ford cross the river within a mile of each other. Large scale illegal businesses are built on and fortunes made from the unregulated traffic in people and goods. Finally, when the prospective new "citizens" arrive in Laredo, there is a large, friendly, Hispanic population which can provide a certain amount of cover: At least more camouflage is available than if a Mexican tried to pass for a local in North Dakota.

America's paramilitary border-guard force is spread thin, and relatively lightly equipped to deal with this human-wave assault on our territory. All Border Patrol officers are required to qualify with all issued and approved weapons, but that arsenal is limited: pump shotguns, HK MP5 submachine guns, Ruger Security Six and S&W M-19 revolvers, and the Winchester Model 70 in .30-06.

A few conventional-looking police cars are in the Patrol inventory, but most of Laredo Sector's transport would be more at home in a military light recon unit than in a police vehicle park. Chevy Suburbans, Dodge Ram Chargers, pickups dragging horse and motorcycle trailers, and a handful of Japanese dirt bikes are supplemented by the old Patrol standby, the horse.

At 0600 on Saturday morning, Agent Rick Aguirre politely introduced himself and showed us into a pickup blazoned with the Border Patrol blue-and-gold circle. "Got your salt pills and your water jug?"

"We've got canteens; do we need salt pills?"

"No, I've got some you can have. It was 103 yesterday, but that doesn't stop ol' Turner and J.J. They're Old Patrol. When they cut sign, they stay on it till they get their man. We'll need water and salt." We drove to the stables where we met the riders.

Turner and J.J. looked like old photographs. Sun-seamed faces were crowned by ivory hat-shaded brows of men who've



It's 85 degrees at 0300 in Laredo in February. David Scherzer and Bill Guthrie get ready to go back to HQ after a night on the river and in the railyards. Photo: Glenn Simpson

spent their lives on horseback. They had already saddled their horses and were getting them into the trailer.

Saturday's work would be a combined-arms exercise. We would scout ahead in the truck, Turner and J.J. would follow the sign on horseback, and the air force would be called in when we thought we had tracked the wets down to a few hundred yards.

When we were all loaded, we went on down the road. U.S. Highway 83 heads north from Laredo, first diverging about 20 miles east of the Rio Grande, and then roughly paralleling it for some 40 miles before it turns into U.S. 81. As the first highway inland from the border, 83 is the



Vegetable produce covered 400 pounds of illicit drugs confiscated by Patrol Agent Art Gutierrez. Photo: Glenn Simpson

first collection point for mojados who have arranged to be picked up. Those who are simply walking away from the border just north of Laredo must cross 83 on the way to catch a bus at Freer or just to walk the 160 miles cross-country to San Antonio. This highway intersects all these routes.

Tourists must have wondered what the Patrol vehicles were doing as the two pickups snaked back and forth from the highway to the fenceline and back, carefully checking points where ridgelines crossed the highway. At our first stop, under a high-tension line crossing, we found mixed tracks of cowboy-type boots and athletic shoes. Churned earth — they had stood waiting by the fence for some time the night before — was dotted with cigarette butts and scraps of plastic wrap with bits of food clinging to them. Mud-and-snow tire tracks swerved right up to the fence and the footprints disappeared. The illegals had been picked up in a truck. Aguirre radioed a report to the dispatcher, we all got back in the vehicles and drove north.

A couple of ridgelines along, Turner and J.J. stopped — much Border Patrol sign cutting seems to be done leaning out of a pickup window, staring at the ground, driving 30 mph with one hand — and began casting about for tracks to supplement the wind-blown prints they'd seen from the truck. Sure enough, the track picked up on the other side of the road.

"Men traveling by foot in this country stick to ridges and mesa tops," Aguirre explained, "you can't see where you're

## LA MIGRA WANTS YOU!

If challenging and often adventurous work in law enforcement with a disciplined unit sounds like your kind of job, there's good news: The Patrol is hiring. Cutbacks and budget-balancing may affect this in the near future, but for now the Border Patrol is looking for qualified applicants.

Formal qualifications are few: You must be at least 18 years old, and be able to pass a written examination and an oral board. But those qualifications aren't what cut most would-be PAs; it's the competition. Starting pay is good and there's more paid overtime than most agents want, so be prepared to go head-to-head with some of the most ambitious applicants for government service.

Making the first cut doesn't guarantee a job, either. Border Patrol Academy in Glynco, Georgia, covers the range of law, patrolling, tracking and public relations minimally required of an agent. That's hard enough, but in that 17 weeks you must also come up to the Patrol's mark for proficiency in Spanish language. And all the agents we talked to raved about the all-arms firearms instruction. (Duty patrolmen won the



Patrol Agent Glenn Simpson poses with the illegal-filled raft he captured by leaping from a tree over the Rio Grande. Photo: Glenn Simpson

Texas state PPC team title the last two years in a row, and last year finished second in the nation to the Secret Service).

Sounds tough? It is. Out of the selection of pre-qualified applicants, over 30 percent drop out of the academy.

Perhaps because of the difficulty of winning such choice, government-

supported, paramilitary work, it sounds too good to give up. How do openings appear?

"That's easy," offered one senior agent. "'Desertion' to other agencies is frequent. Other law-enforcement agencies like patrolmen, since they're educated, drilled in law and intensively trained with firearms. And we've all got field experience."

If the Border Patrol sounds like the service for you, write your nearest U.S. government Office of Personnel Management.

going or if you're being followed if you're down in the valleys. It's easier to keep a line if you can see something in the distance, like a deer stand, a water tower or a house."

On the west side of 83 we saw that the tracks were of at least four people, and again there was a mixture of athletic shoes and block-heeled boots. The patrolmen couldn't swear how many men were in the group, because the breeze had stiffened in the last couple of hours and gusts of 40 mph were rapidly flattening and gouging the shallow marks in loose soil. Agent Turner glared at the granite-colored skies and offered his judgement that the track might not last much longer so we should get going.

By the standard plan, the horsemen unloaded their animals, mounted and began following the most likely *sendero*. We took off east down a clay road at 25 mph, Aguirre continuing to lean out his window looking at the ground, occasionally ducking back in the cab to avoid branches. A few miles of this brought us to a crossroad. We turned back to the north and slowed, the better to inspect the tracks.

"You see anything out your side?"

"No."

"Well, you keep lookin'. If you think you see anything, you tell me and we'll stop."

After hurtling another 400 yards over the wind-cleaned clay a pile of dust showed some texture.

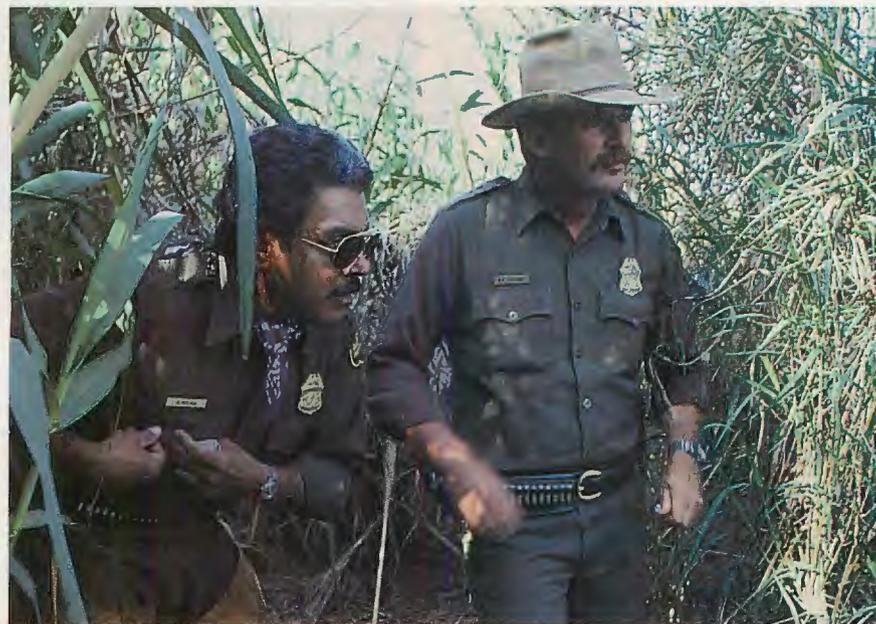
"Stop, I see something."

The wind was blowing so hard by this time, that the sandy piles of anthills were

*Continued on page 82*

**Horses have competition from motorbikes and aircraft, but the traditional mount of the Border Patrol still rates for toughness, mobility and silence. Photo: Dale Andrade**

**Beating the cane near the river is a regular detail for patrol agents of the Laredo sector. Photo: Dale Andrade**



**Patrol Agent R.T. Connelly shows MP5 just picked up from highway checkpoint in aftermath of Libyan terrorist scare. Photo: Bill Guthrie**



# HOLLYWOOD HEAT IN

# MI

**T**IRED of seeing shoot-'em-up shows on the tube where actors use weapons that are either outdated or unrealistic? Well, one of the most popular shows today, NBC's *Miami Vice*, is out to break that trend. The series is certainly not the most realistic when it comes to portraying the life of a vice cop in Miami's underworld drug trade, but it does have a couple of things going for it: *Miami Vice* owes much of its success to slick production and exotic weaponry. State-of-the-art firearms have added to the popularity of *Miami Vice* and helped set it apart from other cop shows.

Early films and television shows were sadly lacking in weapons realism, but since

**SIG-Sauer P220, modified to shoot blanks, differs from original only in a shroud fitted over the ejection port and relocation of the magazine catch.**



**P220's main changes for blank adaptation are in the barrel, which has to be modified to remove its lock up. Note the difference in the standard barrel, below.**



the 1970s the entertainment industry has managed to come up with quality firearms and qualified professionals to instruct actors in their use. Today, the film and television industry seems to be expending considerable effort to ensure that the guns being used are authentic for the period and situation portrayed.

*Miami Vice* followed this trend of attention to weapons detail by arming Sonny Crockett (played by Don Johnson) with one of the latest combat handguns — the 10mm Bren Ten auto-pistol. This double-action pistol owes much of its design to the Czechoslovakian CZ 75 double-action, 9mm, 15-shot auto-pistol.

*Miami Vice* director Michael Mann first selected the Bren Ten for Don Johnson on the advice of actor and top IPSC competitor, Jim Zubiena. Zubiena, who has appeared as a hit man in a *Miami Vice* episode, also gave technical assistance to the series by teaching both Johnson and co-star Phillip Michael Thomas the basics of gun handling. Both actors spent several days with Jim at his private range; Don Johnson, according to reports, is now a pretty good pistol shot.

Originally, Johnson was to be armed with a SIG-Sauer P220. However, the decision was made to arm Johnson with a state-of-the-art pistol — the Bren Ten. Unfortunately, in real life, the Bren Ten project has experienced a number of production problems and its manufacturer, Dornhaus and Dixon, has gone belly-up in the gun market. This development would leave Detective Crockett carrying a pistol which is not in use by any law enforcement agency in the country.

The decision was made to rearm *Miami Vice* actors with new handguns more in line with day-to-day law enforcement reality: Johnson will be getting a .45 caliber Smith & Wesson Model 645 auto-pistol. This is Smith's latest offering based on the earlier Model 39/59 series adopted by a number of police agencies.

In effect, the 645 is an enlarged Model 39/59 that has been chambered for .45 caliber instead of 9mm. Like the 59, and the Bren Ten for that matter, it's a double-action, semi-automatic pistol that permits the hammer to be trigger cocked for the first shot. However, unlike the Bren Ten, it cannot be safely carried cocked and locked. This is because the safety drops the hammer when applied instead of locking it in the cocked position.



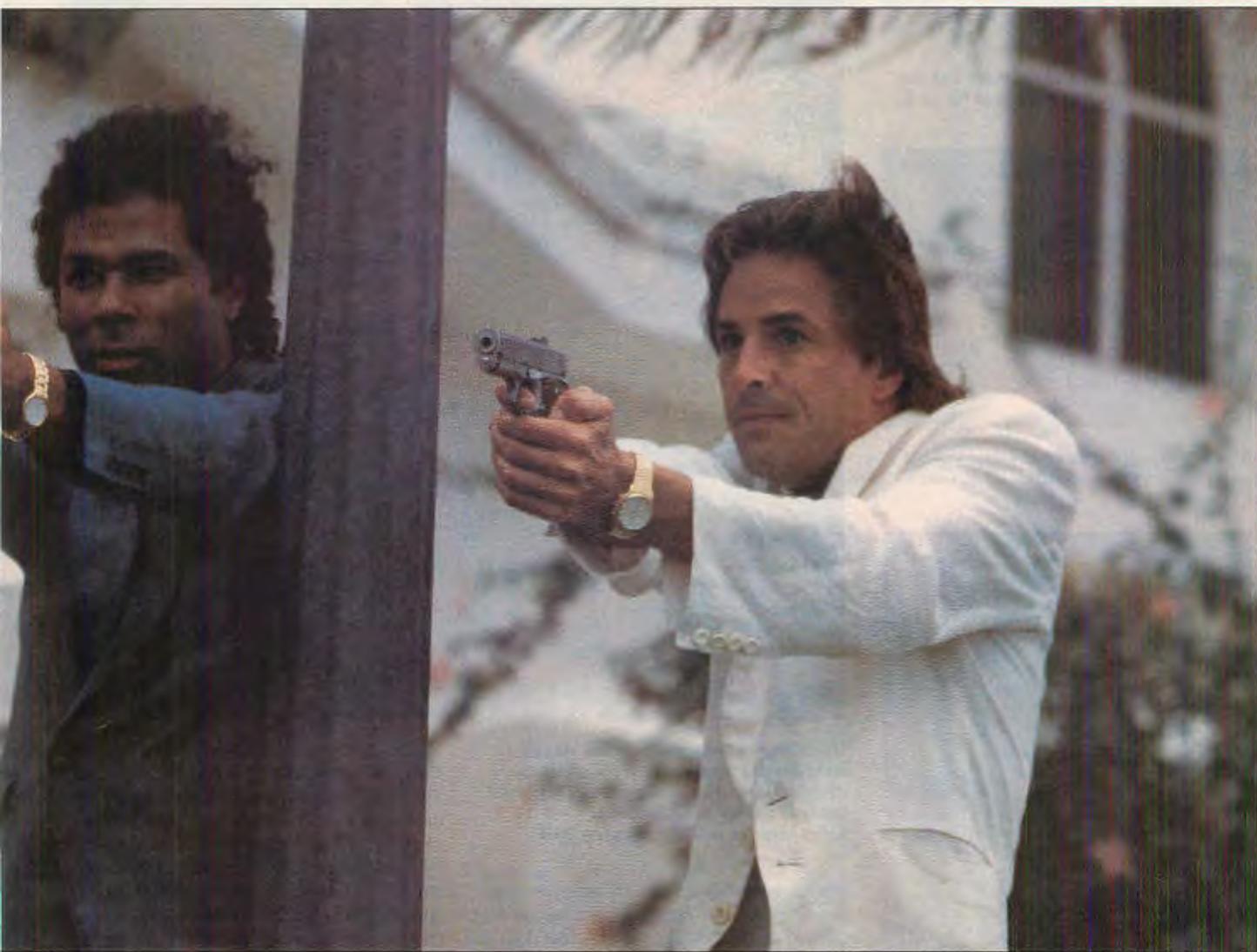
***Miami Vice*'s Don Johnson and Phillip Michael Thomas in action during a shoot on the set. Johnson will reportedly receive \$1.5 million this season for his portrayal of an undercover vice cop. Photo courtesy NBC**

Don Johnson is not the only one in the series getting a new gun. A number of SIG-Sauer P220 autos are also slated to appear in the hands of other *Miami Vice* characters. The P220 is another double-action auto that has found favor with both military and law enforcement personnel. It's a clever design which uses a variety of cheaper construction methods including an alloy frame and various

# AMI

## New Hardware Muscles in on the Action

by SOF Staff



high-quality metal stampings that help keep production costs down without detracting from the weapon's overall performance. The result is a robust, accurate and reliable pistol that's simple to operate and shoot.

*Miami Vice's* use of exotic firearms is not just confined to handguns. Jim Zubiena used a SPAS 12 combination auto-pump shotgun when he appeared on the show. Co-star Thomas (who plays Rico Tubbs) has used a modified Ithaca 12-gauge shotgun called a Stakeout which he carries concealed in a special quick-draw shoulder rig. Other weapons used have included various submachine guns such as the UZI, a

chopped M-16 called a K Gun, the Desert Eagle .357 auto, and the Detonics Mark IV 9mm. The Mark IV, which will be used as an ankle back-up gun, has been plagued with functioning problems.

The K Gun is the product of La France Specialties (P.O. Box 178211, San Diego, CA 92117). This company, headed by Tim La France, a firearms designer and gunsmith who has been producing guns for the movie industry since 1982, is also modifying the S&W 645 and SIG-Sauer P220s so that they can shoot blanks. La France Specialties specializes in manufacturing large caliber pocket autos, and also works

on fully automatic firearms for various law enforcement agencies.

Unlike revolvers, which can shoot blanks without any problem, self-loading firearms require considerable modification before they'll gobble this Hollywood ammo. Auto-loaders depend on pressure built up by the rapidly expanding gases driving the bullet down the barrel to eject the spent case, chamber a fresh round and re-cock the action. When a blank is fired, pressures never get high enough to cycle the action.

Getting a semi-automatic pistol to shoot blank ammunition is not a simple task. The problem here is that most auto-pistols em-

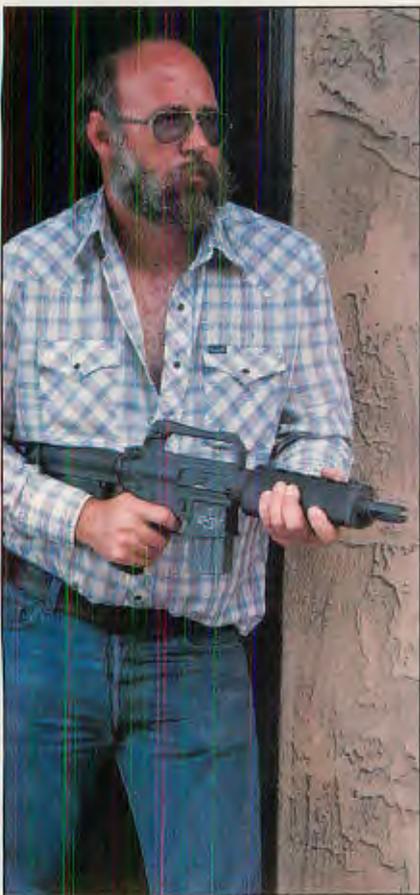
ploy a locked-breech action that keeps the action closed until pressures have dropped low enough to allow the slide to safely start moving back. To get a blank to fire, the pistol has to be modified so that it operates as a straight blowback-action type weapon. This means removing the breech-locking mechanism and occasionally replacing the existing recoil springs with lighter ones. This, combined with a suppressor which is usually screwed into the barrel, allows the gun to operate with blanks.

To function reliably, the relationship between the power generated by the blank cartridge and the tension of the recoil spring is critical. In addition, as the blank case is

The S&W 645 is a scaled-up version of the Model 39/59 series which has had its share of problems.



*Miami Vice* often uses some exotic-looking guns, like La France Specialties' K Gun — a chopped M16.



Olivia Brown (with pump-action shotgun) and Saundra Santiago help round out the diverse *Miami Vice* acting crew. They stand ready to deliver some firepower — if the script calls for it. Photo courtesy NBC

often longer than a standard cartridge case, the front of the ejection port has to be opened up to allow the case to clear during ejection. And they have to get it right: Malfunctions mean filming retakes, and that can be expensive.

La France has also modified the magazine catches of the P220s. Instead of the conventional catch at the bottom of the grip, he has converted it to a button type located just behind the trigger. In effect, he's converted the P220 into the P226, a pistol that has been adopted by many law enforcement agencies in the United States. Finally, at the request of the director, all the *Miami Vice* P220s have been satin-nickel plated so that they can be better seen on film. The Smith & Wesson 645 does not need this since it's already a stainless-steel handgun.

The man who introduced Tim La France to the movie-industry gun business was Joe Swanson, a blank ammunition supplier to the movie industry (P.O. Box 328, Descanso, CA 92016). Joe produces loads for all types of firearms. In many ways, his blanks are just as important as the blank-shooting guns themselves. Not only must the case be properly sized and crimped, but it has to have sufficient powder to generate enough pressure to function the action of the gun. In addition, Swanson must provide movie directors with exaggerated muzzle flash beyond what a normal cartridge will generate.

Another critical aspect of the behind-the-scenes operation, even when using blank ammo, is safety. Don't forget the tragic death of actor Jon Eric Hexum who accidentally killed himself with a .44 Magnum blank a few years back. While fooling around on the set, he put the barrel of a revolver loaded with blanks to his head and pulled the trigger. The charge in the blank was powerful enough to send a bone splinter



**ABOVE:** Smith & Wesson's Model 645 has been adopted in *Miami Vice's* armory for next season. S&W's new .45 has already been criticized by Jeff Cooper, the founder of modern combat pistol techniques.

**BELOW:** *Miami Vice* crew prepares weapons for filming: Model 49 Bodyguard .38, modified Ithaca Stakeout, and the old Bren Ten. Photo: Phyllis Reison



**BOTTOM RIGHT:** On the set of *Miami Vice*, Phillip Michael Thomas is outfitted with a quick-draw shoulder rig, designed by the *Miami Vice* prop department, for his modified Ithaca Stakeout gun — his trademark for the 1985-1986 season. Photo: Phyllis Reison

into his brain.

The lesson was not lost on the movie and TV film industry. Actors now get plenty of coaching in both the safety aspects of the guns they are using and how to shoot them. But even that is not enough. Actors never aim their weapons directly at their co-workers even when the cameras are rolling. Each scene is carefully choreographed so as to make it *appear* that people are shooting at each other. Camera crews also get protection in the form of clear plexiglass screens that are placed between them and the firearms.

When everything finally comes together on the set, the guns and blanks, combined with the acting ability of the stars, create those vivid shoot-out scenes that keep viewers on the edge of their seats. *Miami Vice* certainly has all the excitement along with up-to-date weaponry. In fact, by the time you read this article, Sonny Crockett will probably be carrying the S&W 645 and his compatriots will have their SIGs. So, the next time you see Crockett and Tubbs in action with their new arsenal, just remember how much work goes on behind the scenes to create those gunfights that helped make *Miami Vice* a solid ratings winner. ✎



**Bruce Nelson stitches a holster in his Tucson, Arizona workshop.**



years in law enforcement and competitive practical shooting. He served at every level from uniformed patrol officer to detective and undercover agent. He spent a number of years in narcotics investigation with the California Department of Justice's, Bureau of Narcotic Enforcement. Much of his law-enforcement career centered around firearms training for special agents in his department and for police departments throughout California.

Bruce was one of IPSC's founding members in 1976. He was also a participant in the famous Bear Valley Gunslinger matches conducted by Jeff Cooper, which served as a research laboratory to develop Cooper's widely copied techniques. When Cooper opened his Gunsite facility in 1976, Nelson was his first staff instructor, a position he continues to hold today. But Bruce actually started making holsters even before he pounded the pavement as a beat cop. At the age of 18, Bruce was one of John Bianchi's first employees.

His credentials are obvious, so let's take a look at some of the important concepts Nelson has incorporated into his designs.

A well-designed combat holster must place your handgun at the ready position at all times without restricting your normal daily activities. When worn by plainclothes personnel, it must also maximize whatever concealment potential the pistol possesses. A proper rig must also permit a full and final firing grip upon initial contact with the weapon. Weapon retention qualities are equally important, most often addressed by others through means of retaining devices such as dot snaps or velcro fasteners. Except where required to enhance safety (ankle or shoulder holsters), they should be avoided since they impede the draw and

**Nelson's concealment sheath for Al Mar's SERE lock folder.**



# BRUCE NELSON'S COMBAT LEATHER

## Unheralded Holsters Hit the Big Time

Text & Photos by Peter G. Kokalis

**C**USTOM leathermakers have churned out any number of holsters for professionals who need top-notch tools of the trade. One of them is about to emerge as king of the mountain.

For more than a decade, Bruce Nelson remained a shadowy underground figure among professional gunslingers. Eagerly

sought after by professionals, Nelson's holsters were, to most, an unobtainable legend. His life of 60-hour weeks in law enforcement meant there was little time for making holsters. But Bruce has just hung up his duty-gun belt in order to devote full energy to hand-crafting combat leather.

Nelson's designs are based on his many

usually interfere with the proper firing grip. Holsters should be hand fitted to the pistol they are intended to carry and at first must fit like a new pair of shoes or their retention abilities will fade in a short time. The belt must be matched to the holster and magazine pouches, and should be as thick and wide as practical. Properly designed gun belts are part of the holster's support system and must fit snugly to prevent wobble or shifting of the holster's location. Finally, these concepts must be executed with high quality, tough, dense leather for maximum durability.

Nelson has combined these concepts with his years of street-wise experience to create some pretty slick leather. Twenty years ago most competition and combat strong-side belt holsters had a muzzle rearward rake. This fetish finally reached 45 degrees. As the angle increased, it became more difficult to bury the web of the hand into the pistol's upper backstrap and a consistent firing grip became impossible. In 1967, Bruce designed his #1 Professional holster for semi-auto pistols that reversed this grotesque fad. His holster is configured for a straight-drop angle and allows the forearm/wrist angle to remain constant throughout the draw.

A double belt-loop system pulls the grip area of the frame into the body and enhances concealment. These double belt loops also permit the #1 Professional to be attached to the belt in the cross-draw position. I have two #1 Professional holsters, one for the compact Colt Officer's Model .45 ACP and the other for my Glock 17. I use both in the cross-draw mode.

Carrying your pistol in the cross-draw position offers several important advantages. When you commence the draw, you don't telegraph your movements to potential opponents on the flanks or to the rear nearly as much as you would cranking up your arm to draw from the strong side. The cross-draw is also superior in both comfort and access when sitting in a vehicle. And when clearing leather while wearing a jacket you merely reach inside for the pistol instead of sweeping the coat open first. At least two prominent holster makers produce copies of the #1 Professional and both credit Nelson for the design. Bruce's version sells for \$63.

Another equally famous Nelson holster is the #10 Summer Special, which costs \$32. This inside-the-pants rig has a metal-lined top band to prevent the holster from collapsing after the pistol has been removed and to insure instant reholstering. Precision hand molded from unfinished, thin leather, the rough-out texture prevents the holster from slipping about and increases stability. A single, non-pivoting strap with a one-way "pull the dot" snap secures this high-concealment, high-comfort scabbard to your belt.

There has long been a need for a truly efficient and diverse holster for mounting in briefcases, purses, vehicles, on night stands and under counter tops. Bruce's #25 holster



**#1 Professional holster and double magazine pouch for the Glock 17. This combination provides for a total of 52 rounds of firepower.**

which sells for \$79 can be attached to a flat, lined-leather backing. Velcro strips, snaps and grommets are all provided so the holster can be attached to almost any surface and yet be instantly moved to another location. Fitted for my Colt stainless steel Officer's Model, I chose to mount this versatile rig on the map case door of my van's center console.

Magazine pouches are every bit as important as the holster itself. For speed loading, the top 1½ inches of the magazine should be exposed and the magazine must be oriented so the bullets are forward (in the direction of the belt buckle) when the pouch is located on the left waist (for a righthanded shooter). There has, to my knowledge, never been a recorded instance where more than one speed load was required in an actual gun fight. Single magazine pouches will do for the street. Single magazine pouches cost



**Nelson's #25 holster with stainless steel Colt Officer's Model attached to the map-case door of automobile's center console.**

\$18 while double magazine pouches are priced at \$30 apiece.

Anyone who attaches \$90 worth of custom combat leather to a flimsy \$10 dress belt is begging to lose the firefight. The gun belt's importance cannot be underestimated and it must match the integrity of the holster and magazine pouch. It should be fabricated from tough, dense leather. Lined with leather, the total thickness should be approximately ¼ inch. Nelson's belts feature reduced thickness in the buckle area to ease buckling and solid brass buckles. While available in widths from 1 inch to 1¾ inches, my personal choice is 1½ inches for the .45 ACP or 9mm pistols. This belt costs

**#10 Summer Special inside-the-pants holster with new stainless steel PPK .380 pistol.**



*Continued on page 94*

# AIRBORNE

# Republic of China Jumps **VIGIL**

## in the Shadow of the Dragon

by Michael R. Doyle

**B**IG surprises come in small packages, many times out of the sky. A good example is the military might of the Republic of China (R.O.C.) on the island province of Taiwan. The Republic of China is in the unenviable position of sitting in the offshore shadow of a gargantuan mainland communist adversary. Although vastly outnumbered, the R.O.C. defense forces maintain a proficient state of readiness.

Spearheading the R.O.C. defense forces are two airborne brigades, the 1st and 2nd battle groups, and a special forces group. These are supplemented by a classified number of small commando units such as the long range amphibious reconnaissance team and the 1232 Special Forces Rough Terrain Unit. All these units, as well as the army and marine scuba units, are airborne qualified.

In addition, select troops among the R.O.C.'s navy, marine corps and air force are parachute trained. All told, about 250,000 military servicemen have become airborne qualified in the Republic of China.

The R.O.C.'s airborne, special forces, army aviation assets and its airborne/special warfare/army aviation schools, along with an infantry division and an armored brigade, come under the umbrella of a specially designed Airborne and Special Forces Command. It is headquartered at Ping Tung in southern Taiwan, about 45 minutes by jeep from the southern port city of Kaohsiung.



The venerable C-119 — the Flying Boxcar — is the primary air delivery asset on Taiwan

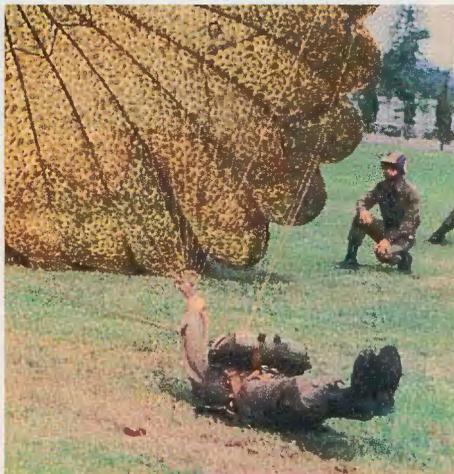
Although the command complex itself is unpretentious — which is in keeping with the R.O.C. government's austerity program — the facility is the R.O.C. version of Fort Benning. It includes the parachute school and the rigger facilities, as well as the Basic Officer (Airborne) and General Officer (Airborne) schools. The Basic Officer School trains cadres from the company and battalion levels; the General Officer School trains officers of the brigade level and higher in division tactics and strategic operations. There is also an NCO school which trains for the company level.

Included among other courses are the following: special warfare training, aggression training, ranger instructor course, a demolition course, an intelligence NCO course, special warfare maneuver course, cold weather warfare, search operations and an intelligence cadre course. The aviation section provides pilot training, an instrument flying course, a test pilot course, an aviation maintenance officer course, an aviation technician course, fixed wing maintenance, rotary wing maintenance and mountain flying.

Instruction also is provided for rough terrain parachuting, military free-fall parachuting, seaborne infiltration and jungle warfare. Other specialized schools with classified topics are scheduled as needed.

All male R.O.C. citizens in the select age group are obligated for a minimum of military service. Airborne units are composed only of volunteers, however, after they have completed basic training and initial assignment. Selection for airborne training is quite rigorous.

**BELOW: Mass jump exercises are a common sight over Taiwan.**



**TOP: How you land is just as important as how you jump. An R.O.C. para undergoes refresher training.**

**ABOVE: A stick of Republic of China paras await the order to stand and hook up.**

A Spartan lifestyle awaits the successful airborne candidate in the Republic of China. Barracks amenities taken for granted at Fort Benning are conspicuously absent at Ping Tung. The paratroopers are rostered to work in the cook house to prepare food for their own units. The food, like everything at Ping Tung, is simple but adequate. Discipline and military courtesy are strictly enforced, but officers share most of the hardships with their men.

The daily training is a tough and continuous regimen, beginning at dawn and continuing well into the night. Peak physical fitness and advanced combat skills are paramount to any paratroops, but even more so when you're part of an army that remains on a war footing. Whenever you see R.O.C. paras moving about, it's always at the double. They seem to be forever dog-trotting cross-country on forced marches in full combat kit. All Chinese airborne personnel are highly trained and daily practiced in Chinese martial arts disciplines.

All of this is tested each December at the Armed Forces Sports Competition. During five days of intense competition, R.O.C. servicemen from all branches vie to be champions in combat-related athletic events; including grenade throwing, the obstacle course (in full combat load), 5,000 meter run with combat kit and rifle, shooting both individual and crew-served weapons (this includes weapon servicing, operating and maintenance), unarmed combat and combat swimming.

**The C-119 Flying Boxcars are gradually being replaced by C-130s.**



**ABOVE: Move out! With Hueys in the background, R.O.C. troopers engage in frequent airmobile ops.**

**LEFT: R.O.C. jump wings awarded foreign students.**



After this event each year, airborne qualified troops deploy into the snowy mountains of central Taiwan for three months of winter training. The program includes skiing, rock climbing, rope-work, rappelling and general winter-survival skills.

Like other R.O.C. armed forces units, airborne troopers assist local farmers at harvest time. This not only is good public relations, but a boost to the agricultural economy as well. The troops, and the people they are to defend and serve, gain a better understanding of each other. Other civil assistance programs include free medical field clinics, environmental sanitation and recreational activities.

But the most common sight is Chinese paratroopers practicing what they do best: airborne assaults. They are fast and mobile masters of vertical envelopment. Combat jumps are rehearsed continually from an aging fleet of C-119 Flying Boxcars, plus UH-1 Hueys — which serves a dual gunship role — and CH-47 Chinooks. The C-119's are to be supplemented with C-130s, due to be delivered in late 1986.

**ABOVE:**  
Airborne recruit stands for inspection of his rig.



**ABOVE:**  
Republic of China jump wings; bottom to top, basic, senior and master.

**RIGHT:** The distinctive looking wings awarded for rough terrain-qualified jumpers.



## R.O.C. AIRBORNE ORIGINS

Formal large-scale military parachute training for Chinese troops did not begin until 1944, five years before the communist hordes under Chairman Mao pushed the Nationalist Army of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek off the mainland to the island province of Taiwan. Allied assistance was an integral part of the early Chinese airborne effort in special operations. But getting conventional Chinese airborne units off the ground was delayed until late in the war because of a ruthless Japanese occupation and the resulting shortage of aircraft and instructors.

Gilbert Stuart, an Australian engineer and a full colonel in the Chinese 5th Army, formed the Paratroop Commandos at Kangtowtsun, which is in the vicinity of Kunming, for its regular army troops in late 1944. A Chinese army storm corps of airborne troops was formally established in April 1945.

Also assisting in the Chinese airborne effort was the United States' Office of Strategic Services (OSS), which raised Chinese parachute units of its own. The OSS operation in China was styled after the British Special Operations Executive, which operated in most other occupied countries.

The OSS parachute school initially trained Chinese guerrilla bands, but because of the pressing necessities of the war effort, training was a quick and dirty version of what airborne troops receive today. OSS classes typically lasted a day or two. After completing this course, guerrillas were dropped behind the Japanese lines equipped with light weapons, radios and explosives. One of the most successful of these airborne guerrilla ops was the destruction of the Peking/Hankow railroad bridge over the Yellow River by Chinese guerrillas operating with OSS operative "St. Cyr."

Encouraged by this success against the Japanese invaders, and prodded by the OSS and U.S. Army leaders, Chiang Kai-Shek decided in January 1945 to organize 20 commando units of 200 Chinese paratroopers each. These commando units were to operate behind the Jap lines with OSS advisers. Only 12 such units were formed before Japan surrendered.

One example of heroism from the brief war service of Chinese paratroops involved their airborne infiltration of POW camps run by the Japanese. The OSS began forming six-man mercy teams to parachute into these POW camps. Their aim was to render medical aid and otherwise assure the proper treatment of POWs. They also could witness and report — presuming they survived themselves — any war crimes committed by the Japanese. Finally, once the captors withdrew, these Chinese infiltrators were tasked with clearing and preparing air strips for the speedy evacuation of POWs.



1948 pattern wings are worn only by R.O.C. paras who fought the Chinese communists.

With the exception of limited military action in specific areas assisting the Allies, World War II was over for China's airborne troops. But then came the long and brutal years of civil war in which they fought on both sides, one aided and exploited by the Soviet Union and the other, the unsuccessful nationalist movement, led by Chiang Kai-Shek.

On 8 December 1949, Chiang Kai-Shek's forces formally withdrew to the offshore province of Taiwan with hopes of rebuilding their battered ranks and launching a counterattack on the mainland. Meanwhile, communist forces continued to attack island outposts of the Nationalist government of the Republic of China set up by Chiang Kai-Shek.

Meanwhile, the successor to the OSS, the Central Intelligence Agency, assisted the government on Taiwan by inserting agents by parachute back onto the mainland. A special unit of 200 paratroopers was formed under the Intelligence Board of the R.O.C.'s Ministry of National Defense. The operational cover was blown in November 1952, when two CIA operatives were captured on the mainland. John Downey and Richard Fecteau spent 20 years behind bars in the People's Republic of China.

CIA efforts to assist the followers of Chiang Kai-Shek in retaking their homeland from the communists continued, especially with remnant Nationalist troops that withdrew into Burma. But as the communist government consolidated its gains and solidified its hold on the mainland — with generous military assistance from the Soviet Union — U.S. assistance steadily decreased.

Yet the agency maintained clandestine resupply missions of U.S. weapons, ammunition and supplies. And parachutes continued to play a vital role. These supply drops were made from unmarked C-46 and C-47 aircraft into the mountainous district of Mong Hsat. Agents and liaison officers were also parachuted in. An airstrip eventually made possible a direct air link with Taiwan. By 1951, though, some of the Nationalist troops in Burma were withdrawn to the new island home of their government.

Many remained behind, however, to intermarry with locals. Thousands of their descendants still fight and die among the English-speaking Karens who are fighting enslavement by today's repressive government in Burma.

The Airborne and Special Warfare Command also serves as a reserve force at the disposal of the R.O.C. Army General Headquarters to conduct airborne or airmobile ops in offensive or defensive combat. The ASWC Command is responsible for the security of the southern part of Taiwan.

R.O.C. special forces were first organized in January 1958 at Lungtan, Taiwan. The 1st Group consisted of five battalions of about 500 men each and a headquarters element. The 2nd Group was formed later that year with three battalions of 400 men and its own headquarters. The 3rd Group was formed in 1960, followed by formation of the 4th Group the next year. All were assigned to Lungtan, but each had a separate mission.

Prior to the establishment of diplomatic ties between Washington and Peking, U.S. Green Beret units cross-trained regularly with R.O.C. SF groups. The biggest joint exercise was an annual venture called "Forward Thrust," which focused on infiltration, guerrilla warfare and civil affairs techniques. Unofficial — and unconfirmed — reports had SF units from Taiwan providing intelligence assets to assist the United States in the early years of the Vietnam War.

In the years since, as support from the United States and other old allies has

dwindled, the Republic of China has been compelled to tighten its military belt even further. Its special forces units at Lungtan were consolidated into a single multi-mission group. Unconventional warfare training was broadened to include the 1st and 2nd battle groups, giving Taiwan's strategic planners more bang for their military buck. These planners still see a military invasion by mainland China as a very real threat. So a war footing remains constant. Because of that, much of the information about R.O.C. defense forces is necessarily vague. But you can bet they are rough. And they are ready. ✎

Training is more important than ever in the Republic of China, which maintains a constant vigil against its communist mainland adversary.



## JUMP WITH THE ROC AIRBORNE

Jump with the ROC airborne! Now's your chance. The International Association of Airborne Veterans (IAAV) is organizing a friendship jump tour of the Republic of China for its members in November 1986. Participants will jump a C-119 and will be awarded jump wings and certificates. SOF personnel will participate. For further info write: The Director, IAAV, Suite 181, 606 W. Barry St., Chicago, IL 60657.



Airborne troopers in fire and maneuver exercise with the Republic of China's version of the M14.

## **SOF COMBAT REPORT**

**RIGHT:** Young KPNLF soldier prepares to move off on the night operation against Ang Kansang dike. Protective amulets are carried around the neck, a *krama*, or Khmer scarf around the forehead — and an AK on the shoulder.



**ABOVE:** Soeun Rien, 14, stands guard with his Czech vz 58 assault rifle at the entrance to Nong Chan camp. He's been soldiering for one year.

# CAMBODIAN RECON



## Another Skirmish in a Long War

Text & Photos by Jake Border

*Jake Border recently reported on his trip into Afghanistan for SOF. This month he moves to the Thai/Cambodian border for bush ops with the KPNLF.*

### RECON PATROL

“**W**HATEVER you do, don't leave the main track,” the colonel told me. “Always follow the troops in front of you. This is the reason why.” He handed me a small green object the size of a cup.

I examined it closely—an anti-personnel mine, and from the markings on the bottom it was U.S. Army issue. A nasty little device, designed not to kill but to cripple, taking off a foot or a leg.

With their customary caution my escorts, Chea Chhuth and Colonel Pann Thay of the Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF), were looking out for my safety.

The mine was one of many actually laid by the Khmer Rouge, probably out of stocks captured from the Lon Nol regime. The KPNLF had fought the Khmer Rouge for this area, winning control of it in 1980, and I was the first journalist to visit there.

A 40-minute motorcycle ride parallel to the Thai-Cambodian border had brought us about 15 kilometers south of Nong Chan to this place, HQ of 108 Battalion. Ahead was a four kilometer walk to a small jungle outpost about five clicks away from the Cambodian frontier town of Poipet.

That was easy. The heat of the day hadn't yet begun in earnest. After an hour's walk through chest-high, bamboo-like grass we arrived at the two-week old camp and made plans for the afternoon.

It was decided that I would accompany a reconnaissance patrol into Cambodia to reach, if possible, National Highway 5 which runs from Poipet inland to the town of Sisophon. Back in 1974 when I arrived in Cambodia for the first time I had driven this route in the comfort of a Renault sedan taxi.



ABOVE: Vietnamese refugee at Dong Rek camp nurses her sick child, mindful of the tragic irony of her situation as proclaimed by the slogan behind.

TOP RIGHT: Wearing the skull and crossbones insignia of 108 Battalion, this young soldier squats with his AK next to the ammo bunker at Tanouy Tachan prior to the attack on Ang Kansang.

## Today you are going farther and we don't know what will happen. There is a possibility that you could be ambushed by the Vietnamese.

No such luck now.

Even though I would be traveling with a 30-man armed patrol, the colonel said he could not guarantee my safety.

"The way you'll be going was patrolled by us, two to three days ago, and we got to within 400-500 meters of Highway 5 and we weren't challenged. Today you are going farther and we don't know what will happen. There is a possibility that you could be ambushed by the Vietnamese."

Not a comforting thought. The colonel certainly didn't mince his words. However, it was too late to back out; the colonel was handing me his compass.

"In case anything does happen to you and you get separated from our men, you'll be able to find your way back," he said, giving me the bearings to follow.

Then with a gleeful chuckle he dropped this final admonition: "Remember, do not head south or west. If you do you'll meet the Vietnamese and their hospitality may not be as good as ours!"

At 1140, with food in my stomach and the colonel's words on my mind, we started out. Leading us was a 31-year-old company commander named, simply, "Marine," who had joined the KPNLF in 1979. We communicated in a mixture of broken Khmer, Thai, English and French.

The sun hid behind the clouds making the going relatively easy for the first 45 minutes, but the humidity was stifling. We passed through long grass and thin wooded areas for about three kilometers with Marine pointing out to me the ruins of previous Khmer Rouge camps. We finally emerged into an open patch of tall grassland that looked like an airstrip.

It was the old railway line from Poipet, built during the days of the French colonialists possibly to service some plantation. Chea Chhuth had pointed it out to me on his map. The tracks had been lifted but the telegraph poles still line the way.

One party of soldiers went ahead to act as scouts. We would periodically stop as Marine conferred with them by radio. Then he would turn saying in the sum total of his English, as if to reassure me, "There is no problem!"

By 1330 the sun was out in force. Scribbled in the sweat-stained pages of my notebook appear the lines: "Bloody hot but won't take water yet. This is no picnic and there is no glamor out here." At that time Vietnamese ambushes were the last thing I had on my mind. I was being mentally tor-

mented by images of foaming cold beer.

We stopped to rest near a dried-up waterhole where some of the men dug a depression and sucked up water through hollow reeds. As I made some notes one of them fingered my combat boots appreciatively. "Sabai" (nice), he said, regarding his own Ho Chi Minh-style sandals disdainfully.

By 1430, Marine figured we were about one klick from Highway 5. The going had been tough; we walked through bush and

then calling again. I didn't need to understand Khmer to realize that even if "there was no problem," something was up. The situation was tense. KPNLF soldiers, normally relaxed, were agitated and fingering their weapons. At the sound of shouting I dropped flat in the grass. At any moment I expected the shooting to start.

Unknown to me we had deviated from our planned route and headed toward a temple where the KPNLF troops knew there was a well and they could get water.



undergrowth so thick in parts that we had to crouch and beat our own path. The men were split into three sections with some left at the rear in reserve. We edged closer in the direction of the road, Marine occasionally sending a soldier up a tree to check our advance.

Soon the sounds of traffic, motorcycles mostly, became plain to hear and the volume of noise surprised me. The road was very near. There was also a rhythmic drumming sound. I wondered if we were near a temple.

We stopped and moved on, then stopped again. I was no longer thinking of cold beers. Some rain fell and moved away. Then things seemed to happen at once. Marine was calling on his radio, listening,

Col. Pann Thay (left), KPNLF Special Forces commander, and Chea Chhuth (with long pointer), Nong Chan base commander, conduct a briefing in the jungle outpost of Tanouy Tachan. The Ang Kansang irrigation dike (marked with star) was their target that night.





**Nong Chan camp: Chea Chhuth (right) prepares to depart for Tanoup Tachan outpost. Author's driver is on left.**



We were about 150 meters from the temple (itself less than 500 meters from Poipet) when the KPNLF soldiers on our right flank, perhaps even closer to the temple, were spotted by a Vietnamese lookout in a tree.

The right flank had immediately wanted to attack the Vietnamese stationed around the temple (who were by now responsible for the shouting I heard), but radioed Marine first who, in turn, radioed base with the message, "I have made contact with the Vietnamese. What are your instructions?" They radioed back, "Withdraw. Do not engage enemy."

Earlier the colonel had told me that this was to be a reconnaissance mission only, not a shooting one, and if we should make contact with the Vietnamese we were to withdraw.

Marine gave me a wave and we pulled back quickly. As we did shots were fired at us, about two bursts of three to four rounds each. I expected a hot pursuit by the Vietnamese but then it began to rain. Within seconds we were all drenched.

Perhaps because of the thunderstorm, it was an uneventful though wet and muddy trip back. The tension had eased, and whenever they could, the soldiers smoked cigarettes they rolled using leaves in place

**Decaying body of dead Vietnamese soldier near Ampil camp marks the cycle of war and death in Cambodia.**

of paper. They also delightedly collected huge bamboo shoots for later cooking from the thickets we passed on the way.

Around 1940, some eight hours after setting out, we made it back. A meal awaited me and I devoured it with relish. Exhausted and wet, I was shown my hammock.

Chea Chhuth and Col. Pann Thay were already resting. Tomorrow was another day and we would have to be up at 0400 for the start of the return trip to Nong Chan. Somewhere in the distance there were explosions — the Vietnamese shelling us in retaliation — but I was too tired to care.

I found out later that three days after I left, the Vietnamese sent out an estimated 50-man patrol in search of the KPNLF outposts. They clashed with a 20-man KPNLF patrol on the old abandoned railway line, and one KPNLF soldier was reportedly wounded.

#### **FIGHTING PATROL**

Uniformed patrols of young men moved off in the moonlight, but these were no boy scouts.

A deadly assortment of Chinese-made weapons — B-40 rocket launchers (the Khmer term for an RPG), AK assault rifles and RPD light machine guns — were slung over their shoulders and their peaked caps bore the skull and crossbones insignia. They were soldiers of 108 Battalion of the KPNLF.

I had joined them earlier in the day, in the company of Chea Chhuth, Nong Chan base commander, and Col. Pann Thay, U.S.-trained commander of the special forces, who were escorting me on a tour of KPNLF positions. Both of these men had been officers in the republican army of Lon Nol in the unsuccessful fight against the communist forces of the Khmer Rouge. Now, they were battling against a Cambodian regime backed by the Vietnamese invaders.

At a briefing in a small jungle outpost called Tanoup Tachan, about 12 kilometers from Nong Chan, I learned of a KPNLF attack on a position barely two clicks away, two nights before. This was at Ang Kansang, an irrigation dike built during the Pol Pot regime and now fortified with 82mm mortars, 12.7mm heavy machine guns and 82mm recoilless rifles. This night, the KPNLF decided to attack Ang Kansang again.

I asked if I could accompany the assault troops. There was initial reluctance out of concern for my safety as the dangers were obvious. Eventually they conceded,

**Suddenly it began. The staccato of machine-gun fire and the whoosh of rockets slapped my ears followed by the deep resonant thump of exploding mortars.**

perhaps because I had experienced the battlefield in Cambodia during the Lon Nol regime in 1974-75.

Nevertheless the colonel said, "I am giving you an escort, six men in the charge of a company commander, who will have a radio. His name is Yuth and he speaks a little English. He has instructions to take you as close to the fighting as he can, depending on the situation."

That settled, I watched the preparations for the night's action. The assault force, three sections numbering about 100 men, converged for a briefing at the camp's only major construction: a solid bunker sunk deep into the ground and reinforced with tree trunks, some cases of AK-47 ammunition and 82mm mortar bombs.

Stripped from their protective plastic tubes, each mortar bomb — with Chinese characters stamped on the side — was primed for firing and stacked in a growing pile. A Chinese-made Type 65 82mm recoilless gun received last minute attention; a home-made firing pin was inserted in place of the defective original. No one was sure how many rounds it would fire. Radios were tuned, and as dusk set in, we ate.

I sensed that since I was "guest," special care had been taken with the food although it was simple fare: rice (of course), some vegetable soup, smoked fish (from Tonle Sap inside Cambodia), hot fish sauce and *prahoc*, a typical Khmer dish of fermented fish which to the uninitiated seems pretty unsavory.

As we ate, fortifying ourselves with a little Mekhong (Thai) whiskey, I asked Col. Pann Thay what the KPNLF was fighting for. His reply was simple and direct. "We are fighting to free our country from the Vietnamese." And who were the opposition forces this night, I queried? "Heng Samrin troops of 32 Battalion. They are reinforcing 34 Battalion whose HQ is at Soeung, a village four kilometers north of Ang Kansang. They have artillery at Soeung, a 122mm howitzer," replied the colonel.

I remarked how ironic it was that in a struggle against the Vietnamese, Khmers were fighting Khmers. How did the men feel about this, I wondered?

"Of course we don't like to shoot Khmer people," answered Chea Chhuth. "Sometimes even some of our men don't want to fight against Heng Samrin troops . . . and sometimes Heng Samrin troops don't want to fight against us. The use of Heng Samrin troops is a new Vietnamese tactic; they want



Skull and crossbones insignia of 108 Battalion top off this KPNLF soldier.



**LEFT: KPNLF recon patrol near Highway 5 and the old railroad line. M16s still abound from the Vietnam War.**

**BELOW: Classic illustration of Khmer amulets and charms worn for protection and luck.**



**Women KPNLF volunteers at the Nong Chan camp. Although technically non-combatants, they receive weapons training.**

the world to think Khmers are only fighting each other. But in any case, the Heng Samrin morale is low and ours is high."

It appears that earlier repeated attacks by the KPNLF in this area — the first at Soeung, the second at a nearby mortar outpost and the third at Ang Kansang the night before last — had caused considerable unrest among the Heng Samrin troops.

"Sources from villages inside Cambodia have told us that at least 80 soldiers have deserted the army. The Vietnamese even had to put up checkpoints to control this and some deserters have been caught and put in Sisophon jail," the colonel added.

What was the opposition's strength tonight, I asked? "Well, we face a full battalion, at least 300 men. But we do not use conventional tactics," the colonel replied. "We make like the guerrilla!"

And then it was time to go. I hoisted my cameras and tape recorder over my shoulder, not knowing quite what to expect, and

we hiked off at a steady pace. I was thinking how glad I was the rains were late in coming.

We walked along narrow trails for nearly an hour, at times stopping and conferring with small groups of soldiers, including the right attacking flank. As we got closer, Yuth counted down our position for me: "Enemy 500 meter . . . enemy 400 meter . . . enemy 200 meter . . ." Then we stopped.

My escort had shrunk to three, Yuth with the radio and two teenagers, one armed with a B-40 rocket launcher and the other with an AK-47. I was thinking what might happen if the enemy had patrols out tonight. I banished that thought quickly.

We took up a position of cover behind a clump of trees with a solid earth base and waited. Silence, except for the cicadas, frogs and mosquitos. My senses seemed to be exceptionally well tuned to the sounds of the night.

Suddenly it began. The staccato of machine-gun fire and the whoosh of rockets slapped my ears followed by the deep resonant thump of exploding mortars. Flashes joined together in a dance of death along the

horizon as the ground shook with the vibrations of the explosions.

I could hear the shouts of men and sensed a deadly frenetic energy that charged the air. The Heng Samrin troops had put out no scouts and the KPNLF had crept to within 50 meters before striking.

But the attacking fire was returned, scarlet tracer bullets from the Chinese-made 12.7mm HMGs cracking the air as they passed us. With a roar that took me by surprise, much to the amusement of my escort, a projectile screamed low over our heads. "Enemy . . . one-hundred-twenty-two-milli-met," Yuth said, exercising his "little English."

This was the battery at Soeung; in the course of the night they fired 10 rounds of 122mm shells at Tanouph Tachan. Then a flare went up, illuminating the landscape and sending us face down in the grass.

I was being treated to an extraordinary sound and light show and might have admired the aesthetics of it if not for the grim thought, ever foremost in my mind, that bullets and bits of hot steel were flying through the air at incredible speeds for the express purpose of killing or disabling.

This reality became evident when a wounded KPNLF soldier was carried past us by two comrades. One foot was in tatters; it looked like it had been through a mincer, and his skull had been peeled open exposing his brain.

For an hour the firefight continued, the cacophony of destruction not continuous but intermittent.

Then we withdrew, joining small bands of men in the dark. The sound of shooting was still behind us but the attack was over. The wounded soldier was lying on the ground moaning in pain. Someone slung a hammock under a pole and he was carried back to base.

By the time we arrived there around 2300, there were six other casualties receiving first aid treatment. As I slumped in my hammock the worst cases of wounded were being carried through the night to the border at Nong Chan, from where they were evacuated to a Red Cross Hospital inside Thailand the next morning.

The final score? None of the Heng Samrin guns were destroyed but the next day traders from Soeung said Heng Samrin troops suffered five KIA and 20 wounded. Unfortunately for the KPNLF, their repaired recoilless rifle fired only three times

*Continued on page 85*



Firing PRC AKS using 30-round Russian red plastic magazine.

## SOF WEAPONS

# KALASHNIKOV'S SIDEFOLDER

## Thumbs Up for ChiCom AKS

Text & Photos by Peter G. Kokalis

**M**ORE than 35 million Kalashnikov rifles and machine guns have already been produced. There are production facilities for this weapon or its derivatives in at least a dozen countries. Thousands still roll off the production lines every day. Over 60 nations have adopted it as their standard infantry rifle. Countless guerrilla movements and terrorists groups employ it to accomplish their ends. It is the symbol of our times.

There's a solid reason behind this love affair with the Kalashnikov — the AK-47/AKM series possesses nearly every virtue

possible in a modern assault rifle: astounding reliability, simplicity of design, ease of manufacture, chambering for a true intermediate-sized cartridge (7.62x39), excellent handling characteristics and accuracy potential well within the intended scope of use. It has also been adapted to a number of other useful cartridges: 5.45x39mm, 5.56x45mm, 7.62x51mm, 7.62x54R and 7.92mm.

To be sure, it is not perfect. The selector lever clicks and clatters loudly enough to seriously compromise position disclosure. (This can be corrected by carefully bending

the selector bar away from the receiver.) There is no hold-open. The trigger pull is invariably long and creepy. The stocks, in any configuration, are usually a bit short for the Western anatomy. The AK-47/AKM's conventional folding stock is a poor firing platform. Overall, however, these criticisms are almost trivial and diminish the Kalashnikov's success not one whit.

The original AK-47/AKM folding stock has been in need of a PIP (Product Improvement Program) since its inception. A double-strut-type, controlled by a large press-button release located above the pistol grip

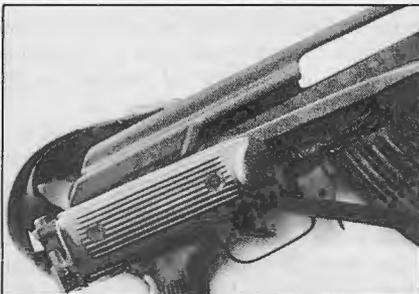
on the left side of the receiver, it folds under the receiver and the magazine passes through it. Patterned directly after the German WWII MP40 submachine gun stock, it is adequate enough for firing pistol ammunition, but decidedly unstable for rifle cartridges.

Soviet designers addressed this problem in the AKS-74. Its folding stock is fabricated from stamped sheet-metal struts, bent into a U-shape and assembled by punch fit and welding. It folds to the left, and is held open by a spring-loaded button latch located at the rear of the receiver on the left side. The stock is held closed by a spring-loaded hook on the left forward end of the receiver. It is both robust and rigid.

The People's Republic of China has recently introduced a side-folding-stock variant of the AKS rifle, chambered for the 7.62x39mm ComBloc cartridge that, in my opinion, is even more rigid than that of the AKS-74. Produced by Norinco of China, a semiautomatic-only version is available from Pacific International Merchandising Corp.

This stock's skeletonized frame has been fabricated from a single piece of heavy-gauge sheet metal bent and folded into the proper shape. Five horizontal ribs have been stamped into the buttplate portion. There is a 4.75-inch long, bright reddish-brown plastic panel on each side of the stock at the forward end. These panels have ribbed gripping surfaces and are retained by a threaded screw and pin. Presumably these panels serve to assist in holding the weapon at port arms or in the assault-sling position. This entire assembly is securely attached to the latch mechanism, which is operated by a checkered, spring-loaded button-release on top of the latch. Press down on the button and the stock can be swung to the right, where it locks in the closed position by means of the same latch mechanism. No locking hook is thus required on the receiver body. The button must be depressed again to open the stock. While the release-button is easily depressed, the latch mechanism is substantial and this stock is every bit as stable as a non-folding wooden stock. When folded, access to the trigger is maintained, although the selector lever is somewhat more difficult to manipulate. We have come to associate an MP40-type stock with the Kalashnikov and some will, no doubt, be aesthetically disgruntled by the new shape.

AKS stock in the folded position along the right side of the receiver.



However, this stock is superior in every way to previous configurations. I prefer assault rifles with fixed stocks, but this is a much needed improvement for those who require the option.

All other furniture on this rifle matches the grip panels on the stock. Both the upper and lower handguards are made of reddish-brown, fiber-reinforced plastic. The pistol grip is likewise fabricated from the same material. Molded in two parts, the pistol grip appears to have been assembled using a viscous two-part epoxy resin adhesive and the excess was removed by grinding. There are vertical gripping ribs on each side. In shape it resembles the pistol grip of the Browning 1917A1 and 1919A4/A6 machine guns, which in turn were patterned



AKS with stock in extended position. The side panel is ribbed reddish-brown plastic.

after the Colt Single Action Army revolver. I examined the PRC AKMs with this identical pistol grip issued to mujahideen during

*Continued on page 80*



PRC AKS disassembled.

## AKS SPECIFICATIONS

Caliber	7.62x39mm ComBloc
Operation	Gas. No regulator. Short-stroke piston. Rotary bolt. Fires from the closed-bolt position.
Cyclic rate	600-650 rpm, but imported as semiautomatic only.
Feed mechanism	30-round staggered-box magazine.
Weight, empty	
(without magazine)	8 pounds
Barrel	Four grooves with a right-hand twist of one turn in 9.25 inches. Chrome-lined bore and chamber. AKM muzzle compensator.
Barrel length	16.3 inches.
Overall length	35 inches.
Folded length	26.5 inches.
Sights	Hooded front post-type, adjustable for windage and elevation zero; tangent-type rear with open U-notch, adjustable for elevation only from 100 to 800 meters in 100 meter increments with 300-meter battle-sight setting ('D').
Accessories	Bayonet, sling and optional extra magazines.
Price	\$429.95.
Manufacturer	Norinco, People's Republic of China.
U.S. Distributor	Pacific International Merchandising Corporation, Dept. SOF, 2215 'J' Street, P.O. Box 8022, Sacramento, CA 95816.



# TALES FROM

## Singlaub's Saga from Soldier to Spy

by Jim Morris

Photos: Singlaub Collection

**J**OHAN K. Singlaub wanted to go to West Point real bad. He probably would have, he was told, except that his father was a Democrat. So he ended up as an ROTC cadet at UCLA. He was commissioned and started jump school at Fort Benning, Ga., a week after his graduation in 1942. Gung ho to go to war in Europe or the Pacific, his first duty assignment was another frustration to test his resolve to be a career soldier. Second Lieutenant Singlaub was ordered to report all the way to the other end of Ft. Benning, clear over in Alabama. He served as a regimental demolitions officer and platoon leader in a parachute training regiment.

Making the most of his situation, Singlaub quickly demonstrated superior leadership skills under extreme difficulty by organizing successful small commando-



type units to act as aggressors on FTXs. This, combined with good marks at UCLA in French and Japanese language studies, soon led to an invitation for Singlaub to volunteer for an unspecified "hazardous mission behind enemy lines." Anxious that he not spend the duration stateside teaching others to go to war, he immediately accepted.

In October 1943, Singlaub received orders to report to Washington. After checking in, he was sent to Building Q in the Foggy Bottom complex where the Office of Strategic Services was headquartered. He underwent initial screening and was dispatched later that afternoon to the Congressional Country Club in suburban Maryland, where a rather bizarre battery of psychological testing began. This included close live-

**ABOVE:** Lt. Singlaub hooked to the static line during Ft. Benning's jump training.

**LEFT:** Jack and Mary Singlaub after their marriage in 1945. Immediately after the wedding, Singlaub was deployed to Asia with the OSS.

fire tests and having explosive charges set off unexpectedly nearby.

Passing those tests, Singlaub recalls, "is a matter of being able to concentrate your mind on the physical things you have to do rather than worrying about whether you were going to get killed."

Taking a sip of coffee as I interviewed Singlaub in his mountaintop home overlooking the small town of Tabernash, Colorado, I agreed wholeheartedly with that assessment. I once defined soldiering as being able to perform simple mechanical tasks while scared shitless.

Singlaub and others were selected for continued training. Many were sent back to regular military assignments or civilian jobs. The selectees were trucked to a nearby secret compound designated as "B-1," now the location of the presidential retreat known as Camp David. The OSS training increased in difficulty and intensity, focusing very much on each individual.

Trainees like Singlaub who survived B-1 would be sent to Scotland for even more rigorous instruction before being assigned to what was known as a Jedburgh Team, a code name assigned by British Intelligence, taken from the name of a town in Scotland. Jedburgh Teams of three men each — two



# UNCLE JACK

OSS control officer (left) briefs Singlaub and two other Jedburgh Team members prior to the three being dropped behind Nazi lines in occupied France.

Allied officers and an enlisted radio operator — were inserted behind German lines in Europe to help organize anti-Nazi resistance and carry out sabotage and intelligence-gathering operations. They were one of the forerunners of Special Forces A Teams.

A month after the Normandy invasion, Singlaub's Jedburgh Team parachuted deep into German-occupied France to prepare partisan support for a southern invasion.

"The invasion of the north had already started, and my first mission was to train the *maquisards*, and prevent movement of German troops from the southern part of France up toward the invasion beachheads. So, I just cut all the railroads."

"Blow the bridges?" I asked Singlaub.

He smiled and shook his head. "No, I blew about a foot off of every curved rail in the whole province. Every place there was a curve in the province, or where they had stacks of curved rails, I just chopped a foot off."

"Took it out of the middle?"

"No, just took it off the end. They just didn't move. There was no way that they could..."

"Did you interdict truck transport as well?"

"We did, with ambushes on selected roads. We had several *Routes Nationale* that

went through our province. The Das Reich Panzer Division had tried to move through our area, and they were attacked by some of the *maquisards* before I got there. In retaliation — the Das Reich was an SS division — they moved into the town of Tulle in Correze and lined up all the young men. They numbered 'em off, made 'em count off one-two-three and so on. 'Okay, all number ones are going to be released, number twos are going to labor camps, and number threes are going to be hung, right there.' And so they started hanging these guys by putting a noose around their necks and pulling them up on balconies.

"Well, there were about a hundred-and-some in each of the three categories, so there were about a 110 who were going to be hung. But I guess the priest who was administering the last rites had some sympathy. So when they had hung 98 or something like that, he said, 'Well, that's all.'"

The Germans apparently had lost count, Singlaub said. "Part way through this they switched. The ones who were to go free were rejoicing, and the Germans said, 'Okay, take the number ones and start hanging ones instead of threes.' The whole thing was a terrible atrocity."

Singlaub said the German brutality continued. "They moved into the province to the north and decided they were going to wipe out a town called Oridor-sur-Glen. They went into the town, rounded up all the women and children and put them in the church, and put all the men in a garage. They stopped a streetcar coming out of

Singlaub (left) and other OSS team members question a captured German, with folded arms.

Limoges, and everybody that had tickets for that town, they took off the streetcar and put in with the others, machine gunned the men in the garage, set the church on fire, and leveled the town.

"Someone from the garage managed to get out. He was left for dead and then came up from underneath this pile of dead and got out, and gave us these details.

"But despite these atrocities, we had more French *maquisards* wanting to join our unit than we could handle. They were not deterred. They were just fantastically brave, even though they lacked a lot of the skills that we would have liked them to have. And that was the job."

I nodded. "Let me ask you, sir, what was your life like on that mission? Where did you live; how did you move around?"

"Well, we parachuted in to a British agent living as a Frenchman. He was a captain in the British Intelligence forces, but was living undercover. He had indicated to London that there was a good potential for resistance in this area, and that he would run the reception committee. He gathered us up and took us to a little farmhouse and introduced us to leaders of this resistance movement.

"Two distinct groups had been brought together. One was a group headed by a regular army captain, in what was called the *Armee Secrete* (AS). The other leader had



been a corporal in the French army, and he was a communist. This was the FTP, the *Franc Tireur de Partisan*.

"In my province I had a little better cooperation, although it was not complete. The communists would constantly try to steal any equipment drop that was coming into an area. If they found out that I was running an equipment drop for the AS battalion, they would go out and set up a reception committee, lay out the lights, and send signals, in hope that the airplanes would drop, and on at least one occasion they did.

"I complained that the aircraft didn't come as I'd been told, and London came back with, 'You must be out of your mind. The pilot claims he dropped the supplies.' I found out later they had stolen the supplies. The communists were more interested in arming for the war after the war than they were in fighting the Germans in that area.

"With this group of the AS we were not only able to train them, we actually got permission to take the whole battalion on operations with trucks we had captured from the Germans, and trucks that had been made available for farm usage. These were civilians led by a few regular army people, and they had some NCOs who had seen military service.

"They were not just limited to my province. Because that was a rugged area, underpopulated by French standards, many people who had gotten into trouble elsewhere, moved into that area to live with the maquisards.

"We lived in a farmhouse, a very rugged old thing, with no indoor plumbing, of course. We didn't live with the farmer. They gave us what was, in essence, a barn. That's where we stayed a majority of the time, when we weren't out doing the training and the initial reconnaissance."

"You were a captain by this time?"

"No, I was a first lieutenant, and my

**Turning his back on a Japanese lieutenant with whom he refused to negotiate, Maj. Singlaub (right) demands to see the colonel in charge of 10,000 Japanese marines holding Hainan Island.**

Frenchman was a first lieutenant."

"So that was kind of a lucky break for you in terms of career development, to be essentially a battalion commander when you were a first lieutenant."

"Yeah, that's right. Although I was really the adviser.

I nodded. "I can't imagine the Germans were not looking for you. Did you have any close calls while you were there?"

"Not during that time. Later on we did.

"Later we got permission to attack four German garrisons that were in our area. And we eventually captured two of them. One was liberated (by the Germans), and one we had under seige, in the town of Egleton. These were garrisons of several hundred troops, a couple of companies."

"And you would attack with an entire battalion?" I asked.

"Right. We put the town under seige. In two of them the Germans surrendered. We said, 'you know, this is how many we have around and you're completely cut off.' We cut their telephones — they didn't have radios — and cut their water. They surrendered. It was a great problem what to do with them. Some of the French, who had lost family to the SS battalion, wanted to just execute them. But I insisted, and we moved them out away from the main route, into the country, and kept them until after the war.

"But in the case of this town of Egleton, they had a radio, and I think they had some SS with them in there. I couldn't crack it. When we moved against them they were holed up in a reinforced concrete school. We used mortars and British anti-tank rock-

ets.

"I called for an air attack on this school, after we'd shot out the top, using mortars, and these projectiles, which were anti-tank things. But they were still in there, defying us, so I radioed London and said that we wanted an air strike. One of the reasons I wanted an air strike was that the garrison we had under attack had called for air support, and they came in and strafed us, and dropped butterfly anti-personnel bombs.

"Well, this was pretty terrifying to these untrained maquisards. It was a real problem, and I was afraid that if they kept this up I wasn't going to be able to keep control.

"So I told London we'd had many attacks. One of them was from a Heinkel He-111, twin-engine plane that came in very low. We could see the rivets on the thing. My Frenchman and I each organized two Bren guns and opened up when it came over us. We sensed that we could either see or hear the rounds hitting it. We knew that we had hit it. But it went off and disappeared.

"We found out later that we had actually hit it, and killed some of the crew, and the thing had crashed before it got back to its base.

"That made them mad, and we had a hell of a lot of air strikes against us. When I reported this to London, and requested that they hit that school, they said, 'Well, according to you, you're getting more air strikes from the Germans than the entire Third Army.'

"That was because all the aircraft were moving back from the beaches, and were in fact moving back toward Germany.

"One day we heard, but did not see, an aircraft fly very high over the area. Later I learned that it was an Allied reconnaissance flight for this special (British) Mosquito

*Continued on page 95*



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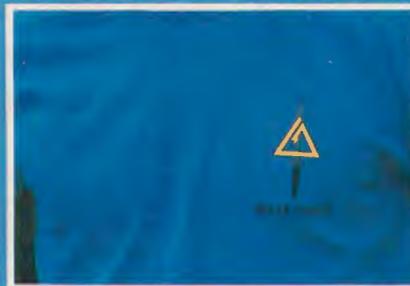
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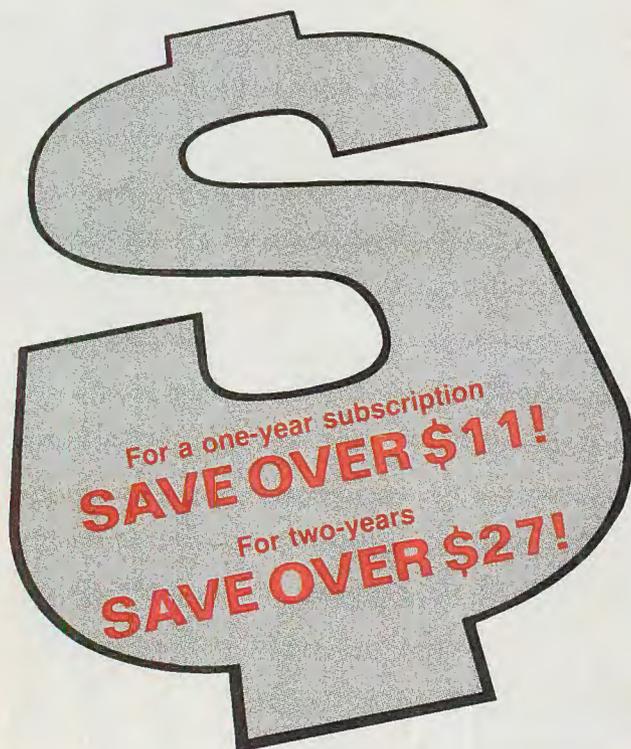
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has been through this scenario before. In 1979 he decided to do something about it. His first effort was the legendary RL1000, a commercial grade reloader with automatic indexing, an automatic military primer pocket swage, and an automatic case inserter. However, its \$2,475 price tag limits its use to commercial users and deep-end aficionados. I've been using an RL1000 for seven years and it's still the best in the business.

The RL1000 was quickly followed by the improved RL1000B, then the more economical RL300, which evolved into the RL450 and the RL450B models. But nothing comes close to Dillon's new RL550 in its price range. At only \$234.95 (less dies), its salient features include automatic powder and primer systems and quick-change tool heads.

The RL550's tool head holds a four-die set and the powder-measure system. To change this entire assembly, merely withdraw the two steel-retaining pins and slide the tool head to the left and out of the press. Additional tool heads cost \$8.95 each or three for \$25. If you're going for speed you'll also want a powder measure for each caliber you plan to reload. They cost \$34.95 each and come with a large and small adjustable powder slide that can cover from two grains of Bullseye up to 65 grains of rifle propellant. Powder dies for attaching the measure to the tool head are three for \$10. Powder drop tubes (which also serve as flaring devices in pistol calibers) come with the caliber conversion kits that also include a shell plate and three brass locator pins for \$23 each. Walnut tool head stands are just \$5 each or three for \$12.

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Those of you who already own a Dillon RL450 are, no doubt, a bit disgruntled to hear about the new RL550. Not to fret. For \$55 you can purchase both the automatic primer and powder systems. Another \$45 will fetch you a replacement frame to take the interchangeable tool heads.

Those who shoot and reload for military small arms will, more often than not, utilize military brass with crimped primer pockets. This crimp must be removed before seating a fresh primer. Dillon's Super Swage 600

*Continued on page 97*

**SOF T&E**

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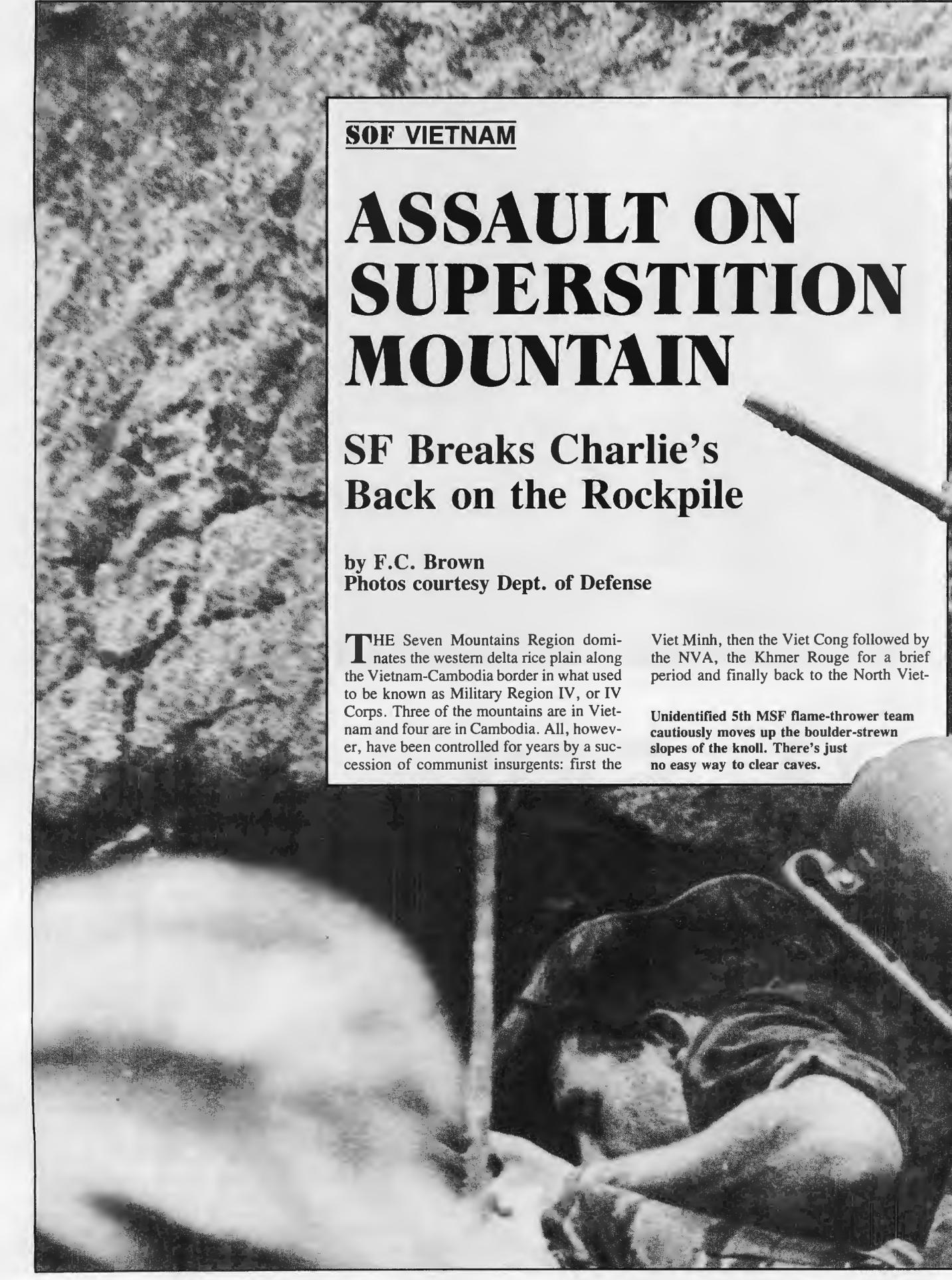
by Peter G. Kokalis

**W**ELL, you finally did it. You own a machine gun. Clutched in your sweaty hands is that Thompson you dreamed of for so long. And now, it's off to the gravel pit to see how many rocks you can demolish. But first, a stop at the closest gun store, where you pick up 100 rounds of fresh, crisp factory FMJ .45 ACP ammo for just \$25.75 per box of 50. You load 50 rounds in that New York drum and the other 50 in 20- and 30-round sticks. In less than two minutes you've lost \$51.50 to the rocks.

You're too smart to do that again, so it's back to the reloading bench and your good old RCBS Rock Chucker. In 2½ hours you manage to push through 100 rounds using hard-cast round nose bullets at a cost of only 6½ cents per round. Once more in the gravel pit, you force yourself into a fire discipline of three-shot intermittent bursts and this time your two and a half hours of labor takes all of 10 minutes to expend.

There must be a better way. And there is.

Mike Dillon has been pumping lead through belt guns for a long time. And he



**SOF VIETNAM**

# ASSAULT ON SUPERSTITION MOUNTAIN

## SF Breaks Charlie's Back on the Rockpile

by F.C. Brown  
Photos courtesy Dept. of Defense

**T**HE Seven Mountains Region dominates the western delta rice plain along the Vietnam-Cambodia border in what used to be known as Military Region IV, or IV Corps. Three of the mountains are in Vietnam and four are in Cambodia. All, however, have been controlled for years by a succession of communist insurgents: first the

Viet Minh, then the Viet Cong followed by the NVA, the Khmer Rouge for a brief period and finally back to the North Viet-

Unidentified 5th MSF flame-thrower team cautiously moves up the boulder-strewn slopes of the knoll. There's just no easy way to clear caves.





Even previous forays by American-led Mike Force troops had not succeeded in making much of a dent in enemy dominance of the area. As a result, the mountainous region acquired an aura of invincibility among the local populace. This was particularly true of Tuk Chup Knoll which the Viet Cong openly boasted would never be captured. The locals looked on the knoll with awe, and spoke of it as "the place where Buddha does not dwell."

In early 1968 the American high command, after prolonged consultations with its ARVN counterparts, decided to launch an extensive operation in the area, concentrating on Nui Coto. The primary goal of the operation was the capture of Tuk Chup Knoll which would end the myth of local VC invincibility, pay heavy psywar dividends, and wrest control of the surrounding area from enemy hands. This ambitious undertaking, which would employ primarily U.S.-led Mike Strike Force (MSF) personnel with myriad allied support units, would prove to be the largest American Special Forces-directed operation of the entire war.

Following two days of preparatory B-52 strikes, the operation opened on 12 July with an airborne drop south of Nui Coto. Simultaneously, heliborne troops were fed into the surrounding area with an element inserted on 614, Coto's highest peak. The assault force was composed chiefly of Mike Force troops out of Nha Trang backed up by ARVN Rangers. Delta Company of the U.S. 7/1st Cavalry supported the operation with jeep-mounted 106mm recoilless rifles which would prove to be particularly effective.

Resistance was light on the initial assault, mainly erratic sniper fire, because the assault force had gained the element of surprise. But numerous booby traps were encountered, mostly of the "toe-popper" variety, and this slowed the pace of the troops moving along the sides of the mountain.

No real contact took place in the first five days although a platoon of VC was observed returning from a nearby hamlet in twos and threes. They'd been seen retrieving weapons from the brush, then moving onto the mountain.

Contact was initiated on the early afternoon of 17 July when a Mike Force point element encountered three VC, killing one. Later that afternoon contact resumed around the base of the mountain resulting in another VC KIA.

Mike Force elements, moving to consolidate their positions, began coming under heavy enemy sniper fire shortly thereafter. The pace picked up as more VC weapons joined in: M79s, automatic weapons, B-40 rockets and 57mm recoilless rounds. Mike Force casualties totaled two killed and 20 wounded, including two American advisers.

On the morning of 31 July a platoon of Vietnamese PRUs (Provisional Reconnaissance Unit) and their U.S. Navy SEAL



name again.

The three mountains inside Vietnam — Nui Cam, Nui Giai and Nui Coto — were all important enemy base areas throughout the 1960s and early '70s, and were indispensable to the communist war effort in the surrounding region. Cam and Giai contained major storage depots for armaments and munitions, and also served as rest areas for enemy local and main force units. Nui Coto, a few kilometers to the south, contained the headquarters complex for VC forces throughout the area and was known as Superstition Mountain among U.S. advisers. The southwestern portion of Coto was a huge pile of rocks and boulders topped with scrub, known as Tuk Chup Knoll to the locals and the Rockpile to Americans. In addition to the headquarters complex, the knoll was also home to a large armory com-

**TOP:** Capt. Henry Sturm (left), CO of the 2nd Bn., 5th MSF, and SSG John Talley check out caves at the south end of the knoll. Talley carries a CAR-15.

**ABOVE:** Sgt. George "VC" Clark, Combat Recon Platoon leader for the 5th MSF, examines captured weapons brought off the knoll.

plete with workshops, an extensive hospital complex, storage facilities, and enough underground shelters to comfortably accommodate two battalions of enemy troops. The knoll was also the reputed site of Chau Kim's cave, the alleged domicile of the near-legendary communist leader in the Seven Mountains Region.

Earlier operations against these mountain redoubts by ARVN forces were limited in scope and less than successful in execution.

## CHAU KIM — THE SHADOW OF SEVEN MOUNTAINS

Chau Kim (sometimes also spelled Kem) was the enigmatic mastermind of organized communist activity throughout the Seven Mountains Region of the western Mekong Delta, and his elimination was a prime goal of American and South Vietnamese officials. As far as can be ascertained, however, this never came to pass.

Kim, an ethnic Cambode (and also rumored to be part Chinese) was born and raised in the Coto Village area. Not much is known of his early life, although he is said to have served with distinction in the Viet Minh ranks during the war against the French. After a brief period underground he surfaced in the late 1950s as a Viet Cong agent. He showed a particular adeptness for clandestine activity and this enabled him to rise rapidly in the local VC hierarchy. By the mid-1960s he headed up all communist activity in the Seven Mountains.

Defectors who had previously served under Kim described him as a hard-core ideologue, brave to a fault personally but unforgiving of mistakes committed by his cadre. He is known to have personally participated in numerous combat operations including the 1968 Tet assault against the district town in Tri Ton, and suffered minor wounds on several occasions. He also had a human side, showing a fondness for the potent local home brew, and possibly had several wives simultaneously.

Among the indigenous population Kim enjoyed a reputation out of proportion to his accomplishments. The locals spoke his name with awe and referred to his formidable redoubt on Nui Coto as "Chau Kim's Cave."

During the sustained Mike Force operation against Nui Coto in 1968-69, Kim was known to be in the main cave complex on Tuk Chup Knoll directing VC forces. Toward the end of the operation, however, he vanished. Two of his children were captured nearby along with their guardian monk, and all were subsequently taken to Can Tho where they made broadcasts and leaflet appeals to "Colonel Chau Kim and his soldiers" to give themselves up. Kim ignored their appeals. A Special Forces officer who worked the operation noted: "He (Kim) got away, there's no question about that. He stayed there as long as he could, then departed. I would imagine the [other] top VC cadre got away also. We only found one dead VC [in the cave complex] who may have been a top level man. We're not even sure of that."

Nothing more was heard of Kim until



Eastern end of Nui Coto which shows clear evidence of U.S. artillery and air strikes.

the summer of 1969 when he was reported to be back in the mountains, reorganizing his forces and traveling in VC-held areas with a strong security element. His companions probably included Thai-Hin-Tai (a.k.a. Sung or Muoi-Bach), in charge of the local VC arsenal, and Tran-Van-Sang (a.k.a. Sang or Hai-Sanh), VC chief of the Squad for Special Missions.

Kim's clandestine network always seemed to be one step ahead of allied intelligence, and numerous efforts to ambush Kim and his entourage were unsuccessful. Over the next few months,

Kim was variously reported to be: (1) back on Tuk Chup, (2) at Nui O across the border in Cambodia, (3) attending a strategy session in North Vietnam, and (4) to have been killed in a B-52 strike in Takeo Province, Cambodia. None of these rumors, as far as is known, was ever verified.

The last intelligence reports on Chau Kim surfaced in the fall of 1972 when he was once again reported to be back in the Seven Mountains Region. Some hold that he was later "purged" during an internal power struggle, while others insist he crossed over to Cambodia and joined the Khmer Rouge. The truth will probably never be known.

advisers arrived on the mountain and said they had information on the location of an important enemy cave. In moving toward the cave's reputed location, numerous booby traps were encountered. This slowed the advance considerably and quickly lowered indigenous troop morale; they required some prodding to keep moving. More than 20 Vietnamese were wounded in negotiating the maze of booby traps as were two of the SEALs, one later dying of his wounds.

By August, three of the main peaks had been seized and secured, and were being used as radio relay sites and platforms for forward observers. On Tuk Chup allied troops held the summit and base while the VC held the sides and inside. The base around Nui Coto was heavily patrolled by Mike Force elements assisted by local Popular and Regional Force troops.

There were some interesting sidelights to the campaign. During the early phases of the assault, SFC Gary W. Dollar of Roanoke, Alabama, was wounded and became separated from the indigenous troops he was leading. He spent the night alone in a dry creek bed on the side of the mountain, minus rations or water, until finally picked up by a rescue chopper. Back at Can Tho his wounds were treated, and he was then transported to the Alamo Club for a reunion with his fellow SF advisers. They watched awestruck as Dollar devoured a steak dinner, shrimp plate, veal cutlet dinner, two cheeseburgers, and nine Cokes!

In addition to the rugged terrain, VC snipers using Soviet-made, scope-mounted Mosin-Nagant rifles took a steady toll of allied personnel. They killed five American advisers, wounded several more, and inflicted scores of casualties on assaulting Mike Force troops. What was particularly troubling was the extreme difficulty of locating the sniper positions. One SF NCO was heard to comment on the almost eerie ability of the snipers to score with head

**SFC Oscar Mendrano, minus shirt, directs 106mm recoilless rifle fire against a VC-held cave. A surrendered VC who had served on the mountain for seven years in a mortar squad acted as his spotter.**

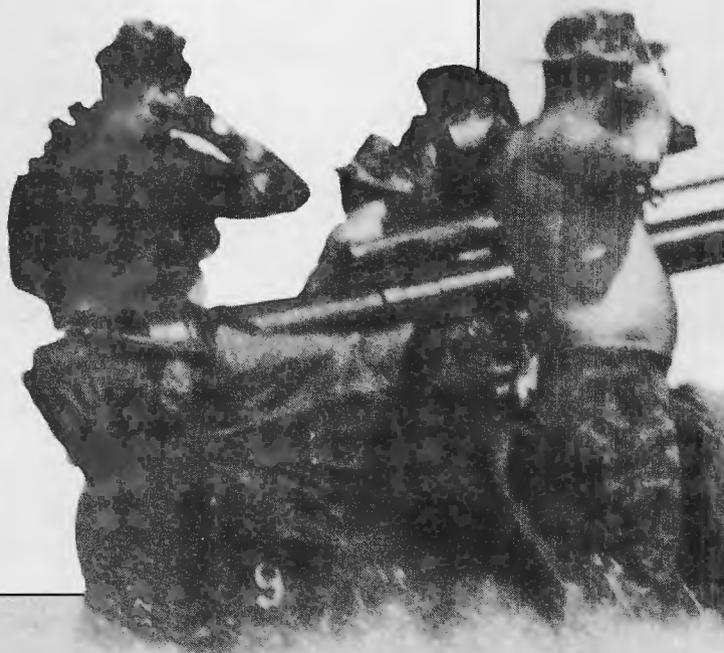
shots, virtually all of which proved to be fatal.

Despite calls for a speedy advance the operation proceeded slowly from August through October as virtually every nook, cranny and crevice of the rocky terrain had to be investigated. VC mortar and machine-gun fire, coupled with the devastation wrought by the ever present snipers, made the advance tough with consistent casualties. There were a number of times when Mike Force troops openly balked at advancing and had to be persuaded to return to the fray by their SF advisers.

The chief complaint among the assault force, indigenous troopers as well as advisers, was that they rarely got a glimpse of the enemy due to the rocky terrain. Additionally, some advisers complained that the troops used in the initial assault were trained in jungle warfare, but were out of their element when used in mountain fighting, hence their poor showing. There was some validity in this, and replacement troops later brought in were specially trained in mountain warfare.

There were a number of small, relished victories. One sniper, known for his uncanny ability to pick off officers and NCOs,

*Continued on page 76*





# HOLY WEEK INVASION

## Sandinistas Stumble into Honduran Hornets' Nest

by Francisco Carberry & John E. Padgett

*Four days before Easter — in the midst of Catholic Latin America's Holy Week — Nicaragua's Soviet-backed government ordered a cross-border strike at the supply and training headquarters of the largest anti-communist rebel group, the Democratic Force of Nicaragua (FDN).*

*Initial news reports indicated a defeat for the FDN. The government in Honduras — which routinely denies the FDN's presence along its south central border — acted unconcerned, releasing little information. It closed the combat zone to the news media, which explains why most reports on the Nicaraguan invasion were sketchy at best, incorrect at worst.*

*But Soldier of Fortune Editor/Publisher Robert K. Brown was undaunted by closed border checkpoints. He immediately put together an assistance team that included the authors, packed up 500 pounds of medical supplies donated by SOF readers and headed off into the bush. This is the report of what was learned from that mission.*

**The war is over for these Sandinista troops. They fatally underestimated the ability of the FDN to repel an invasion. Photo: Paul Larkin**



**S**USPICIONS about a possible Sandinista military strike into Honduras began to grow two weeks before Easter. Managua's communist regime closed Nicaraguan border posts across from Honduras' El Paraiso Province, shutting off a steady flow of political and economic refugees into an area controlled by the largest and most powerful anti-communist force, the FDN. Located just a few clicks over the border are the FDN's Center for Military Instruction (CIM), its main supply depot and its meager air support assets.

The border closing bolstered intel by FDN recon units, who reported a buildup of D-30 122mm howitzers and BM-21 multiple rocket launchers just across the Coco River from the Las Vegas Salient. Locally known as "the elbow," the Las Vegas Salient is a piece of Honduras' El Paraiso inside a dogleg of the Rio Coco that juts into northern Nicaragua. The river border serves as a natural defensive barrier for the sprawling FDN headquarters complex generally known as Las Vegas, actually several camps consisting of command headquarters and most of the FDN's main service and support facilities. The strategic motive for the Sandinistas to hit such a target was obvious.

The timing also made such a raid seem more likely. Devout Catholics, which are numerous among the FDN's ranks, stand down for seven days of relaxation and festivity during Holy Week. And a vote on the resumption of U.S. military aid was looming in Congress. If the communists could chalk up a major defeat against the FDN, it would lend credence to disinformation that the FDN deserved no additional support because it was incapable of competent military operations.

This thinking was proved wrong on two counts. The Sandinista troops who subsequently invaded had their asses handed to them after being cut off and surrounded by the FDN. And the House of Representatives surprised even themselves by approving \$100 million for the anti-Sandinista move-

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**"May Day! May Day!"  
the co-pilot frantically  
radioed. "There are  
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— of piricuacos out  
here!"**

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ment — \$70 million for military aid and \$30 million for humanitarian assistance.

Despite indications of enemy movement, small FDN recon units found the countryside across the river in Nicaragua quiet and apparently empty. They were sent out to look again. On 15 March, thinking maybe it was a false alarm, the FDN command sent a task force of 2,400 men (and women, who make up roughly three percent of their ranks) into Nicaragua's Matagalpa Province in two columns under the command of El Medico, a deceptively rotund and easy-going doctor-turned-freedom-fighter.

Unknown to the FDN task force headed south into Nicaragua, Sandinista recon elements already had crossed the Rio Coco and penetrated the FDN perimeter around the Las Vegas Salient. As El Medico's men trooped south after four weeks of R&R in the Las Vegas camps, fitted out in new boots, web gear and weapons, they met another 1,200-man FDN task force headed north after eight months in the bush. Commanded by Rigoberto, the column of tattered men looked exhausted by their successful hit-and-run forays against the Sandinistas.

Five days later, on 20 March, border activity began to look more ominous to the FDN commanders. A Huey pilot landed in Las Vegas with a report of a heavy Sandinista buildup on the Nicaraguan side of the Rio Coco. Four communist battalions were massing at the river, five rocket launchers had been spotted just south of there and a much larger force was rumored to be mov-

ing north. The FDN's field commander, Colonel Enrique Bermudez, asked for another aerial recon. The Huey took off again, its pilot and co-pilot accompanied by an FDN staff officer.

Heading due south, the Huey flew near tree-top level. The canopy of mountain rain forest was difficult to penetrate, but it seemed quiet. About 12 clicks south of the FDN camps, however, just after topping a large hill and turning down a valley, the Huey flew into a hail storm of lead. One rifle round embedded itself in the pilot's heel, another split his left pelvis and a third round creased his chest. The co-pilot and FDN observer were unhurt, but all three were getting soaked as the chopper sprayed oil and hydraulic fluid inside its cabin. Blue smoke trailed from the wounded bird as the firing increased.

"May Day! May Day!" the co-pilot frantically radioed back to Las Vegas in Spanish. "There are hundreds — thousands — of piricuacos out here! We're hit! We're hit!"

A Hughes 500 Defender was scrambled for an SAR. Meanwhile, the Huey's co-pilot struggled to turn the shot-up helicopter in a half circle and crab away from the heavy ground fire. They limped north for about 10 minutes before plummeting hydraulic pressure forced him to auto-rotate into a jungle clearing. He and the FDN officer immediately went to work on the seriously wounded pilot, hoping friendlies would reach them before the Sandinistas.

They looked up from their desperate work at the sound of rotors. The chop-chop was coming from the wrong direction to be a Hind gunship. Still . . .

The Hughes 500 popped over the tree line and dropped into the clearing. It was a tight fit, but the three stranded men piled quickly into the light observation helo. It streaked for the field hospital near Las Vegas. The wounded pilot survived. The CIA's damaged Huey subsequently was recovered.

The FDN command compound was frantic. Commandante Rigoberto was in the

**LEFT: This Honduran soldier was determined to fight if the Sandinista invasion became more serious. Photo: Paul Larkin**



**Among the hundreds of Soviet-type weapons captured from the Sandinistas by the FDN were, from middle foreground back, an RPG-7, an RPD, a PKM, and at right an assortment of AKs. Photo: Paul Larkin**

**Captured Sandinista meets the press after Holy Week invasion. Photo: Paul Larkin**



middle of his debriefing with the FDN's G-2 shop when someone handed him a tersely worded written order directing him to move as many of his exhausted men as possible out on flank positions. He ran to a staging area where his men were lounging about, waiting to exchange old equipment for new, and sent half of the 1,200 men at the double to hilltops several clicks east of the camp. The remaining 600 followed at a slower pace.

Radio communication with El Medico couldn't be risked with the enemy on the FDN's doorstep, between the task force and FDN headquarters. But El Medico's men were at the enemy's rear, and the Sandinistas probably didn't know it. A runner was dispatched from Las Vegas.

Unknown to FDN commanders, El Medico's flank security had detected the huge Sandinista presence. The task force CO commandeered a resupply helicopter and flew north. After assessing the situation, he returned and ordered both 1,200-man columns to do an about-face for a hard march north. They marched non-stop for 30 hours and halted, waiting for the main Sandinista force to move in and the orders to step in as a blocking force.

That is often the hardest part for any good soldier: the wait.

#### CUBAN CONCEPT

The preceding month — February 1986 — had been a good one for Cuban General Nestor Lopez. He had arrived in Managua as the new chief tactical adviser to the Sandinistas, and to take over command of a 3,500-man Cuban brigade, which no doubt had been dispatched to Nicaragua by Fidel Castro for solely humanitarian purposes.

Lopez' predecessor, General Arnaldo Ochoa, had been recalled to Cuba under a cloud. Under Ochoa's watch, the Nicaraguan civil war had stalled. Despite flagging outside support, the anti-Sandinista rebels were holding their own. The rebels hadn't gained any ground. But they hadn't really lost any either. The communist military planners knew as well as anyone that in a guerrilla war, if the insurgency does not lose

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## The retreating Sandinistas were caught in a withering crossfire from above. It was Sandinista fish in a barrel for the FDN.

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it wins. And after an initial delay caused by a \$1 million reward offered by *Soldier of Fortune* for a defector to deliver one of the aircraft to the free world, the Sandinistas had deployed their Mi-24 helicopter gunships with Cuban pilots, but with only limited effect.

Lopez wanted to make an immediate impact in his new command. He ordered an offensive with one goal: a bold strike to cripple the FDN, the most powerful anti-communist group. And Lopez' lust to please his military mentors in Havana begat the Holy Week invasion.

Infiltration of the Las Vegas salient before the all-out invasion push was undertaken under Lopez' orders by three platoons of Commandos de Destino Especial (CODE), which were attached to two special warfare battalions, known as Battalion Lempiesa Internal (BLI), and the Cristobal Venegas Frontier Guard Battalion. The two BLI battalions were named after two Sandinista heroes in the war against Somoza, German (pronounced "Herman") Pomares and Francisco Estrada. The three battalions — about 1,000 men — spearheaded the middle of the Sandinista thrust into Honduras.

Candidates for CODE units volunteer from the battle-hardened BLI units, which are internal hunter-killer battalions. Initial selection screening is conducted by the DGSE, the Sandinista state security version of the KGB. A year of grueling training includes emphasis on small unit tactics, river and other waterborne ops, and jungle and mountain warfare. This primary phase is

taught by Soviet Spetsnaz instructors, Cubans, East Germans and Vietnamese.

The last three months focus on demolition, assassination and infiltration training taught by North Korean instructors. Graduates are assigned to five-man teams within a 35-man platoon for intensive on-the-job training. CODE units never take the easy way, said one FDN commander who has had the misfortune to encounter them. "They never use trails. They make their own. When they are after you, most times you don't know it until it's too late."

With the two BLI units and another regular battalion holding down the middle, the left flank of the Sandinista attack was carried out by the 50-02 battalion, a regular Sandinista army (EPS) unit. On the right Sandinista flank, which struck east of the main FDN complex toward the vital dirt airstrip at Boca de Arenales, were two other BLI formations, the Santos Lopez and Juan Pablo Umancor battalions.

There was a limited force left to defend the FDN command complex: 700 seasoned troops and 950 recruits just seven days shy of graduating from a six-week boot camp at the CIM, 800 FDN troops at the main headquarters compound (*Estrategio*) and about 600 troops occupying the high ground west of Las Vegas, overlooking the approach of the weakest Sandinista flank. El Medico's 2,400 men were holding on the Nicaraguan side of the border and the FDN also had another 1,200 (exhausted) soldiers just returned from eight months in Nicaragua.

The objective was to overrun and destroy the Las Vegas complex of camps. While the west offensive flank moved up to apply pressure, the stronger right Sandinista flank would bear down in the east to capture the FDN air facility. A CODE team also had been designated to penetrate inner FDN defenses in hopes of capturing and extracting a key FDN leader.

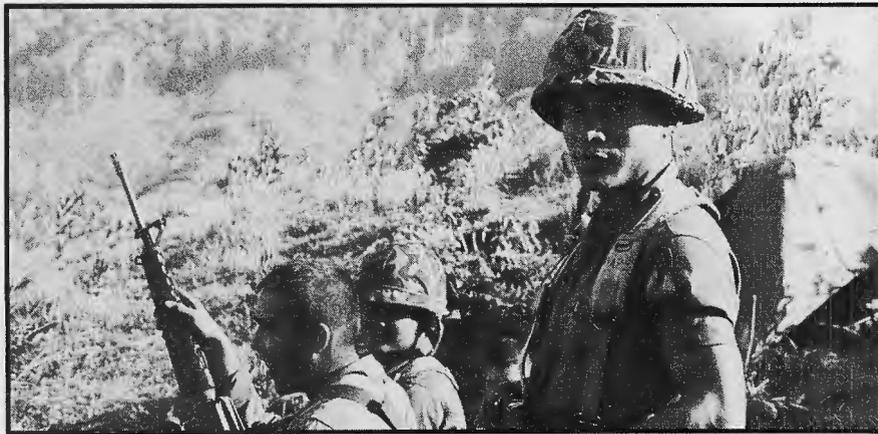
The attack began with a barrage of artillery and rockets on the main FDN camps in the middle of the Las Vegas Salient. Five Soviet BM-21 rocket launchers were brought to the front, but thanks to the effi-

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Honduran troops sealed off the area near the fighting. Only *Soldier of Fortune* was allowed to get near the action. Photo: Paul Larkin



BELOW: Honduran troops were on alert near the Nicaraguan border after the Holy Week invasion. Photo: Paul Larkin



RIGHT: U.S. soldiers in the Honduras border area, despite their remote location, still get their favorite reading material. Photo: Paul Larkin

ciency of Marxist industrial economies, only three of them functioned. Mi-8 (NATO code name "Hip") helicopters were used to ferry troops to the front, with Mi-24 (NATO code name "Hind-D") gunships held in reserve. But the Sandinistas apparently were not willing to risk the embarrassment of having one of their aircraft shot down on Honduran soil. The FDN had expected an air assault, though, and had a reception committee of SA-7s waiting.

The CODE teams had forced the FDN outposts and security patrols back inside the perimeter of the main complex. The first main infantry assault was launched against the FDN's Center for Military Instruction (CIM), the Sandinistas expecting easy and early gains against the green recruits. But the 950 boots, assisted and encouraged by the 700 seasoned FDN regulars, put up fierce resistance. The recruits had just completed weapons training and had been issued new rifles. The artillery fire had only a marginal effect, and the rockets fell outside

the camp perimeter. So while the Sandinistas expected weak resistance and an easy advance, they found instead a hornet's nest.

Intense rifle fire, coupled with grenades and RPGs, made it slow going for the central Sandinista assault. After losing about 50 KIA, the Sandinistas fell back to regroup for another attack, once the 50-02 Battalion moved up on line with them.

The 50-02 Battalion already had problems of its own, however. It was pinned down by 600 FDN riflemen on hilltops and finally was forced to withdraw. As it began to dawn on the three Sandinista battalions assigned to the middle thrust that the 50-02 Battalion would not appear, the two BLI and the regular units began taking fire to their rear.

El Medico had moved up about 800 of his 2,400 men to attack the enemy's middle flank from behind. As the 600 weary FDN riflemen rolled up the western offensive flank, the three enemy battalions in the middle realized they were being surrounded. An

attack was quickly ordered in the opposite direction — back toward the Nicaraguan border.

El Medico's 800 men fell back in good order along the obvious line of retreat for the three Sandinista battalions. FDN resistance began to weaken. The communist troops began to regain their confidence as they broke into a narrow valley leading to the border. Which is just what the FDN wanted.

The 800 retreating FDN soldiers melted into the surrounding hillsides, where 800 more of their colleagues were already in position. The retreating Sandinistas were caught in a withering crossfire from above. It was Sandinista fish in a barrel for the FDN.

Those who escaped this kill zone faced ambushes ahead set by the remainder of El Medico's force.

FDN defenses did not fare as well on the east flank. The two BLI battalions assigned to the right Sandinista flank had no trouble in capturing the air strip from 200 FDN defenders. With the collapse of their offensive line to their west, however, they were compelled to soon withdraw. Damage to the dirt strip was thus limited.

Casualty figures in this action are imprecise and unconfirmable at best. FDN casualties are estimated by SOF staffers in the area at roughly 50 killed and 50 wounded, give or take 20 percent. Estimates of dead Sandinistas vary from 200-400, with a similar number wounded. The capture of nine Sandinistas was confirmed, along with the recovery of 649 AKs dropped by fleeing communist troops. In addition, the FDN recovered thousands of rounds of 7.62x39mm ammunition, an unspecified number of RPD light machine guns and RPGs, packs and personal gear and 13 SA-7 launchers with ammunition.

The U.S. Embassy in Honduras set the number of Sandinista invaders at 1,500, with some estimates going over twice that high. The Honduran government main-

*Continued on page 89*



**BELOW: U.S. Army aircraft maintenance crews keep helicopters ready to fly. Photo: Paul Larkin**



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## ASSAULT ON SUPERSTITION MT.

*Continued from page 70*

was finally cornered and killed by an SF adviser.

The faltering operation received a shot in the arm on the morning of 17 November when 400 fresh Mike Force troops, along with U.S. advisers from Detachment B-55, were dropped in by parachute from U.S. Air Force C-130s. They immediately moved to the mountain and took up defensive positions, attempting to consolidate what had been gained during the previous three months.

Throughout November and December the offensive was renewed and casualties were heavy on both sides. SF commanders felt they needed more troops for an operation of this magnitude and voiced their concern up the chain of command.

By January it was apparent that allied forces simply did not have the manpower in place to overrun the formidable Viet Cong bastion. Reinforcements were promised and new plans were formulated to capture the knoll.

Throughout February 1969, meetings were held between 5th SF Group personnel, IV Corps planners, and officials from the 44th Special Tactical Zone which was charged with primary responsibility for the Seven Mountains Region. The conclusion was unanimous: The mountain had to be taken and the enemy HQ on Tuk Chup Knoll, on Coto's southwest side, neutralized. Past experience dictated that only a frontal assault would be successful. The only question left unanswered was which unit would be assigned the almost suicidal mission of conducting the assault.

Viet Cong forces expected to be encountered included the 512th Local Force Battalion comprising some 250-300 seasoned troops equipped with mortars, recoilless rifles, light and heavy machine guns, rocket-propelled grenades and assorted small arms. The 512th, sometimes in consort with other VC units, frequently operated along the southern slopes of Nui Coto. The local District Force Company, C-805, was also present and believed to be clustered primarily on the knoll. To the north, around Nui Giai, was the 510th Local Force Battalion, some 150-200 strong and equipped along the same lines as the 512th.

Allied planners coordinated their efforts and produced a three-phased plan to secure the mountain:

Phase 1: CIDG (Civilian Irregular Defense Group) troops from SF camps throughout IV Corps, in conjunction with local Regional/Popular Forces and the National Police, would cordon off the An Tuk, Olam, and Coto Village areas that nestled around the base of the mountain. This would serve to curtail the flow of food and supplies to the VC on the mountain as well as isolate the local VC and loosen their stranglehold on the populace.

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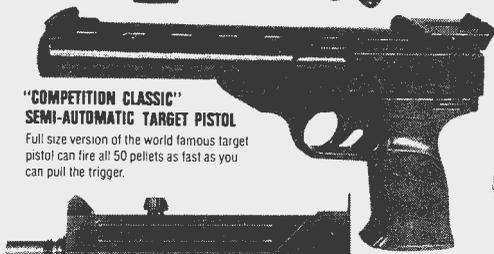
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Phase 2: Allied troops would seal off Tuk Chup Knoll and isolate the VC troops thereon. U.S. Navy riverine forces would patrol and ambush along the Tri Ton Canal to interdict enemy forces and close off another avenue of escape.

Once phases 1 and 2 had sufficiently weakened the enemy, they would proceed to . . .

Phase 3: Allied troops would storm the knoll, secure it, destroy the labyrinthine cave complexes then sweep the entire mountain. The enemy, once and for all, would be rooted from the area.

The unit selected for the assault was Detachment B-55, 5th Mobile Strike Force Command.

The operation began on 4 March 1969 and, despite control and coordination problems, had completed Phases 1 and 2 within 10 days. A number of small arms were captured along with rifle ammo and 60mm mortar rounds. Preparations were then finalized for the frontal assault on the knoll. By 15 March the entire 5th MSF, which had been flown in from Nha Trang, was in rear positions to the west of Nui Coto. They spent the entire day preparing for the impending assault.

The allied attack began at 0430 on 16 March with an hour-long artillery barrage against known and suspected enemy positions. At precisely 0530 assault troops moved out across the rice paddies toward the mountain. Deep within their mountain recesses the VC gunners waited. At 0645 they opened up with a combination of RPGs, M79 grenades, automatic and assorted small arms fire. Allied troops were immediately hit with heavy losses with one company sustaining 20-percent casualties in the first two minutes.

Even more distressing was the fact that it was almost impossible to tell where fire was coming from, so dug in and concealed were the enemy gunners.

Urged on by their commanders, the 5th MSF continued to forge ahead and up the boulder-strewn slopes. Lead elements of the 5th reached the summit of the knoll at 0805.

Allied forces now had a solid line of troops extending up the west side of the knoll. The plan now called for this line to sweep to the south around the flank, clearing out myriad enemy caves as they encountered them. The remainder of 16 March and the entire next day were devoted to finalizing preparations for the flank assault. During this period both Mike Force battalions were constantly subjected to enemy rocket and small arms fire and sustained additional casualties.

Dame Fortune smiled on the 5th MSF on the 17th when nine VC surrendered. The tactical success of the operation thus far, plus the ongoing psywar operations, had convinced these nine that this time Nui Coto would fall. The nine VC were exploited by allied intelligence and gave solid information concerning VC cave locations, firing positions and weapons caches.

Early on 18 March the 5th began their

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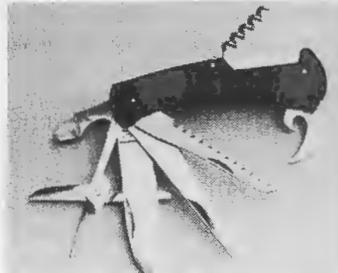
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sweep around the flank with the 2d Battalion assigned responsibility for the upper portion of the knoll and the 1st Battalion the lower. An assault-in-depth concept was used to prevent enemy soldiers from popping out of spider holes and slit caves and shooting at the assaulting force from the rear. The guiding principle of the 5th MSF was to ensure the VC were always to the front of the assaulting line — no easy task, given the boulder-strewn terrain and the numerous natural cave formations.

During the early afternoon of the 18th, a company of the 1st Battalion encountered heavy enemy opposition and sustained numerous casualties. A reserve company was rushed forward to plug the gap and the advance resumed. Due to the necessity of methodically searching every cave and rock formation, progress continued at a snail's pace.

The allied advance continued throughout the 18th and 19th, clearing caves and uncovering caches. A ceasefire was declared from 0001 to 0730 on the 20th, and an intensive psywar campaign was launched telling enemy troops that the fall of the knoll was imminent, and inviting their surrender or defection. At 0730 the attack resumed assisted by artillery and air strikes. Over the next three days more caves — protected by several fields of booby-traps — were captured including one large complex with a number of beds. Inside were a variety of

weapons including a ChiCom machine gun.

The most daring exploit of the operation took place on 23 March when three Montagnards from the 5th MSF, armed only with hand grenades, managed to enter the main VC cave complex — rumored to be Chau Kim's cave. They moved some 300 meters underground and forward of allied positions, discovering several large troop installations and three VC cave arsenals teeming with weapons. They watched as about 100 VC, male and female, made preparations to depart Tuk Chup Knoll. During the course of their movement through the interconnecting cave complexes they killed seven VC. They also noted with interest that the VC had a complete electrical hook-up — and proceeded to cut the wires. While attempting to return to their own lines they were challenged by enemy guards at a cave entrance. The three soldiers had earlier each taken an AK-47 from one of the VC arsenals, and holding these up as a mark of recognition succeeded in bluffing their way past the guards. They returned to their own lines bringing with them invaluable information on VC locations as well as various documents they had seized while in the complex.

The assault continued throughout the 24th and 25th with more VC caves seized and caches of supplies and documents uncovered. Using information provided by defectors as well as the intrepid three-man

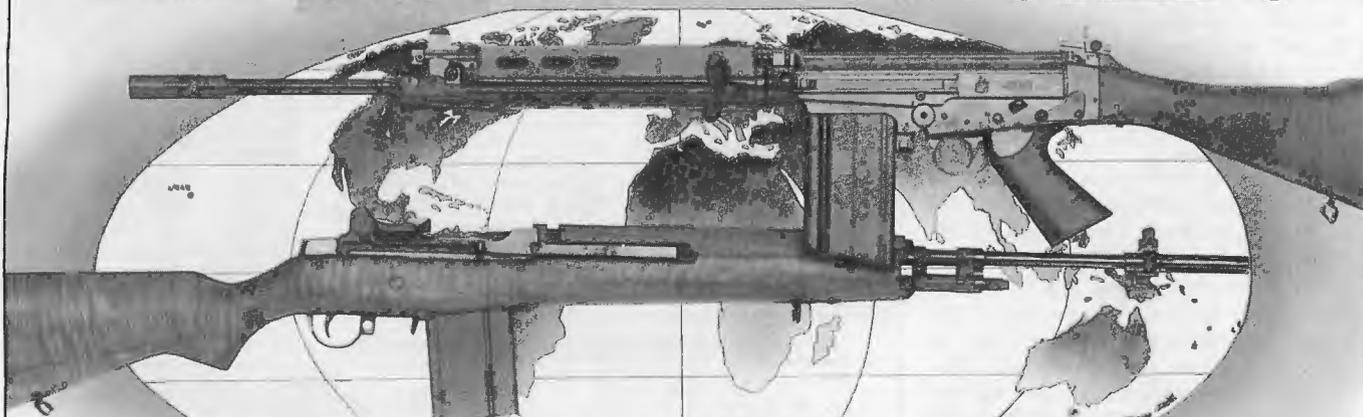
Montagnard patrol, both MSF battalions located and captured the main cave complex. Most of the enemy had by this time abandoned the complex, but the Mike Force troops did capture hundreds of assorted weapons, equipment, medical supplies and thousands of pages of documents. The capture of the main cave complex broke the back of VC resistance on Tuk Chup Knoll.

Allied casualties in the final phase of the campaign included 45 KIA, three of whom were U.S. advisers. VC casualties were 53 KIA, confirmed by body count, but allied commanders estimated the toll of enemy dead was actually much higher; bodies had either been buried or dragged off. An additional 10 VC were captured and 23 more defected under the "Chieu Hoi" — Open Arms — program.

Enemy losses in weapons and materiel were significant. Allied forces had captured more than 500 assorted small arms (everything from PPSH submachine guns to U.S.-made shotguns), 13 crew-served weapons and some 95,000 pages of documents. Among the tons of equipment taken were typewriters, a mimeograph machine, short-wave receivers, loudspeakers, U.S. PRC-10 radios, mess gear, generators, a movie projector, telegraph keys, ChiCom flamethrower tanks, blocks of TNT, underwater mines, power tools, armorer's tools, blasting caps and sewing machines.

Surviving VC troops, male as well as

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female, fled the mountain in disarray after the capture of the main cave complex. Many were killed in the surrounding paddies by helicopter gunships. Chanh Chau, a prominent guerrilla leader and VC chief of An Tuc Village, was among those who defected to the allies. Wounded and sick with dysentery, he had fled the knoll shortly before the final assault. Chanh Puth, VC chief of the Propaganda Entertainment Subsection, also defected. Others, like the mysterious Chau Kim, simply disappeared.

The battle for Nui Coto was pronounced a success, and both the U.S. and Vietnamese high commands said it effectively ended the myth of VC invincibility in the area. Their pronouncements proved to be premature, however. While the capture of the mountain fortress was an important psychological victory, it only interrupted rather than ended communist armed presence in the area. Within two months, by May 1969, North Vietnamese troops had been introduced into the Delta and many went to Chau Doc Province to shore up the deteriorating situation. In November of that year NVA units launched a strong attack against the Mike Force troops still guarding Tuk Chup, and after several days of vicious hand-to-hand combat, were able to recapture the knoll. Superstition Mountain and the Rockpile continued to change hands until the end of the war in 1975. ✖

## BATTLE BLADES

*Continued from page 12*

target is moving — and trying to kill you in the bargain — nothing but pure, blind luck would enable you to hit your adversary with a lethal throw. A tomahawk rotates on its way to the target when thrown. A linear cutting surface of only four inches makes the distance between release point and target critical. In contests, tomahawks are thrown from known — and well practiced — distances. Plus or minus eight inches at 28 feet will mean a bad throw.

A tomahawk's best use, though, is as a camp tool to cut small limbs, split kindling, drive tent pegs or use as a light hammer. As much as I enjoy living out the mountain man mystique, I don't usually carry a tomahawk when hunting or camping. But I do keep it around the camp.

One other thing. Don't confuse a hatchet with an honest-to-God tomahawk. They are similar, but not the same. Atlanta Cutlery (Dept. SOF, Box 839, Conyers, GA 30207) has a tomahawk with a four-inch cutting edge priced at \$12.95. Write for more details, or call them toll free at 1-800-241-3595. Another tomahawk source is Track of the Wolf, Inc. Write them at

Dept. SOF, P.O. Box Y, Osseo, MN 55369, or call (612) 424-2500.

Tomahawks are fun, useful and inexpensive. If you're a fan of primitive weapons or just an avid camper, add one to your T.O.E. Just don't plan on using it as a primary edged weapon. Not unless you enjoy "counting coup." ✖

## COMBAT WEAPONCRAFT

*Continued from page 16*

while at the same time eliminating teachers, headmen, retired policemen and other respected people who resisted the comrades' doctrines. The same use for the bayonet was commonly practiced by the Viet Cong a few years back, and although it's abhorrent to us, it is undeniably effective.

So far I have dealt with the uses of a knife at the end of a rifle. The uses of a knife in the hand are too numerous to discuss here, but it makes common sense to me (and also the Russians) to combine the two. The AKM bayonet is a handy working knife, as well as filling all the needs mentioned above. It can



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even serve as a wire-cutter when used with its scabbard. In contrast, the current-issue American bayonet is a sharp pointed, double-edged blade, good for little else but stabbing. The Ka-Bar is a great working knife — Bill Bagwell notwithstanding — but an American soldier must carry a separate bayonet for his rifle. Why not combine the two by reinforcing the blade of the Ka-Bar and adding a bayonet loop and lug? All infantrymen carry a knife, so why not increase its use by making it a bayonet as well? A good utility knife that could serve double duty as a bayonet would be an invaluable asset without increasing the weight of the soldier's load.

Are bayonets an asset to the combat soldier? Without reservation, the answer is yes. It's a tough, multi-purpose tool that's saved more than just a few lives through the years. If you make it an integral part of your combat load, it could save yours too. ✕

## KALASHNIKOV'S SIDEFOLDER

*Continued from page 59*

SOF's trip to Afghanistan in 1982.

Soviet AKM sheet-metal receiver covers have transverse reinforcing ribs and rolled edges to prevent slicing open the hand when retracting the bolt carrier. PRC AKS rifles have retained the plain AK-47-type receiver cover. If the edge at the rear of the ejection port projects ever so slightly away from the bolt carrier it can cause a nasty cut if the retracting handle is jacked swiftly to the rear. This can be corrected by bending that portion of the receiver cover inward with pliers.

All other features on this rifle remain as before. The method of operation is that of all Kalashnikovs and need not be described, except to note that PRC AKMs do not employ the five-piece anti-bounce device and, since this weapon is imported as a semiautomatic-only, there is no secondary auto-safety sear. There are four ports on each side of the gas cylinder as found on the older AK-47 series. An AKM muzzle compensator has been installed and there is the usual cleaning rod mounted under the barrel. The rear sight is graduated to 800 meters, again a hold-over from the AK-47, as this was increased to 1,000 meters on the Soviet AKM. The receiver body is a 1mm-thick stamped, sheet-metal U-section with numerous support rivets that also retain the barrel extension with its locking recesses for the bolt lugs. All metal surfaces have been salt blued, except the bolt group, which remains in the white. Disassembly and re-assembly procedures conform to those of all other Kalashnikov rifles.

The overall length has not been altered by the new stock and remains at 35 inches (26.5 inches with the stock folded). The weight, without magazine, is 8 pounds —

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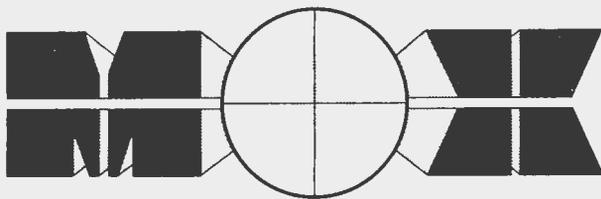
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somewhat heavy by today's standards. Trigger pull weight on SOF's test specimen was 4.25 pounds. The rifle is equipped with a single 30-round all-steel ribbed magazine, bayonet (AKM configuration but without the wire-cutting feature) and the standard ComBloc web sling with leather front keeper. No cleaning kit is provided. The suggested retail price is a modest \$429.95.

You can fire thousands of rounds through any Kalashnikov and the results will invariably be the same. They are garbage eaters and will crank away without stoppages no matter how poor the ammunition stuffed into their chambers. However, this rifle's firing pin is not spring loaded and only cartridges with hard military primers should be fired. No problem. There is plenty of inexpensive PRC and Yugoslavian Berdan primed 7.62x39mm available that will do nicely. PMC (Pan Metal Corporation) is also offering both soft-point and military FMJ ball loadings with Boxer primed brass cases manufactured in the Republic of Korea on U.S. machinery. The ball load has MilSpec primers. Use it. The PMC soft-point cartridges I examined appeared to have been assembled with softer commercial primers.

We fired PRC ammunition with a '71 83' headstamp indicating factory code 71 manufactured in 1983. It has a brown-lacquered steel case, is Berdan primed and mildly corrosive. This ammunition conforms to original Soviet specifications. The

Soviet-type PS boattail projectile weighs 123 grains and has a steel core with a muzzle velocity of 2,330 fps. The accuracy performance of this rifle and ammunition were average for a Kalashnikov. Although SOF's Demo Team managed one three-shot group of 1 inch at 100 yards, our five-shot groups averaged between 4 and 5 inches. Kalashnikov ejection patterns are always violent: at least 30 feet to the right and front of the muzzle. Of course there were no stoppages. Felt recoil is low and handling characteristics with the new side-folding stock are excellent. ✕

## U.S. BORDER PATROL

*Continued from page 39*

disappearing into tails of sand blown across the hardpack like snow from a mountaintop. Mesquite scrub closely flanking the road had preserved a pile of fractured clay between the ruts of the road, and the same blocky-tread athletic shoe print was visible that we'd seen up on the highway. Aguirre beamed, "Yup, we got'em now."

The quarry had struck off cross-country from the sendero followed by Turner and J.J. When the refugees found an easier road running the way they wanted to go, they took it. Aguirre radioed J.J. and reported.

"You get on up by that house farther north and see if there's any sign," J.J.

ordered, "We'll load up and see you up there."

Aguirre got behind the wheel, stepped on the accelerator, and we sped a couple of miles up the road. There was no sign of the wets at the house, but a little way along the clay track, a boot heel pointed toward the stock tank. We cautiously approached the brush around the little reservoir, seeing potato-chip bags and more bootprints. Following the trail down to the water's edge, the water-softened clay showed cowboy-boot tracks pointing toward a small bass-boat tied to a mesquite trunk, and the prints were at least size 12.

"That's a rancher . . . fishing."

"You don't have trouble with landowners?"

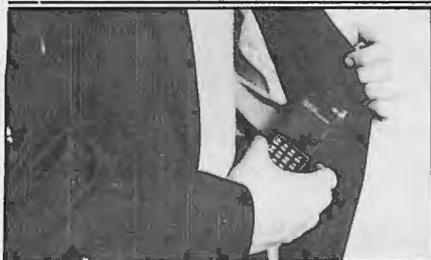
"No, around here they're pretty cooperative. Some people just don't like you on their land, but unless they hire illegal aliens most don't much mind. The majority give us gate keys."

Movement down in the scrub showed us where Turner and J.J. were. They slouched over their horses like models in a cigarette ad.

"Is it much of a burden having to be so picturesque all the time?" Turner just laughed and shook his head.

We got back in the pickup and headed off toward a collection of tumble-down frame and mud-brick buildings, like a little abandoned Mexican village on the wrong side of the river.

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"This is a good place to look," Aguirre had slowed again and was looking out the window, "illegals will lie up in vacant buildings overnight sometimes." Our quarry was more cautious; we found nothing.

After a few hours of finding and losing the track, we were on the point of giving up, when one strange stippled pattern in the dirt at the side of the clay road attracted Aguirre's attention.

"What is that?"

"It's a soccer boot print."

"We didn't see any soccer shoes down by the road."

"Yeah, but this shouldn't be here, anyway."

Casting back and forth through the brush, we found more tracks, including the block-tread athletic shoe and the other familiar prints of our little party. Soccer Shoes, as the agents began calling him, walked in the coarse grass most of the time. Possibly he was concerned about leaving tracks, but his long-cleated, hard-soled shoes may not have been comfortable on the hard pack of the road. At any rate, the chase was on again.

Turner and J.J. were moving up to our position, because the tracks they were following had been blown away entirely. As we followed on foot, the track became more complex and twisted from cover to cover. Aguirre reported this information to the horse patrol. J.J. came back on the horn and suggested they call for air support.

"They might have seen us," Aguirre scanned the horizon. "If they have, it's time to bring in the plane."

The Border Patrol Southern Region inventories Hughes 500 choppers, and Super Cub and Cessna 182 fixed-wing aircraft. After a few minutes, one of the Cessnas hopped over the horizon and buzzed us. J.J. and Aguirre each radioed information and the little airplane began a series of wide swings across the arid-brush country. The 182 came and went several times, and we walked along the overgrown track, heads up, looking for movement against the wind in the brush or for telltale colored clothing.

Nothing.

"These tracks must be from earlier today. Something else must have startled them. They aren't here now, anyway." The collapse of any tension seemed to leave Aguirre disgusted. "I'll take you back to town. We aren't going to find anything now. You can link up with a Mo-Pac patrol if we get back this afternoon, and you can get set up to sweep the railyards tonight."

Turner and J.J. stoically rode farther and farther away from us along the animal trails lacing the valley floor. They would stay out till the end of their shift, mark the spot, report, and pick the trail up again the next day.

Although Border Patrol sources wouldn't hazard any guess what percentage was getting through their sector, observation of their methods and results suggests that a high percentage are picked up within a few hundred yards of the border, and well over

half of the remainder is picked up in the hinterlands as they make their way to cities and jobs. Sector chief Teverbaugh says that once the illegals enter the bush, they're playing the Patrol's game. Illegal aliens then begin lives of months or years of evading the less aggressive and detailed but wider-spread net of documentation checks in areas where they live and work.

In Laredo the biggest collection point for illegals is what agents call Mo-Pac, after the Missouri-Pacific railroad that once owned and operated the Laredo switchyards. Unskilled and semi-skilled labor floods the Laredo market, and the Patrol presence is strong, so the alien's first priority is to get out of the area, and travel to some large city where the appetite for cut-rate labor is nearly bottomless. Highways out of Laredo are beset with traps for fleeing Latins, and the rail lines are relatively clear, so if they can get through the switchyards, they're nearly home free.

Agent Scherzer was again the guide for the late shift. We met at sector HQ and headed out for a circuit of road checkpoints just after dark.

"Put these on," he handed me a set of night vision goggles. "Wets walk along the rails at night sometimes, since tracks are easier to follow in the dark." The wavering, pulsing green glow of South Texas night at highway speed seen through night vision equipment was mysterious and nauseating.

"See anything?"

"Not yet."

"If they're out there, people will show up pretty bright. T-shirt collars, straw hats, white socks, anything that reflects light stands out." Still, aside from the occasional burst of light from a ranch house security lamp, the only light in the goggle's interior screen was that reflected from green wheel-polished rails slithering endlessly along the green-black ground.

"Is the flood of illegals changing the proportion of aliens from each country?"

"Nah, most are still Mexicans. So many are Mexicans and there's so little of anything else, we lump the rest together as OTMs . . . other than Mexicans. We get some of every country, though."

"You mean that you might catch an Albanian tonight?"

"Bite your tongue!" Scherzer shook his head, "Salvadorans and Guatemalans and Haitians cause enough paperwork: I wouldn't get out on patrol for a week if I caught an Albanian."

"So you don't get Eastern Europeans through here?"

"Sure, we do, but they're harder for us to process. You see, if we catch a Mexican, we can just show him to the border. He's classified as Voluntary Return, a VR as we call 'em. But if we bag anything else, they have to be handed through the Border Patrol system up to Immigration and Naturalization Service, so he can ask for political asylum or whatever's appropriate. It's a lot more work, and we've got enough of that," he snorted.

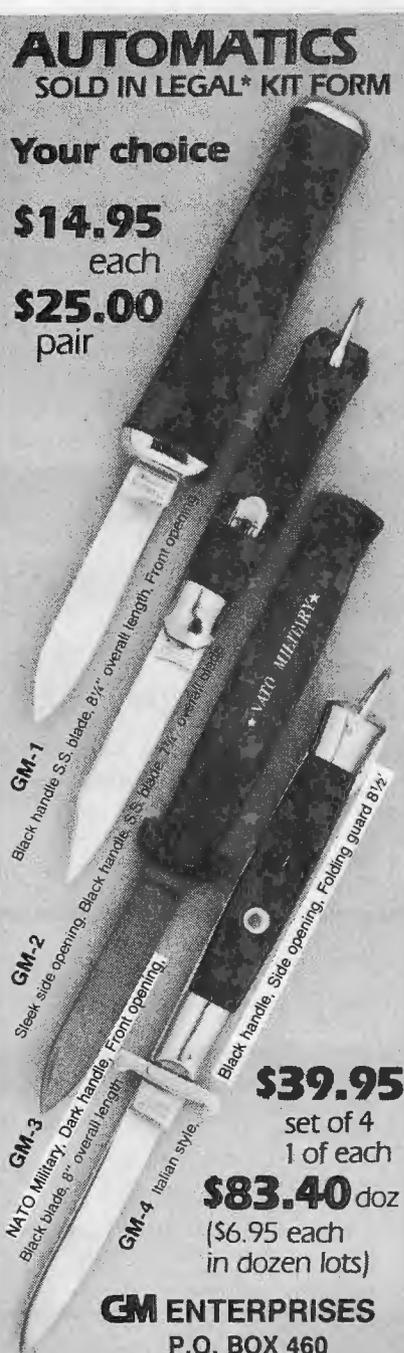
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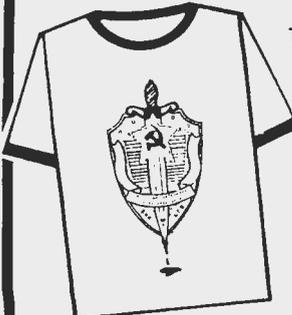
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We pulled up behind the communications van at the checkpoint and got out. Earlier in the day this checkpoint's MP5 submachine gun had been picked up, and the agents were still talking about the rumor of Libyan agents looking for a coyote across. SMGs loaded with 9mm Silvertip hollowpoints had been distributed to checkpoints that Libyans might try to run.

"But alloy hollowpoints don't penetrate vehicles well, do they?"

"No, but that's what we were issued," volunteered an agent between checking cars full of passengers.

"Do you catch anything at these checkpoints?"

"Traffic through here's real regular," observed one of the officers, "and a certain percentage of it is illegal. We spot-check passengers and loads alike. Of course, trucks are the biggest-volume carriers of contraband across this part of the border."

Hour after hour, agents inspect cars, vans and trucks, check customs seals on semis, and regularly radio sector headquarters for help and transportation to move fresh caught illegals back to HQ or to the border crossing. It's usually hot, always tedious, mostly boring and occasionally dangerous. All along the border, violence is on the rise.

The railway yard roust appointment was approaching, so after touring the highway checkpoint we climbed into the vehicle, pulled across the median and headed back to town.

"You'll have to be careful when we get into the yards," Scherzer advised, "there's all kinds of wire and scrap metal on the ground, and against the background noise of the yard, a free-rolling freight car is perfectly silent."

Just two nights before, the railyards had been packed with trains and they had all swarmed with Mexicans jumping trains. A Hughes 500 helicopter with searchlights had been called in to illuminate the trains. But tonight, the river was high, several intercept missions had been run on the underside of the railroad bridge — a favorite high road for the young — and the trains were nearly clean. In fact, after inspecting a few cars and finding them perfectly empty, we were ready to find a more productive beat.

"Hey, hold on, there are a few in here," the cry went up from a railroad special agent inside one of the galvanized sheet-covered automobile transports. Multi-cell duty flashlights were aimed at the top of the triple-tier car-carrier and a couple of heads covered with tousled black hair peered over the edge. A Patrol Agent called for them to come down in clear idiomatic Spanish, but the young men apparently didn't like the idea of the man with the camera. A Patrol Agent explained that we represented an American magazine.

At that point they began scrambling down, combs out by the time they hit the dirt. The half-dozen teenagers demanded to have their pictures taken, so they assembled into a compact formation, each assuming his pose, and SOF reporters obliged.

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Cheap assembly is available in Mexico, so an increasing number of American automobiles are put together there. As they move on railroad cars north to the United States, some of these vehicles become private coaches for young Mexicans on their way north.

"When it's cold, they'll let themselves into the cars, the keys are in the ignition, and they lounge or sleep on the seats, idling the engine so the heater runs, listening to the radio and filling the ashtrays," a railway special agent laughed. "The distributors know what happened when they turn the key at the other end and there isn't enough gas to get the car off the train. But we don't give these people any trouble. As far as we're concerned they're simple trespassers. Of the Mexicans we see in the yards, 99 percent of them are *not* criminals; they're just ordinary people trying to find a better job."

Scherzer cut in at that point: "But the people who smuggle the illegals in are the lowest form of life. They deal in stolen goods, drugs and death."

There was general agreement, and the group was instantaneously illuminated by vehicle lights: Another Patrol vehicle had arrived.

"I suppose we can let the wets collect here," Scherzer said. "Let's take a walk."

Glenn Simpson had come with the new vehicle, and he joined us to walk a beat across the railyards and into a residential area. Sodium vapor lamps put a yellow gel across what had been a blue velvet night as we entered the streets of the largely-Hispanic area. We walked some time, Glenn and David pointing out various possible collection points for illegal aliens.

"But this is the best," Scherzer said with satisfaction, as we sauntered up to the edge of a steep debris-strewn slope which dropped into overgrown blackness, barely washed by the lemonade-colored light from the closest streetlamp. "It's an old gravel pit, and it provides good cover for Mexicans who wait out the evening here until it's time to board the trains."

"Do you drive the area to flush them into the streets?"

The Patrol Agents laughed, and Scherzer

said, "That's a little too enthusiastic. Ten years ago I used to chase wets down dark trails. Now I wait for them where I know they'll show up. It's open, lit ground from here to the yards, and they can't get there without crossing it."

"Well, if this pit collects wets, why not doze it over and turn it into a parking lot?"

"Because catching wetbacks is like fishing for bass." Simpson began to splutter with laughter, but Scherzer continued. "No, Glenn, this is serious. If you leave hiding places, they always collect there. If you clean everything up, then they're spread out all over the place. This gravel pit is best just as it is."

The theory sounded plausible, but high water and big hauls on previous nights had cut into traffic. We saw no one.

"This is the best job I can imagine," Scherzer sighed. "It's better out cutting sign, but it's good anyplace. I love to hunt, and that's what this is like: hunting. But it's better than hunting, because this game is the smartest."

Simpson mumbled agreement and we walked back across no-man's land to the yards.

Other vehicles had gathered from the surrounding area, most of them filled with Mexicans. We began to load the young men into our vehicle and into one other van that had some room left. Six Mexicans crowded into the back of the carryall, politely handing notebooks and night vision equipment forward to us. As we motored to the bridge, the young men chatted quietly. Again we stopped in the parking area just north of the bridge and the Patrol's charges were led to the sidewalk which would take them back to Mexico.

We stood and watched them walk past the U.S.-side port of entry enjoying the cooling 75-degree midnight breeze after the hot, leaden day. As the adolescent illegals left the United States, one of them turned and called in heavily accented English: "See you tomorrow night!"

Several Patrol agents waved back, grinning. "I'm sure you will," one muttered, "I'm sure you will." ☒

shot at, they're out there. Many are just boys and young men, whose youth is being eaten up soldiering at a time when their peers in the West are enjoying an education, a movie, or dancing. And on top of it all, they're volunteers.

Because the operation was executed in darkness, it's difficult to evaluate the tactics used. But one characteristic was manifest: their determination and bravery. Guts, we used to call it.

Perhaps the effectiveness of the Ang Kansang operation is best judged by this significant report received in Nong Chan four days after the attack: "A battalion of Vietnamese troops and another 122mm



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## CAMBODIAN RECON

Continued from page 57

before seizing, but to everyone's amazement and pleasant surprise the headwounded soldier recovered in the hospital.

How effective were the KPNLF soldiers in combat? Good. True, they are not molded in the "spit and polish" tradition, and their discipline would undoubtedly appear lax in comparison to a regular army. But they aren't fighting a "regular" war. They suffer acute shortages of ammunition, their living conditions are poor, the food is basic and they receive no pay.

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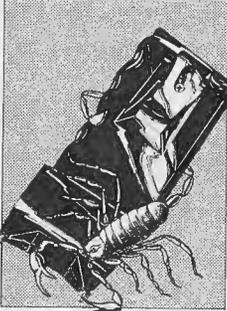


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howitzer have been sent to reinforce the area."

## BATTLEGROUND: CAMBODIA

About 300 kilometers west of Bangkok by road is the Thai frontier town of Aranyaprathet. A few years ago, a large highway sign on the town outskirts informed the traveler that the Cambodian border was just five kilometers away. Today that sign is gone but the border remains, sealed as tight as ever.

But scattered along the Thai-Cambodian border stretching northward from Aranyaprathet are a string of camps which house Cambodian refugees. These are exiles from the civil war and famine which have plagued their country for more than 10 years since the fall of the U.S.-backed Lon Nol regime to the communist Khmer Rouge forces in 1975, and more recently the Vietnamese-backed Khmer regime of Heng Samrin.

Hundreds of thousands of Khmer refugees have found sanctuary in Thailand (many of them moving on to find new homes in host countries of the West such as the United States, France and Australia), but many thousands more are forbidden to cross into Thailand. They live in makeshift huts in malaria-infested

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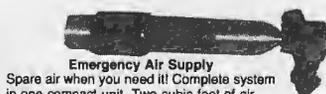
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areas, existing in a state of continual, if sporadic, warfare. But they have not been abandoned.

Associated with each camp, and living close by, are the soldiers of the Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF, once known as the Khmer Serei or Free Khmers). The KPNLF (reportedly 12,000-strong though this is regarded as an inflated figure) was formed in March 1979 from the union of five Khmer Serei groups.

Former monarch of Cambodia, Prince Norodom Sihanouk also has his own following on the border although somewhat smaller: the estimated 5,000-man national Sihanoukist Army (ANS), previously known as Moulinaka. In June 1984 they joined with the KPNLF to form the Permanent Military Committee for Coordination (PERMICO), headed by General Sak Soutsakhon, former supreme commander of the Cambodian armed forces prior to 1975 and now chief of staff and first vice-president of the KPNLF.

With the permission of the Bangkok office of PERMICO, and the permission and letters of authorization from the Royal Thai Army in both Bangkok and Aranyaprathet, it is possible to pass by the numerous Royal Thai Army checkpoints and cross the bamboo curtain of Cambodia to visit the front-line freedom fighters.

I spent two weeks along the border in August 1984, visiting not only the holding camps of Khmer refugees inside Thailand, but also four camps inside Cambodia: Nong Chan, Nong Samet, Ampil and Dong Rek. Although these camps were overrun by the combined weight of the Vietnamese and the Kampuchea People's Republic Armed Forces — the Heng Samrin army — in the dry season offensive of 1985, the anti-communist resistance was not crushed but merely dispersed.

Today they have established new camps on the ruins of the old ones, or else nearby, and life continues as before.

In Ampil, headquarters of the KPNLF, a 115-round bombardment just prior to my visit had the camp residents frightened and the United Nations' border officials restricting refugee relief workers there to "limited access." This meant they could not enter the camp except to deliver essential supplies. Water tanks and a temporary tent hospital were set up for the 32,000 residents about 500 meters from the camp's entrance.

I managed to see General Diendel, second vice-president of the KPNLF and Ampil camp commander, for his assessment of the shelling. The general was in his garden pruning roses. Behind him, work on his new reinforced concrete bunker was in progress.

His comment was brief and to the point: "Some people might get excited

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about this (shelling)," he said, "but for us, it's just normal."

Normal or not, any civilian family without a bunker was, like the general, busily constructing one. "We encourage the civilians, in fact we insist, that they build bunkers to protect themselves," said Gen. Diendel.

In other camps along the border the situation was more relaxed and activities relatively normal, but the residents of Dong Rek were disturbed by the recent shelling of Ampil and the O'Bok camp further north. Men asked me when they would be resettled in third countries like America, Australia or New Zealand. Others decided on more direct action: Some 44 Vietnamese left the camp to join the United Front for the Liberation of Vietnam (UFLVN). From somewhere in the jungle, the armed UFLVN resistance force reportedly sends commando units on raids inside Cambodia and Vietnam, and operates a clandestine radio station that broadcasts twice a day into Vietnam.

The KPNLF often draws its troops from the ranks of defectors. Morale has always been reported low in the Heng Samrin army which, since 1980, has been filled with conscripts drawn by lot owing to the lack of volunteers. In the first half of 1984 some 150 soldiers defected to the KPNLF with their weapons. These defectors are severe in their denunciation of Vietnam's involvement in Cambodia, although their criticisms generally reflect the traditional enmity between the two countries which has existed for centuries. Some I spoke with in Nong Chan, however, gave first-hand accounts of Vietnam's alleged mistreatment of the Cambodians.

Min Savoeuy, a 21-year-old from Prey Vieng province, was a combat soldier with Infantry Battalion Number 4 which fought the Khmer Rouge on many occasions near Tonle Sap. As an assistant section leader he made about U.S.\$5.28 per month. Why did he defect? "Because I couldn't stand seeing, with my own eyes, the cruelty of the Vietnamese to the Khmer people," he charged. "Some Khmer traders were going to the border to sell chickens. The Vietnamese wanted the chickens but the Khmer traders would not hand them over, so they (the Vietnamese) killed them with grenades."

As Gen. Diendel repeatedly stated, "Our number one enemy is Vietnam." He stresses that KPNLF intentions have never been to achieve military victory over Vietnam, but rather a political one, thereby ensuring a state recognized and protected by international law. But in order to achieve this they must press the Vietnamese into combat so as to force a Vietnamese recognition of their military credibility.

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the shortage of weapons to supply them. These shortages are a persistent headache to the KPNLF and they don't understand the reasons behind it. Gen. Diendel is appreciative in his acknowledgement of the moral and material support from Thailand and other ASEAN nations, but is critical of the lack of aid from the "freedom-loving democratic countries of the West."

The KPNLF's principal supplier of arms, like the Khmer Rouge, is Communist China. But the KPNLF claims that for every one gun they receive, the Khmer Rouge gets a hundred. On the surface this should present no problem as the KR and the KPNLF/ANS are partners in the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea, in opposition to the Vietnamese-backed regime of Heng Samrin. But privately many Khmers dislike the connection and distrust the Khmer Rouge. "Pol Pot was more cruel than Hitler — he at least did not kill his own people," said a KPNLF officer whose wife and children had been killed by the KR. Some, remembering Heng Samrin's former days as a KR officer before his defection to Vietnam in 1977, even fear a secret alliance of Heng Samrin and the Khmer Rouge.

Ironically, some analysts recognize that a Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia, right now, could be disadvantageous to the KPNLF and the non-communist alliance as a whole. It would create a power vacuum that would be filled by the militarily superior Khmer Rouge, now estimated to have at least 40,000 men under arms.

The KPNLF wants to fight the Vietnamese but to do this effectively, they say, the West must support them with not only lethal aid — arms and ammunition — but with non-lethal aid as well — food and medicine, uniforms, mosquito nets and hammocks. ✕

## HOLY WEEK INVASION

Continued from page 75

tained its tight-lipped (and this time red-faced) policy. Having denied the existence of the FDN within its borders, it couldn't very well admit that anti-communist guerrillas killed the hundreds of Sandinistas whose bodies began showing up at military bases for disposal. And with its tense relations with Nicaragua, Honduras couldn't say its troops killed them either.

Most embarrassed, however, was Nicaragua. Setting out to discredit the FDN as a viable fighting force, the Sandinistas angered their closest allies in Congress, such as Speaker Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill, and lost face militarily in the bargain.

The Sandinistas claimed victory, but it was very much like the "victory" declared

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by Lord Cornwallis over General Nathaniel Greene after the Battle of Guilford Courthouse in the American Revolution. It was an immense loss of British men and equipment to a relatively untrained, ill-equipped and numerically inferior force under Greene, who led a masterfully planned series of controlled retreats that repeatedly mauled British lines before falling back. The Crown was singularly unimpressed by the claim of victory. "Another such victory as this would ruin the British Army," Cornwallis was advised.

Even the Sandinistas cannot claim the token advantage held by Cornwallis, that of holding the field after the battle. Guilford is a little-known battle, but all important, for it helped set the stage for the final patriot victory at Yorktown seven months later.

Victory for Nicaragua's anti-communist freedom fighters remains a far-off goal. But Congress has given them the means to win. And they proved, during the Holy Week invasion, their ability to fight. Now the burden to achieve victory is on them — to make the dream of a "Yorktown" against Soviet-Cuban imperialism in Central America a reality. But much hard work — and much dying — remains to be done in their quest for liberty.

## AID AND COMFORT

Getting to *la zona* — the FDN combat zone — is never easy for a gringo, even one with friends at the front. This trip was no exception.

Responding to heavy fighting resulting from an invasion of southern central Honduras by Nicaragua in late March 1986, SOF Publisher Robert K. Brown led a team to assist the Freedom Fighters in whatever way possible. Our primary mission was medical assistance. Toward that end, two medical specialists from Refugee Relief International, Inc., Felipe Picazon and myself, accompanied the team.

We had brought 500 pounds of medical supplies, much of it donated by SOF readers. Among these were 600 doses of badly needed tetanus vaccine and anti-toxin.

There was a problem getting us and our goodies into the FDN's AO. The FDN was glad to see us. The Hondurans, who for diplomatic reasons could not acknowledge the presence of the FDN, were less excited about outsiders visiting the area. The press was banned from *la zona*.

Our Refugee Relief credentials got us through the first two Honduran checkpoints. They searched our gear at the third, however. "Everybody out of the jeep," they told us. We got through by bribing the Honduran sergeant with some battle dressings and C-rations.

The trip for the most part, though, is hours-long droning boredom in the back of a jeep usually too loud to permit nor-

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mal conversation. It also happens to be one of the most bone-crunching, four-wheeled trips on the planet. They save the excitement for last. The rutted dirt road winds into a no-man's land on the border between Nicaragua and Honduras. The Nicaraguan border was often less than 100 meters to our right, with bunkers and wire fences visible. The Honduran side was fully fortified, including a battery of 105mm howitzers, supplemented by roving patrols.

We turned off at a nondescript adobe shack and found ourselves surrounded by FDN security men and women in civilian clothes carrying FN FALs and AKs. We were recognized, and passed through to the small valley below, in which were located the administrative tent, hospital supply tent, sick call building and some living quarters. While we shook hands and caught up on the news, a line of troops passed down the medical supplies, which were gratefully received.

The FDN forward field hospital facility was well-dispersed, with supply and administration in one location, outpatient, dental and student facilities in another, and surgery, X-ray (yes X-ray!) and wards in yet another. Buildings of local construction were used, and tents were well-camouflaged.

Looking at the camouflage, Felipe and I realized this was the first time in our military experience that we were on a side that did not enjoy air superiority. As the occasional Honduran or FDN helicopter passed over the area, we could see the troops glancing nervously upward. There were many among us who had seen the business end of an Mi-24 helicopter gunship. Some were there as a result of the experience.

Although the Freedom Fighter medical facilities are never long on supplies, they still help nearby civilians in need. During our visit, hundreds of people from both sides of the Nicaraguan-Honduran border presented themselves for treatment, some of the more serious cases being hospitalized and cared for by the FDN "Cuerpo Medico," or medical corps. The treatment costs the recipient nothing, but the Freedom Fighters have been paid in goodwill and support by the *campesinos*.

"Some of these people are from Nicaragua," said one clinic doctor, "and they have been driven out by the Sandinistas and have lost everything. They are the ones we are fighting for. We can't deny them what little we have to give." As for the Hondurans, he indicated a long line outside the outpatient clinic with a sweep of his hand: "Look at how poor they are. Look at the children. How can we refuse them?"

Indeed. One was a girl of four in the tertiary stages of malnutrition and dehydration. Her young belly protruded grotesquely from her frail, sallow frame,

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swollen by a distended liver and spleen. Her skin looked like that of an old woman, clinging like worn-out leather to tiny bones. Despite our best efforts, it was too late for her. She died a few days later. So did three more like her.

I have seen it happen before. In Vietnam. In Thailand. In El Salvador. You never get used to it. It doesn't get any easier.

Also lining up for treatment are Honduran army troops sent by their government to secure the border against further Sandinista crossings. While Honduras officially will not admit the presence of anti-Sandinista rebels on its soil, the grim realities for the soldier in the field are the same, no matter what uniform he or she is wearing. Honduran troops use FDN medical facilities, and armed units from both forces patrol the border together.

The ailments at the outpatient clinic were those common to Central America: parasites, malnutrition, tropical ulcer, fungal disease, scabies and the usual mixed bag of respiratory infections, diarrheal disease (amoeba and giardia are common), etc. While yellow fever and malaria are concerns, the FDN has done a good job on vaccinating for the former and taking preventative measures for the latter.

The major medical problem during our visit was a more common disease: measles. This viral infection used to strike mostly children in North America, but is much rarer now that we vaccinate for it. Among an army with no immunity, however, it can be devastating. The FDN were in the middle of an epidemic. Fortunately, they had just received a large quantity of vaccine to immunize those who had not yet been infected.

While supplies had begun to arrive in the past month, there were still problems. When the wounded began coming in from the Holy Week battles, for example, the only operating lamp in the surgical tent blew out, and thus the FDN's surgeon was forced to do surgery on complex cases using an antique headlamp. He showed me this contraption, with a bare bulb, headband and wooden case, which had found its way down in one of the shipments of private sector supplies. Whoever donated it did not know how priceless the old relic was to become.

One of the FDN medics who recognized me was Rebecca, a combat vet of 17 whom I had met on my first visit to an FDN field hospital in 1983 (see "Paramedico," SOF March '84). No longer carrying her FN-FAL, she had been trained as a paramedico, and was a damned good one. Handling one of the sick call desks, she screened the patients, treating routine illness with care and skill, and turning over the more serious cases to Felipe, me, or the other FDN docs.

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Another lady that we got to know briefly was a young woman in her mid-20s. Articulate and courteous, she had the dark Hispanic beauty found among many Nicaraguan women. Dressed in a spotless white peasant blouse over camouflage trousers and jungle boots, her black eyes mirrored a determined strength. At the hospital for a check-up, she had just returned with her unit from special operations deep within Nicaragua. She is that unit's commander.

Then there was old "Land, Air and Water," as his friends in the surgical ward called him. Hit in the leg, he was evacuated by a helicopter. Sandinista ground fire hit him again while in the air. The chopper crashed in a stream, where he took yet another round while in the water. Yet he survived with wounds in the left leg and both arms. Now "Land, Air and Water" was about healed and ready to return to the fight in another week.

"You know," I told him while dressing his leg wound, "when I was in Vietnam, if a man got wounded three times, he got a ticket home. No more fighting." His joking manner disappeared. "You had a home to return to, amigo," he said.

— John E. Padgett

## FULL AUTO

Continued from page 18

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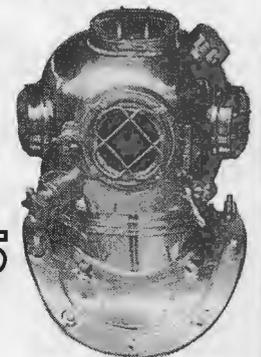
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this, we must emulate the NRA, which, in 115 years has not had a fatality or serious injury in any sanctioned competition.

No matter how big a war chest we accumulate, none of the above will be possible unless people step forward to the firing line and volunteer their time and efforts as well. The NFA's first five initial directors (all of whom serve and will continue to do so without remuneration of any kind) were appointed and represent as broad a spectrum of interest level and geographical location as possible.

They are: John Nichols of Portland, Oregon (503-286-3206); Sheila Powell of Bristolville, Ohio (216-889-3717); Roger Small of Brentwood, Tennessee (615-331-9655); Jim Pongrass of Houston, Texas (713-492-2945); and Paige Massey of Austin, Texas (512-328-5500). Call them for further information or if you can volunteer your time in addition to your membership dues. Four additional directors will be elected by 1 January 1987. Each director will serve a staggered two-year term and will be responsible for the appointment of executive officers to effectuate board policy.

We need your help. Benjamin Franklin said, "Surely we must hang together, or surely we shall hang separately." We must organize, be heard and work with the existing three million membership of the NRA to overturn this "machine gun ban." Without your individual participation, the erosion of our Second Amendment rights will continue at an ever-increasing pace. You'll hear more about the NFA's progress in future Full Auto columns. ✕

## NELSON'S COMBAT LEATHER

*Continued from page 45*

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qualities over a long period of time requires some break-in before it can be used. The unloaded pistol or magazine must be inserted repeatedly into the holster or pouch with a very slight twisting motion to gently loosen the fit of the leather. The time required will vary. It took but two or three minutes to break in my Colt Officer's Model holster and close to 30 minutes for the Glock 17. Sliding the holster on the belt will also require considerable effort at first. After the two have been worn for a short period of time they will mate together with just the proper amount of tension.

Nelson's catalog is straight and to the point. He offers new designs only when he is convinced they fulfill a professional requirement. His list includes a wheel-gun holster for strong-side carry, police duty holster, IPSC competition holster, ankle holster, revolver speed-loader pouch, handcuff case, Sam Browne belt, Carlos Widmann rifle sling, Western gunbelt rig, combat shotshell holders, assault rifle magazine pouches, and several types of hunting holsters. Most of this equipment carries a natural medium tan, but dark brown and black are also available.

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## TALES FROM UNCLE JACK

*Continued from page 62*

squadron they had, that did precision bombing.

"That night the anti-maquisard German force was coming up from Clermont-Ferrond, and they broke through, liberated a group in Ussel, and were on their way to this town of Egleton. So, well after dark, I gave the word to break contact and head for the hills. We had a prearranged rendezvous.

"We'd been up for three days straight, so we were really bushed. My Frenchman, radio operator and I headed up, and I think that I must have been sleeping while walking, because I just didn't remember it.

"I do remember getting to a farmhouse. We didn't go into the farmhouse, we went into the barn, and just burrowed into the hay and went to sleep.

"Well, my radio operator had slept, and he woke up when a German troop came up and banged on the farmhouse and went in and searched the place, looking for maquisards.

"Of course, he couldn't sleep. He was terrified, but my Frenchman and I were out cold. The next morning we got up and started toward the rendezvous. Up on some high ground we could see back toward the

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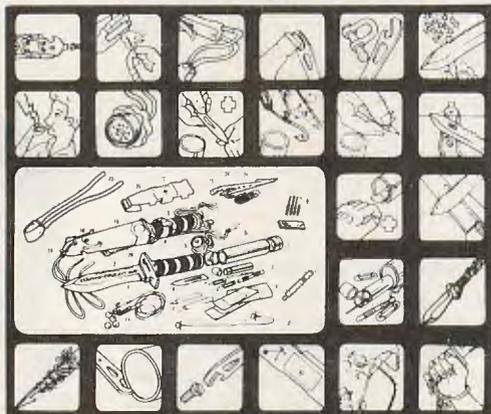
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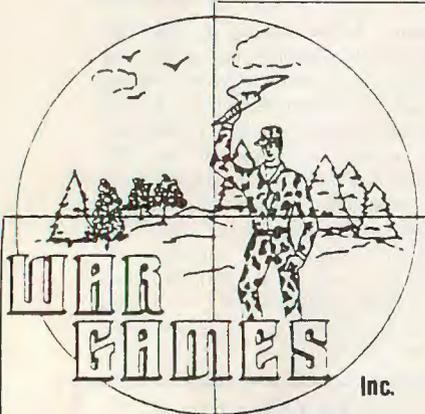
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town of Egleton. We went to an open area, and saw four Mosquitos coming right on the deck. They flew directly to the town, went up into the air, came down, and four of them put their bombs exactly into that school. Absolutely leveled it.

"The trouble is the Germans had already gotten there, and moved on to find out what had happened to the garrisons in these other towns. The only people left at that time were some wounded Germans, and some people taking care of them. Probably less than a platoon had been left behind.

"By this time, after we had gotten permission to attack, and after Paris had fallen to the Allies, the Germans were interested in heading back to Germany. Our orders were to prevent them from getting from the Atlantic coast ports back to Germany by moving through our province. Our province was rugged enough so that we could pretty well stop them. Their main route was to the north, just south of the Loire River. We got permission to move the battalion up and attack Germans moving through that area.

"By this time we were able to move into towns. Generally speaking, when we'd go into a town, I'd take over the Gestapo headquarters, because I'd found that they were usually pretty well stocked, and in pretty good buildings. So they jokingly referred to me as the 'American Gestapo.'

"We were royally treated compared to the austere eating conditions that we had in England. In England you could only get one egg a week. Well, we were out in farm country, so we could have eggs every day if we wanted. We could have meat. If there was any food available, we were given highest priority in the whole province.

"Later, when we moved into towns, or when we moved into better accommodations, our hosts would crack open a wall that they had sealed up to hide their best wines or their best cognac from the Germans. And they would produce the most incredible wine, just to celebrate the occasion — the arrival of the Allies.

"Eventually we were given instructions to exfiltrate the area. We crossed the Loire River in the vicinity of Orleans. We eventually made contact with some patrols that were on the south side of the Loire River. We crossed on a ferry that had been put into operation — the bridges had all been taken out — and went on into Paris. This was in October of '44, something like that."

Singlaub then began looking for another good mission. "My intelligence officer in the maquisard was an Austrian by birth. He'd spent most of his life in France, but he was fluent in German. He had contacts in Austria. And there were a lot of French that had escaped from the labor camps in Austria, and had gone to the mountains. It was his suggestion that we take our team up there and help set up a resistance in the Austrian Alps, among the French who had escaped. So, I put the proposal to London."

Singlaub even presented the proposal in person, returning to Paris two days later to await formal approval.

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"When we came back to Paris I thought they were going to approve this thing, but apparently the status of Austria was under debate, because of the three-power thing: British-Russian-U.S. interests in that area. So that mission never took place."

Singlaub returned to England for further training while awaiting reassignment. In December 1944, he volunteered to go to the Far East. Many of the Jeds had already left to go there. First, though, he had some homefront duty to complete. He received 30 days of leave in the States on his way to the China-Burma-India theatre. He and his fiancé, Mary Osborne, were married 6 January 1945, just prior to his new assignment in eastern Asia. He met her before joining OSS and they announced their engagement just prior to his deployment to Europe.

Now World War II was quickly nearing its end. But plenty of adventure lay in store for Jack Singlaub. Among other things, he would be dropping supplies to U.S. operatives assisting a guerrilla movement in French Indochina headed by a man named Ho Chi Minh. He would parachute into what later became North Vietnam. And he would lead a small commando team which made a daring daylight drop onto Hainan Island to free Allied POWs being held by 10,000 of Japan's Hokkaido Marines.

Once on the ground, with his radio destroyed in the jump, he had the unpleasant task of being the bearer of bad news for the Japanese CO. The United States had dropped the atom bomb, and surrender by Japan was imminent. After refusing to talk with the Japanese lieutenant sent out to take him and his men captive, Singlaub brazenly informed the stunned commander that the tiny commando unit was taking charge of all Allied prisoners and military installations on the island.

But that's another tale from Uncle Jack. Watch for it in a future issue of *Soldier of Fortune*. ✕

## RL-550 RELOADER

*Continued from page 65*

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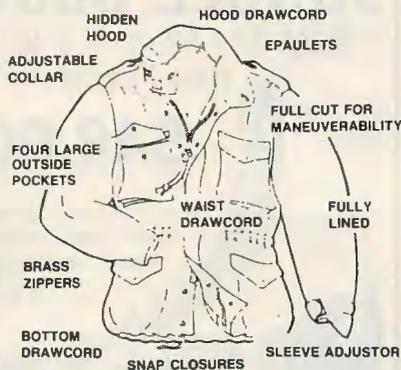
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Finally, Dillon's primer magazines are all armored. But don't let that lull you into thinking you can stick ice picks or screwdrivers down the primer tube or otherwise force them in any way. Always treat primers like Fabergé eggs, unless you want a hole in your head or in the ceiling of your reloading room.

How does Dillon consistently wax his competition in both quality and price? Easy, they have no distributors, wholesalers or stocking dealers to add to their margin of profit. Dillon products are ordered factory direct. In addition, problems can be addressed directly to the factory (1-800-421-7632) where your questions will be fielded by experienced shooters and reloaders who know the product line. For further information contact Dillon Precision Products (Dept. SOF, 7442 E. Butherus Drive, Scottsdale, AZ 85260). Break loose and start popping caps by the thousands — that's what your machine gun was designed for. ✂

## BULLETIN BOARD

*Continued from page 6*

from the water unconscious by her mother. But Mrs. Tammy Kroll was unable to reach a telephone operator for a rescue squad because of the AT&T strike. Hearing Mrs. Kroll's screams, Patridge — who lost both legs in a 1966 Vietnam land mine explosion — hurried across the street, assisted by his wife, Sue. After Sue pushed Patridge's wheelchair 60 yards through a bumpy field, their way was blocked by a thick, high hedgerow.

Without hesitation, Patridge slid from his chair and crawled another 60 feet through the tangled brush to reach poolside. "I didn't detect any heartbeat," Patridge later said. "The baby wasn't breathing and her face was blue. Her little eyes were all rolled back. So I started CPR." His action saved Jennifer Kroll's life. Patridge disagreed. "God saved that child, not me."



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## WALKING THE LINE...

It started out as Civilian Border Assistance, a volunteer border militia to monitor and apprehend illegal aliens crossing from Mexico into Arizona. The U.S. Border Patrol admittedly catches only a small percentage of the illegals fleeing economic hardships in Mexico. (See "U.S. Border Patrol: Riding Herd on the Tex-Mex Line," page 34)

The CBA soon faltered, however. Tom Posey of Civilian Material Assistance stepped in to take the fledgling group under CMA's wing. J.R. Hagan heads the reorganized effort in Arizona and Nevada. The border vigilantes made headlines when 20 of their numbers from Arizona, Kansas and California — armed with Mini-14s, AR-15s, ChiCom semi-auto AKs and a wide array of handguns — made citizens' arrests of 11 illegals caught in two pickups in Lochiel, east of Nogales, Arizona, on 5 July at 0330. The trucks were confiscated and the suspects deported.

Although the group claims to have the support of unspecified federal agencies, U.S. Border Patrol members dispute this. And prior to the 5 July incident, FBI agents — aware of what was afoot — discouraged two members from participating. One member, a naturalized U.S. citizen from Nicaragua, and the other, a husband of a legal alien, were told their status in the U.S. could be adversely affected if they participated. The two remained at home, but complained that the CMA's border efforts are an extension of "a long-honored American tradition" of citizens banning together to deal with problems the government can't solve. They cited as examples the Cattlemen's Association and Neighborhood Watch Committees.

## TASS PRAISES PEACE PUKES...

Leftist demonstrators claiming to support peace not surprisingly are the subject of glowing reports in the Soviet press, most notably Tass. Pravda reported the "brave action" of some useful idiots from Colorado's Rocky Mountain Peace Center to disrupt a nuclear test in Nevada. In a telephone interview with a New York-based Tass correspondent, one of the five peace pukers complained that "we didn't have a chance to fulfill the set task."

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Set by whom, one wonders? "We were arrested . . . beyond the boundaries of the nuclear testing ground," he said. *Soldier of Fortune* deplores human sacrifice, especially for a stupid cause like communist propaganda. But we must not forget that this country is based on individual liberty and adult responsibility. So the next time the Rocky Mountain Peace Center wants to send volunteers to sit atop ground zero, we would urge law-enforcement officials to stand aside.

## REUNIONS, ANNOUNCEMENTS...

A reunion of Vietnam's **River Patrol Force (Task Force 116)** is set for **11 November in Albany, Oregon**. Held under the auspices of the Gamewardens of Vietnam Association, Inc., the River Patrol Force units were part of Operation Gamewarden that operated in the Mekong Delta region from 1966-71. For more information, write: **John Williams, Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 5523, Virginia Beach, VA 23455, or call Lt. Cliff Clifton at (804)490-2315.**

Many veterans of World War II, Korea and Vietnam were separated from the service before being issued medals which they were entitled to wear, according to Korean Veterans International. The KVI is offering a brochure explaining how authorized veterans may obtain these medals. To obtain the brochure, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to: **Medals Brochure, c/o Korean Veterans International, Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 52033, Tulsa, OK 74152.**

**The 101 Association, Inc.,** is holding its **1986 Eastern Regional Reunion at the Holiday Inn, 6515 International Drive, Orlando, Florida, on 15-16 October**. It is comprised of men who served in special operations units deployed in the China-Burma-India Theater during World War II. **Registration deadline is 15 September**. For more information, write: James R. Ward, Dept. SOF, 104 Dogwood Circle, Seminole, FL 33543, or Harry W. Little Jr., Dept. SOF, 102 8th St., Belleair Beach, FL 33535.

Some Vietnam veterans in Delaware County, New York, are trying to get their veterans' hotline out of the red ink column and back into operation. Their call load has been so heavy they've been unable to pay their phone bill and were

temporarily disconnected. Honor the dead by helping the living. Send your tax deductible donations to: **NYS Delaware County Vietnam Veterans' Hotline, Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 191, Walton, NY 13856**. For additional information, call **Anthony S. Losicco at (607)865-7309**.

If you are interested in obtaining **POW/MIA bracelets**, they're still available. Write **Liz Slick, c/o National League of POW/MIA Families, Ohio Chapter, Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 14853, Columbus, Ohio 43214** for more information.

## FONDA'S FRAUD...

As regular readers know, SOF likes to keep the editorial fires lit beneath Jane Fonda, who with her husband, "Tommy the Commie" Hayden, volunteered extensive propaganda assistance to Hanoi during the Vietnam War. In the July issue of SOF, Bulletin Board advised readers to order a copy of the December 1985 issue of *Conservative Digest Magazine* containing an excellent article concerning Fonda's efforts to soft-soap her 1960's radical image. But we printed the magazine's incorrect address, according to BM-1 Henry Sieg, a U.S. Coast Guard lighthouse keeper on Burnt Island, Maine.

We stand corrected, Bosun's Mate Sieg. To obtain a copy of the December 1985 issue containing the article, "Who Is Afraid of Blabby Jane?" Hanoi Jane Fonda is playing a moderate these days to make millions to finance her husband's socialist projects," write: **Conservative Digest, Dept. SOF, 1635 Blue Spruce Drive, Ft. Collins, CO 80524**. Or call: 1-800-847-0122 (Inside Colorado call 1-221-0964.) Back issues are \$2 each. Annual subscriptions are \$19.95.

## ADVENTURE BOOKS...

SOF is launching a series of adventure novels and is soliciting prospective manuscripts. Submissions (**DO NOT SEND ORIGINALS; COPIES ONLY**) should be 70,000-125,000 words. They *must* be fictional and technical accuracy is required. A potential for serialization is desirable. Manuscripts

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## FLAK

*Continued from page 10*

N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006.  
Ray Hawkins  
Burney, California

How could our government treat the subject of POW/MIAs with such an attitude? These brave men fought and died for their country. How could the CIL-HI and the U.S. Army mislead these poor families? They have suffered enough. Thanks for exposing them. Now it's time to write my congressman. Maybe with enough letters he'll light a fire under someone's ass.

Don Fanning, Airman —  
USAF  
Ellsworth AFB, South Dakota

*We encourage all our readers to keep the flame burning bright on the subject of all of our servicemen missing in action. Start by writing your senators (U.S. Senator John Doe, U.S. Capitol, Washington, D.C. 20510) and congressmen (U.S. Representative John Doe, U.S. Capitol, Washington, D.C. 20515). U.S. Representative Bill Nichols, the congressman investigating, should be encouraged to hold hearings on the subject.*

## THE LID DILEMMA...

Sirs:

It was with great interest that we read your recent article on the new Light Infantry Divisions (SOF, July '86). A similar reorganization is taking place in the Armored Cavalry, with results just as discouraging.

The reconnaissance elements of the Armored Cavalry are being reorganized, reduced in strength, and in the case of our unit — Air Troop of the 107th Armored Cavalry Regiment — eliminated altogether. Since Air Troop is at the same time expanding to squadron strength we would have thought that the need for ground troops to provide security and carry out dismounted patrols would be greater than ever, but instead we were told that the positions for 19-Deltas/Cavalry Scouts were being

eliminated.

Our efforts to find out why this is happening, through our unit's chain-of-command, local elected officials, etc. have been less than overwhelming. Any input or help would be most welcome as well as any assistance we can provide to other units faced with the same future.

Joseph G. Gild  
Steven E Yoders  
John M. Smith  
1802 State Route 43  
Mogadore, Ohio 44260

## ISRAELI MILITARY TOURS...

Sirs:

I was interested to note ads urging U.S. Navy vets to sign up for the Israeli Navy Veterans Tour '86. Perhaps some of the crew of the USS *Liberty* would like to go along. Robert Epstein  
Port of Albany, New York

In 1985 I read Mike Epstein's ad in SOF for the Armoured Infantry Tour to Israel. This tour was outstanding. We received briefings from high-level members of the Israeli military who know firsthand the experience of war. The accommodations were in the best hotels and the food excellent. If Mike runs the trip to Israel again, it is an absolute must for those who want to see a battle-tested military ready to go.

Wayne M. Harris  
Rochester, New York

## OUTRAGE OVER ISRAEL...

Sirs:

Because of your opposing viewpoints in FLAK, I finally decided to resubscribe. I had let the first notice go by and was about to ignore the second. I had become convinced that only those who were 100 percent pro-Israel should subscribe to SOF. The August issue helped change my mind.

How about a future article on the brutal attack on the USS *Liberty* on 8 June 1967? Or an interview with Marine Captain Charles Johnson, who stopped three Israeli tanks with a .45 pistol in Lebanon in 1983? Or finally, how about an article on why Israel has such favorable treatment from press, government, etc?

Paul J. Wright  
Hutchinson, Kansas ✕

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Photo by Mike Schaefer

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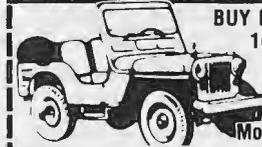
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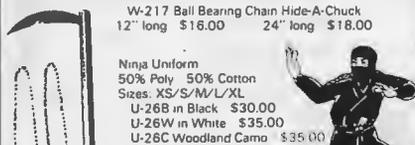


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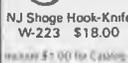
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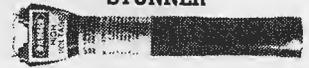
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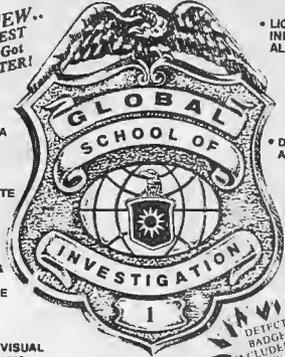


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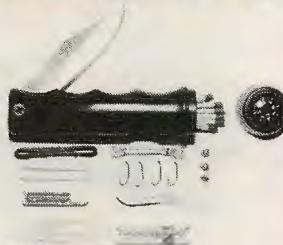


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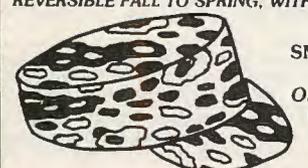
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## Quality, Functionality and WARMTH...

When it comes to winter clothing, the 3 main concerns of the military are quality, functionality and WARMTH. After this they think about price.

The US military wants its troops to keep warm in the winter in clothes that will last a bunch of winters. They know quality costs more.

Genuine military clothing isn't the cheapest. But as every ex-GI knows, the clothes seem to last forever, they're very, very warm and designed to be functional.

All the items in this ad are current military issue, brand new and unconditionally guaranteed to satisfy you or your money back. And when you consider the quality, do the prices seem high at all?

### USAF Heavyweight Flight Jacket - Type N2B

DESIGNED FOR TEMPERATURES OF -10° to 32° F.

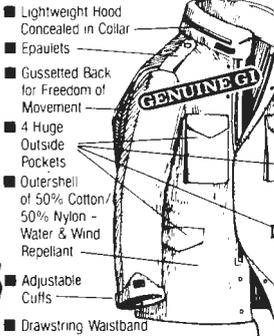


- Polyester Fiberfill Lining - (Maximum Warmth Per Ounce)
  - Nylon Shell - (Waterproof & Windproof)
  - Shell Color Sage Green
  - 2 Outside Pockets
  - Knit Cuffs and Waist
  - Pile Line Hood - (drapes over shoulder when not needed)
  - Flap Under Zipper to Prevent "Cold Spots"
  - Zippered Sleeve Pocket with Pencil Holder
- Sizes: S, M, L and XL \$87.75/each.

### Field Jacket - Type M65

In one form or another, this jacket has been the military workhorse for over 40 years and is still going strong.

The field jacket is designed for 3 season wear. In winter you can button in the liner (see below) or wear a vest or heavy sweater under it.



- Lightweight Hood Concealed in Collar
- Epaulets
- Gusseted Back for Freedom of Movement
- 4 Huge Outside Pockets
- Outer shell of 50% Cotton/50% Nylon - Water & Wind Repellent
- Adjustable Cuffs
- Drawstring Waistband

### M65 Liner

designed to be buttoned into the M65 Field Jacket. These liners are lightweight, polyester-fiberfilled, and very warm. Order same size as your field jacket. Sizes: XS, S, M, L, XL \$19.00/each.

### Ranger Combat Cap - Woodland Camouflage

latest Army issue. This winterweight cap features lined flaps which can fold out to keep your ears warm and tucked into the hat when the weather's balmy. Sizes run small. Also available in Olive Drab (OD) Green. Sizes: 7, 7-1/4, 7-1/2, 7-3/4 \$8.50/each.

### Drill Instructor/Smokey the Bear Hat

Formerly 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 hear apobse, 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.

### Genuine Leather Chin Strap

Acorn Hat Cord (as shown) \$2.00/each. (Specify color: silver, gold metallic, black gold, metallic, yellow, red or light blue) \$7.75/each.

### Watch Cap - 100% Wool

- Tight Ribbed Weave
  - Roll Down to Cover Ears When Desired
  - One Size Fits All
- Choose Color - Black or Olive Drab (OD) Green \$6.00 each.

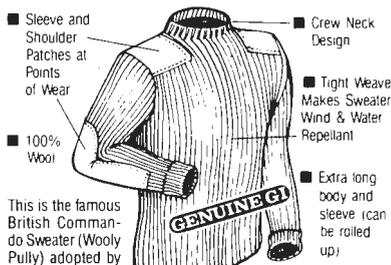


Sizes: XS, S, M, L, XL (Send us your chest size for proper fit) Long Length (for person over 6 ft. tall) Choose: Olive Drab (OD) Green or Woodland Camouflage (Also Black or Tan Commercial Mt. to GI Specs. - Reg. Length Only) Reg Length \$55.00 Long Length \$60.50 Extra Large/Long \$85.00

### MILITARY GOODS CATALOG

1987 edition, 84 pages, loaded with genuine military clothing, gear and equipment. \$2.00/each. Free with order.

### Commando Sweater



- Sleeve and Shoulder Patches at Points of Wear
- 100% Wool
- Crew Neck Design
- Tight Weave Makes Sweater Wind & Water Repellent
- Extra long body and sleeve (can be rolled up)

This is the famous British Commando Sweater (Woolly Pulley) adopted by the US Military. The natural 100% wool fibre content makes the sweater super warm. Specify size: 34, 36, 38, 40, 42, 44, 46 \$47.75/each.

Choose:  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 nameplate area);  Camouflage Crewneck;  Tan Crewneck;  Maroon Crewneck.

### 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 \$22.75/each.

### We're Not The Cheapest!! But Then, We're Not Trying to Be.

For over 65 years the Kaufman name has been respected for offering the finest in genuine military goods and insignia. Our commitment to first rate service is legendary. Our service policy means:

- All in stock items are shipped no later than the next business day regardless of whether you pay by check, money order, credit card or C.O.D. (There is a C.O.D. fee of \$4.00 in addition to the regular shipping)
- Toll free telephone lines direct to our Customer Service Department. We'll not only be glad to take your orders (every firm with an 800 number will do that) but we'll also be happy to answer your questions. Whether you're calling to ask about our merchandise or the status of an order you placed, we guarantee friendly, courteous service.
- No, we're not the cheapest. But you get what you pay for. If you order the cheapest you may wait a long time for delivery of something you may ultimately be unhappy with. If you order from Kaufman's you'll see why top quality merchandise and first rate service (with a Customer Service Department always available) will squeeze the most value out of every dollar you spend.

### IMMEDIATE SHIPMENT

### SHIPPING COSTS

Please include appropriate shipping costs from chart below with each order. Amounts shown include costs of postage, packaging insurance and handling.

Orders up to \$10.00	\$3.00
Orders from \$10.01 to 20.00	3.75
Orders from \$20.01 to 35.00	4.50
Orders from \$35.01 to 50.00	5.25
Orders from \$50.01 to 70.00	6.25
Orders from \$70.01 to 90.00	7.25
Orders over \$90.00	8.00

Canadian Orders - Send Double Amount Indicated.

# SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

YES! Send me one year (12 issues) of Soldier of Fortune for \$24.95 — I save 30%

I prefer two years (24 issues) for only \$44.95 — I save 37%

Savings based on annual newsstand rate of \$36.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

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PAYMENT ENCLOSED (U.S. FUNDS ONLY)

MASTERCARD     VISA

CARD # \_\_\_\_\_ EXP. DATE \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Payment must accompany order. Please allow 4-8 weeks for your first copy to be mailed. (Offer good in U.S., Mexico & Canada only.)

Offer expires 6/30/87



## ● Tough Customers

Dillon Precision has sold over 50,000 progressive reloaders, most of them to average shooters and darn nice guys. Some of our customers however are pretty damn tough. We can't give you all the details but we can tell you this. Dillon progressive reloaders are in use by members of the U.S. Special Forces, the U.S. Seal Team in Norfolk, VA, the ISRAELI MILITARY INDUSTRIES and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Agents from the U.S. Secret Service stuff Dillon loaded 9 mm's into their UZI's. Swat teams around the world prepare their special ammunition on Dillon reloaders. Governments in Thailand, Equador and the Philippines protect their leaders with Dillon ammo. Rumor has it that Dillon loaded ammunition went ashore in Grenada. Hell, even Rambo's blanks were loaded on a Dillon. Wherever there is need for special purpose ammunition that absolutely must not fail — Dillon is there.

## ● The New Dillon RL550

Based on the RL450, the best selling progressive reloader in history, the new RL550 fills the demands of the worlds toughest customers. The new automatic powder and primer systems, combined with interchangeable die holding tool heads, make the Dillon RL550 incredibly simple for a beginner, as well as quickly producing match grade ammo for the professional. The Dillon RL550 is available in over 115 different rifle and pistol calibers. Priced at \$234.95, the Dillon RL550 is complete to load one caliber, less dies.

## ● Your Choice

There are less expensive reloaders than the RL550 and the choice of the worlds toughest customers may be more reloader than you need, but before you put your money down consider this. Out of all of the claims and promises for performance, only Dillon will let you try the RL550 for 30 days. If it doesn't live up to our claims or your expectations return it, we'll refund your money including postage. Our warranty is simple, no fine print, no time limit, no games. Commercial reloader or weekend warrior, 500 rounds or 500,000 — if it breaks we'll fix it, free.



## ● Dillon Progressive Reloading Die Sets

Dillon's tapered carbide sizing die guarantees that your bullets will always be tight. Our super seating dies have a large "open radius" entrance. Starting bullets has never been easier. Accu-crimping takes the mystery out of how much crimp is enough. \$39.95 in 38/357, 45 ACP, 9MM and 44 Mag.



## ● You Can't Do Without Em

Dillon's High Quality Alloy Primer Flip Tray  
\$10.50



Precision Primer Pick Up Tubes — 4 for \$10.00

Dillon Caliber Conversion Kits — \$23.00  
RL550 Interchangeable Die Holders — 3 for \$25.00



## ● Dillon Electric Case Trimmer

Case trimming has always been the most unpleasant part of reloading. The RT1200 takes the work out by simultaneously sizing and trimming cases. Available in 223, 308 or 30/06. \$98.50.



## ● Dillon Super Swage 600

Until now, re-using military brass with its crimped in primers has been a slow and uncertain task. The Dillon solution is a remarkably simple device that allows you to swage the primer pocket with speed and ease. \$39.95 complete for large and small primers.



## ● Urban Camouflage

Blend into the firing line at your local range in Dillon blue. Caps \$4.50, Tee Shirts \$6.50, Golf Shirts \$18.50, Shooters' Jackets \$34.95.

## ● Order Now

All Dillon products are sold factory direct and backed by a simple sales policy. Try our products for 30 days; if you are not completely satisfied, simply return for a full refund. Ordering from Dillon Precision is simple. Call us TOLL FREE. A member of our staff will be glad to take your order. Please have your Visa or Master Card ready when you call. If you prefer, we will ship C.O.D. cash with no extra C.O.D. charge. All RL550 presses are shipped freight paid within the continental U.S. All other orders are subject to a \$4.00 shipping/handling fee. Call Toll Free 1-800-421-7632. In Arizona 602-948-8009.

# Dillon Precision

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Scottsdale, Az 85260

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