



Clint Eastwood's "Heartbreak Ridge"

# SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

JANUARY  
1987

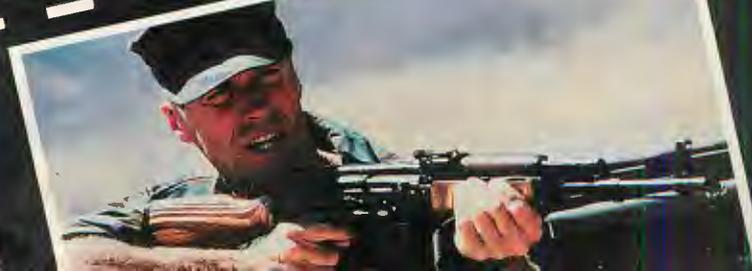
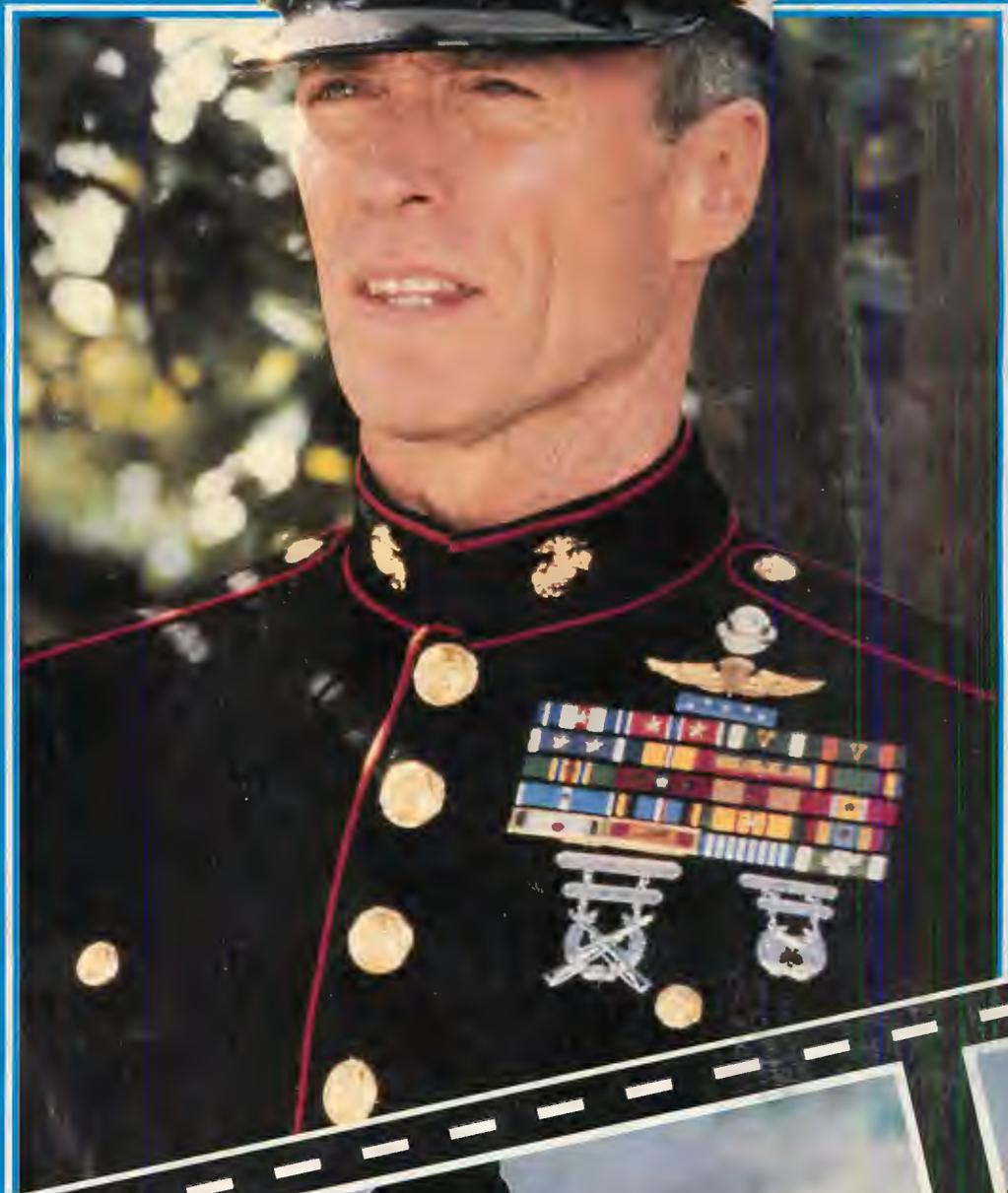
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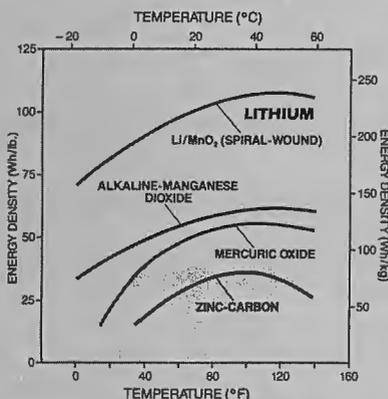
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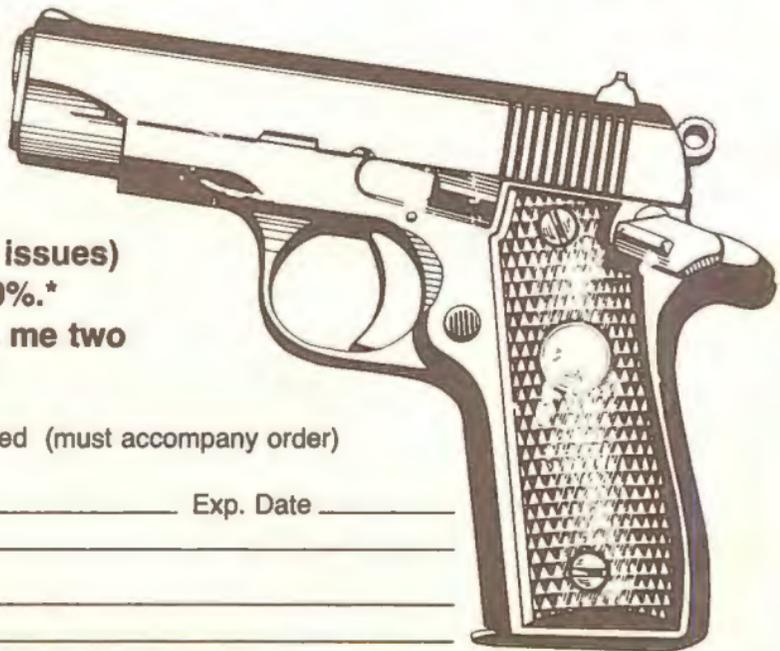
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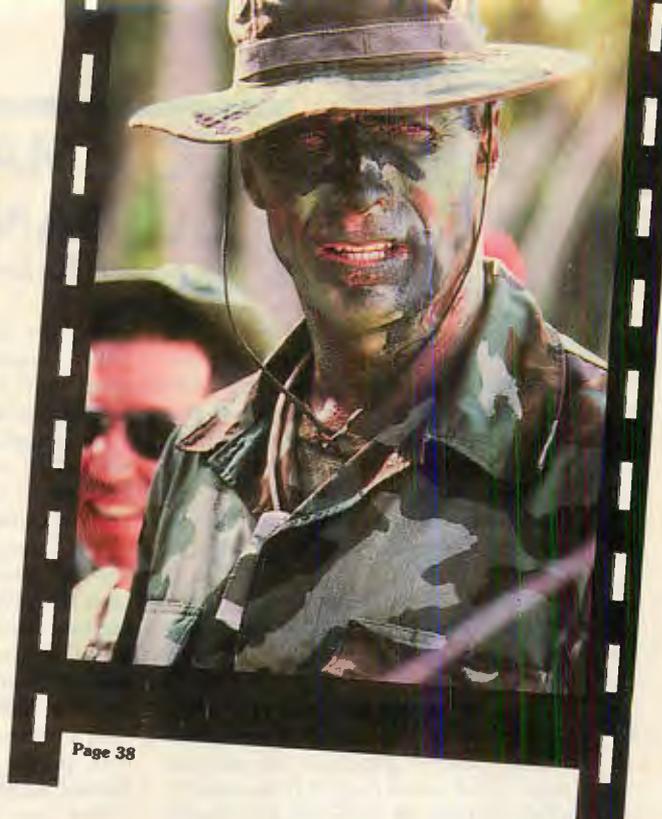
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**COVER:** One for the Corps. Clint Eastwood plays a hard-driving Marine NCO in "Heartbreak Ridge," a film about the modern Marine Corps. Eastwood and his men find common ground on the shores of a Caribbean island during an American invasion — the whole thing looks suspiciously like Grenada.

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# COMMAND GUIDANCE

by Robert K. Brown

It looks as if the CIA is in and the private sector is out. But the retreat of private aid from the contras' fight for freedom against the Sandinistas is not an ignominious one. Patriotic citizens who donated time, money and supplies to the contras can be proud of their part in keeping these freedom fighters fighting.

Private sector aid does not have a long history. In fact, *Soldier of Fortune* Magazine started it. I formed the Afghan Freedom Fighters Fund back in 1980, less than a year after the Soviets invaded Afghanistan. When Central America became an important issue in 1981, the struggling nation of El Salvador found itself in danger of being overrun by Marxist guerrillas. SOF is proud to have provided supplies and training to the Salvadoran military as it struggled to stay alive. Well, it has withstood the test of battle and El Salvador's fledgling democracy is well on its way toward putting the guerrillas out of business once and for all.

But none of the private sector's previous efforts were as strong, nor as focused, as they were with the new crisis in Nicaragua. I don't think I'm exaggerating when I say that private sector aid kept the contras alive during the dark days since the spring of 1984 when the U.S. Congress voted to cut off aid to these freedom fighters. But between the will to fight against the tyranny that had taken over their homeland, and the supplies sent down by Americans who care, the contras held on — both in manpower and in spirit — until Congress came to its senses in 1986 and voted for \$100 million in aid. And

that's the difference between guerrilla theater and a real army — a real army can stick together through triumph and adversity.

As Americans, we can thank all the patriotic men and women who flocked to the contras' cause in record numbers. But no single individual deserves more credit for making the private sector project a success than General John K. Singlaub. He is probably the one man who is most responsible for keeping the contras from falling apart when there was no "official" aid to be had. He singlehandedly brought the American public out of its lethargy and turned words into deeds.



But Gen. Singlaub did more than tour the lecture circuit. His organization, the United States Council for World Freedom (USCF), has donated \$25 million to the contras and they are not ready to stop yet. Even with U.S. government aid in the offing, Gen. Singlaub still devotes 90 percent of his time to the contra cause. The little time that he

has left is spent aiding other struggling movements resisting communist tyranny around the world. Recently, a huge shipment of medical supplies he had procured made its way from Korea to the anti-communist guerrillas in Cambodia. This man never quits.

But just because the horizon looks brighter for the freedom fighters in Nicaragua, don't give up on sending your surplus uniforms, boots, socks and web gear to those organizations aiding the contras. Because even after the U.S. government gets into the act, the contras' morale will get a big boost from knowing that the American people are behind them and their cause. ✕

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# THE RESCUERS: THE WORLD'S TOP ANTI-TERRORIST UNITS

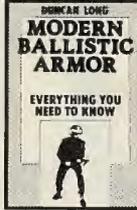
by Leroy Thompson

Planes hijacked. Embassies taken over by force. Children held hostage. No one—and no country—is immune to terrorism anymore. And that's where hostage rescue units (HRUs) come in. In **The Rescuers**—the **FIRST** and **ONLY** book on HRUs—the units of over fifty countries are detailed, as are their training, operations, weapons and equipment. Leroy Thompson, having worked with hostage rescue, counterinsurgency and VIP protection teams in more than a dozen countries, includes a no-holds-barred rating of units. Five classic examples of actual rescues bring to life a unit's anti-terrorist tactics and planning. Photos of units—many of which have never been released—are included. Well-known HRUs, such as Germany's GSG-9, Britain's Special Air Service, France's GIGN and the U.S. Delta are covered, as are the lesser-known units of Bahrain, Colombia, Malaysia and other nations. 5½ x 8½, hardcover, photos, glossary, index, 216 pp. **\$17.95**



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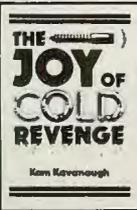
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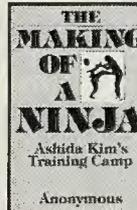
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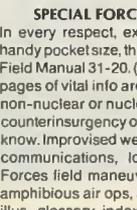
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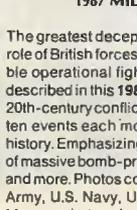
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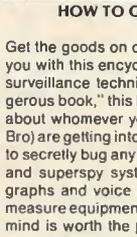
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Doris O.  
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Regarding Gulf-Chevron Corporation. I have just cut my credit card into pieces and refuse to buy anything from Gulf. I doubt they would even blink an eye at this. I guess Red money spends just as easy to them as green money. Keep up the excellent work. If it were not for your magazine, I would be supporting them unknowingly.

Tip Burns  
League City,  
Texas

SOF ran a Bulletin Board item, "Fueling Marxist Fires," in the September '86 issue, about Chevron Corporation's sponsoring of Soviet-Cuban adventurism in Africa. Here's a reprint of the address for those who want to get directly involved: R. Cort Kirkwood, Gulf Out of Angola Project, The Conservative Caucus, Inc., Dept. SOF, 450 Maple Ave. East, Vienna, VA 22180, or call (703) 893-1550.



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## COMBAT PISTOLCRAFT...

Sirs:

In the August 1986 Combat Weaponcraft, "Good Enough for Custer," regarding pistols in combat, you failed to present the main idea behind wearing a pistol in combat. The fighting officer's pistol is intended for use on his own soldiers. In wartime an officer can use his weapon against soldiers gone mad, traitors, cowards, soldiers who refuse to carry out orders, etc. Threats or wounding may have the same effect, of course. Civil and military laws in different countries vary, and the officer's right to use his pistol varies also. Here in Sweden, the death penalty is totally abolished, even for traitors in wartime, but to defend one's life is an acceptable reason for shooting. In many communist countries there are laws that forbid you to surrender to the enemy if you're still alive. The pistol may in this case be used as an instrument of suicide.

Name & address withheld

You raise an interesting, and admittedly valid, point. Soviet NKVD political officers during World War II were notorious for shooting troops with a penchant for heading east instead of west, and the Russians certainly weren't the only ones who used sidearms as a motivational technique. But the "lead by pistol point" method of command indicates acute leadership problems — something we try to rectify before the battle, not during it.



## SOF's VICE?...

Sirs:

I thoroughly enjoyed "Hollywood Heat in Miami: The New Guns of Miami Vice" (October '86 SOF). It would have been even better if the criticism of the S&W Model 645 had been explained, however.

G.K. Nash  
Amarillo, Texas

I have been a subscriber to SOF for three years. While living abroad it helped keep me informed as to the dispositions of political and military situations around the world, as well as assisting me in weapons research for a novel I am writing. The pastel pink and blue cover of your October issue with its article about Miami Vice was cute. I wonder, though, what kind of expertise Don Johnson has concerning weapons any more than Ed Asner has on Central America. If I wanted to read about television and Hollywood hoopla I would buy a movie magazine, but that is not the kind of magazine I am interested in. I am cancelling my subscription. Maintaining authority on military affairs while pursuing mass-appeal and television media personality hype seems incompatible to me. Until SOF decides which way it's going to go I'll save my money.

Name withheld  
Seattle, Washington

Is it "Soldier of Fiction" now, or perhaps "Soldier of Fashion?" A pink and blue cover? A very wasteful article. Are the yuppies in control over there or what? Designer scuba gear and now designer weapons. How about an article on why Jeff Cooper doesn't think much of the S&W 645? Stop trying to be so "in" and remember that many of us protecting the American way of life are standing on the outside looking in.

Steven J. Anderson  
Jeffrey D. Jones  
3rd Bn. 2nd Marines

SOF has mixed coverage of various firearms, freedom fighters, and political bozos (and heros) so well that your magazine is never dull. But even players with great batting averages strike out once in a while, and I feel your "staff" article on Miami Vice's new hardware left innuendos about the new Smith 645 that should be answered.

The 645 can be safely cocked and locked with a simple no bucks modification that is absolutely

reliable. Jeff Cooper himself recommends it. He also doesn't like the Smith 39/59 series, but different doesn't always mean bad. I've fired over 6,000 rounds in IPSC competition through my model 39, and it malfunctioned only once. When the 645 came out, it was logical to move up to a "real gun." I'm not sorry in the least. Was it a jewel right out of the box? No, but few things are nowadays. So the safety moves up instead of down like Colt. As long as you haven't had a lobotomy, this isn't something that should throw you.

Brian A. Jackson  
Lake City, Pennsylvania

Due to the reader response we have been receiving after running "The New Guns of Miami Vice," we are prepared to deliver our own test and evaluation of the Smith & Wesson 645. Look for the review in an upcoming issue of Soldier of Fortune.

## CALLING ALL VETS...

Sirs:

In May 1970, two Marines from my unit were declared MIAs. In September 1970, I came home. But the two Marines did not. They are still in Southeast Asia — still missing in action. I remember Operation Homecoming in 1973 but cannot recall thinking of the two Marines from my unit. I guess I had forgotten about them.

1983 finally rolled around and this veteran finally became involved in the POW/MIA issue and finally remembered the two Marines left behind in the jungle. Lieutenant Skibbe and Captain McVey, I apologize for forgetting about you. I was happy to be home and was so selfish. I just didn't think about you.

I am only one veteran, and my voice can only be heard by so many. To you veterans reading this letter, stand up, get involved, stay involved and help bring our people home. It could have been me; it could have been you.

Write to President Reagan, your senators, and your congressmen. Tell them of your concern and your desire to see positive action taken on "this nation's highest priority."

Bill A. Davison  
USN — 1969/1970  
1st Recon. Bn. — 1st Mar.  
Div.  
Waynesburg, Pennsylvania



## KNIFE TIPS...

Sirs:

Bill Bagwell's recent Battle Blades, "Prolonging Your Knife Life" (September '86) contains an inaccuracy. He states, "A small Arkansas stone and a few drops of oil or diesel fuel are all that are required to keep a razor edge on your knife." John Juranitch, in his book *The Razor Edge Book of Sharpening*, clearly demonstrates that the use of oil is not only messy and expensive but will actually give you an inferior edge.

I feel that this is an important piece of information for your readers, as the use of oil has too long been foisted on the sharpening public.

John Hartford  
Sherman, Connecticut

*Bill Bagwell stands by his comment about the quality of Arkansas stone (or novaculite) sharpening. It's cheap, easy-to-use, and pocket-sized. Lubricants such as oil, diesel fuel, water or spit are used only as a suspension medium so knife cuttings won't clog the stone's pores, thus prolonging the stone's life. John Juranitch's method of sharpening is fine if you are willing to pay the money for the right equipment. It's to each his own — but don't think the more expensive system will put a better edge on your knife if you already know how to sharpen properly.*

The June '86 Battle Blades ("More Blade, Less Sheath") answered a problem I have had for many years — the best way of carrying my knife that I favor for protection while working at night. It's a shame American knife manufacturers have not used this great method with their fighting knives.

My favorite knife is the Marine fighting knife — Ka-Bar — which has never let me down. Although there are much higher quality knives on the market it is the one I feel most comfortable with, but because of its bulk I have always refrained from carrying it. After reading Bagwell's article I adjusted the sheath of my Camilus and it is indeed comfortable to wear.

Robert Booth  
Portland, Oregon

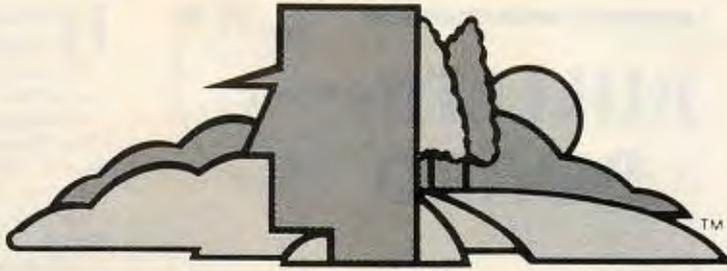
## MIAMI VICE OVERSIGHT...

Sirs:

I felt I should inform you of a tremendous oversight in "Hollywood Heat in Miami: The New Guns of Miami Vice." One company was slighted in recognition for their contribution of the Electroless Satin Nickel Finish applied to the Sig Sauer P-220 — T&T Technologies of Stafford, Texas. I am sure that you would want to give equal limelight to all companies who helped *Miami Vice* look good, as you did for all other companies involved.

Charlotte  
Thompson  
Sales VP  
T&T  
Technologies,  
Inc.

*SOF recognizes the hard work and effort that many companies put into the upcoming Miami Vice series. Unfortunately, there are so many unsung people and companies involved with the inner workings of the weapons and equipment project that we were not able to mention them all.* ✕



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## MONARCHISTS SEIZE CITY...

The food riots in Iran aren't the only sign of the Khomeini regime's instability. (See "Rumblings From Tehran" in this Bulletin Board.) Monarchists supporting Reza Shah II, son of the late Shah, who was overthrown by radical Shi'ite Moslems, want to see the young Pahlavi take power.

Three days after Reza Shah II pirated the signal of Iran's government-controlled television in early September to appear in homes across the nation, monarchists rioted and took over Zahedan, a major city in Iran's remote southeast corner near its border with Pakistan and Afghanistan. SOF sources say 50 government employees connected with its communications apparatus were executed as a result of Reza Pahlavi's electronic stunt.

Meanwhile, down in Zahedan, monarchists held complete control for four days and held out on a limited basis until late September, when Khomeini's Revolutionary Guards, supported by air, artillery and tank units, finally wiped out the last resistance. Sources say there were many defections to the monarchists from the police in Zahedan, which has rail and air links to Pakistan. Largely composed of Baluche tribesmen, Sunni Moslems whose tribal minority was protected under the Shah of Iran, the seizure of Zahedan included monarchist flags being flown and huge pictures of Reza Shah II being plastered on walls.

Watch SOF for future reports...

# BULLETIN BOARD



## Send JANE FONDA To CHERNOBYL

### BUMPER STICKER, T-SHIRT IDEAS...

As a public service to its readers, Bulletin Board trashes Jane Fonda on a regular basis so people won't forget her traitorous past in collaborating with the communist government of North Vietnam. In this spirit we recommend to our readers a bumper sticker seen at the 7th Annual *Soldier of Fortune* Convention. It reads: "Send Jane Fonda To Chernobyl." They cost \$1 each and can be obtained by sending the appropriate amount to: **Fonda Bumper Sticker, Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 665, Moorpark, CA 93021.**

Among the many fine T-shirts seen at the convention, one really caught our fancy. It showed the GE Minigun like that used aboard AC-47 gunships. The Minigun is portrayed over the General Electric corporate symbol, all above the slogan: "We Bring Good Things To Life." The shirts (specify size) cost \$8.50 each (postage paid). Write: **Minigun T-Shirt, EHK Corp., Dept. SOF, 7125 Q St., Suite 101, Omaha, NE 68117.**



## HONOR ROLL...

El Salvador/Nicaragua Defense Fund contributors:

In memory of Robert Waggoner, Clint Hanson, Kevin Easley, John Steient, Jerome Price.

Refugee Relief International, Inc.: Larry & Jamie Hawkins, Charles R. Morris.

Numerous donors requested their name not be printed.

## SURINAM COUP FLOPS...

Surinam is still drawing the attention of mercs and would-be mercs. (See "Merc Ripoff in Surinam," SOF, August 1984.) The latest episode unfolded with the arrest this summer of 13 U.S. citizens at a remote airstrip outside New Orleans. Thomas L. Denley of Mississippi, an Army veteran who had worked with U.S. Customs and as a local law enforcement officer, was arrested as the alleged recruiter and group leader. News reports indicate Denley was promised \$745 million in Dutch guilders from the Amsterdam-based Anzus Foundation. Surinam's sagging economy, based completely on bauxite, the raw material used to produce aluminum, continues to spark interest in a change of government. Denley allegedly planned to pose as an international financier interested in making large investments. During a scheduled meeting with government leaders, he and his team allegedly planned to kidnap them and then call in a larger force of Miskito Indians.

Like most would-be merc operations we've heard of in the recent past, however, this one failed due to security problems. Loose lips will surely sink a ship. In this case, it never left the dock.

All the men involved pleaded guilty to charges ranging from violating the Neutrality Act to conspiracy to violate the Neutrality Act and attempting to carry firearms on a commercial aircraft. As of press time, sentencing had not been handed down.

## MAD MIKE WRITES...

He's not really mad, nor is he really miffed. But Colonel Mike Hoare wants SOF readers to know that a correction is in order if they plan to order his new book, **The Seychelles Affair**. It's not yet

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WP-127, Navy Blue, w/epaulets	36-46	WP-171, US Army Black, w/epaulets & patch	32-50
WP-130, RAF Blue/grey	32-50	WP-176, Black, US Naval Academy	32-50
WP-170, Black	34-46	WP-180, Sand (Tan)	34-46
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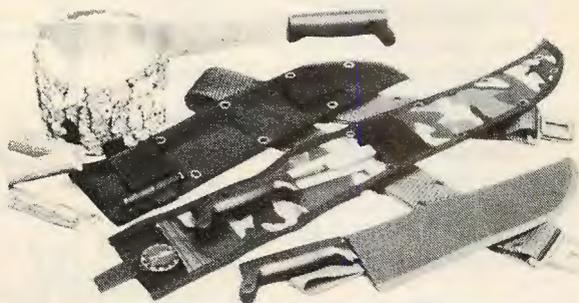
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## MIAMI VICE ADDITION...

There are so many people involved in bringing the TV cop show *Miami Vice* to your tube that it would take volumes to acknowledge them all. But SOF left an important group out of the line-up. Weapons Specialists Ltd. (61 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10010) modifies, rents and maintains weapons for film, television and theatrical productions. They have also been instrumental in training *Miami Vice* personnel in weapons handling and safety.

We goofed when identifying the modified Ithaca shotgun carried by Phillip Michael Thomas. It was designed and modified by Rick Washburn of Weapons Specialists Ltd. (See SOF, October '86, pg. 43.) The holster for this unique weapon is by Dennis Gaylor of DeSantis Leather.

## DO YOU KNOW HER?...

Bulletin Board advised SOF readers in the February 1986 issue that Nicaragua's Daniel Ortega used a Diner's Club credit card to buy designer eyeglasses. (See Bulletin Board, "Blind to Hypocrisy.") Now comes a similar report about another prominent communist, one more indication that communism might make everyone equal, but some sure seem a hell of a lot more equal than others.

It seems that a Soviet woman named Raisa Gorbachev — wife of a certain well-known Soviet citizen — was shopping for diamond earrings at Cartier's in London. Comrade Ms. Gorbachev paid for the purchase with an American Express card, according to *Washingtonian* magazine. "I think she does" have a card, a New York spokesman for the credit card company responded when queried. "But I don't know whether it's green or gold."



## RUMBLINGS FROM TEHRAN...

Apparently all's not well in the capital of the fundamental Islamic Revolution. SOF sources inside Iran report sporadic food riots and regular anti-government demonstrations against the war with Iraq. A particularly sore point among critics of Ayatollah Khomeini's regime is the conscription of children — some as young as 12 — into his Revolutionary Guards. One source, who must not be named, witnessed a demonstration in the lower-class Thirteen Aband area of Tehran which turned into a riot. He said the mob spotted a car containing five Revolutionary Guard members, picked it up, turned it over and set it afire with the men inside.

This and other reports of almost daily gunfire and sporadic bombing by anti-Khomeini activists were confirmed in coded telephone conversations with in-country sources. However, telephonic communication with Iran was abruptly interrupted for two weeks in August amid unconfirmed rumors of a coup attempt. Whatever the case, the communications blackout was real.

There were other indications of internal unrest, however. The 5 August edition of Iran's official government daily, *Kayhan*, reported that Colonel Ali Sayad Shirazi, head of Iran's ground forces, had been relieved of his command. He was replaced by Colonel Hussein Hassani-Sa'adi, who the newspaper reported "was assigned to the new post because of Colonel Sayad Shirazi's responsibility at the Supreme Defense Council." SOF sources say Shirazi was removed because of his strong opposition to another offensive against Iraq and resentment over the growing domination of Iran's regular armed forces by the Revolutionary Guards.

A week after this report, Captain Ali Akbar Mohamadi, personal pilot for Iran's President Khomeini and Speaker of the Parliament Hasemi Rafsanjani, defected to Iraq with Rafsanjani's private airplane. Also on board were two co-pilots and an engineer. The four asked for political asylum in West Germany. There is some speculation that they provided the Iraqis with limited intelligence on planning for Iran's next offensive. The Iranians apparently tried to cut their losses by speeding up the plan, launching an offensive over Labor Day weekend.

## THE POLITICS OF MIAMI VICE...

Just when you thought *Miami Vice* was a simple cop show, they go and do something strange. Instead of sticking to busting cocaine-smuggling bad guys, the script writers have gotten involved in international affairs and taken a shot at the contras in Nicaragua. In an episode aired on 3 October 1986, Detective Crockett gets sucked into a cover-up involving a bunch of mercenaries (the implication is that they are sanctioned by the U.S. government). A lowlife acquaintance of Crockett's was in a small village in Nicaragua where he filmed an American-led group of contras who shoot up the village and kill a priest in cold blood. He gets the film out of the country, but spends the rest of the show eluding government goons led by — get this — G. Gordon Liddy.

How did a guy like Liddy get involved in a story like this? Liddy couldn't be reached for comment, so your guess is as good as ours. SOF also tried to reach the public relations section for *Miami Vice*, but they refused to return our calls. Maybe they have something to hide.

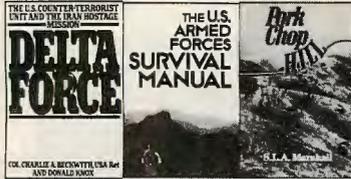
If you are as outraged as we are over this not-so-subtle piece of disinformation, call Universal Television at (818) 777-1000, or write to the supervising producer of the Michael Mann Co., Kerry McCluggage, at 100 Universal City Plaza, Bldg. 69, Universal City, CA 91608.

*Continued on page 112*

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†Soft cover

**M**OST of us have noticed the growing number of police deaths at the hands of criminals. The alarming fact is that many of these criminals are better armed than the police officers they confront. The FBI shootout in Miami a few months ago is a sad example of cops being outgunned by bad guys.

Police officers in some parts of the country are finding out the hard way that the six-shooter just doesn't have the firepower necessary in these kinds of encounters. In order to come out on top in the law enforcement game, they may have to adopt weapons and tactics in accordance with the capabilities of the enemy. And the first step is a new side arm.

More and more police departments are considering trading in their service revolver for a high-capacity magazine autoloader. But which one? In my opinion, the Glock 17 is the best alternative for replacing the police revolver. An officer with 20 years on the force has had the workings and techniques of revolver shooting ingrained in him until it has become instinctive. The last thing he wants is to re-learn everything on a new weapon.

When switching from revolver to autoloader a new set of motor skills has to be learned — everything from safeties and magazine release to grip angles and trigger pull. And that has always been an obstacle for police departments wanting to switch to semi-autos. But Glock has corrected that problem, so there is less time spent in transitional training.

Besides transitional training considerations, what other advantages does the Glock 17 offer to law enforcement agencies looking for an autoloader to replace their wheel guns? Let's take a look at some of them.

**SAFETY** — Basically the Glock is fired just like a revolver. There is no safety to fool with (or forget) and the trigger pull is the same for each shot — long, like a double-action revolver.

The Glock 17's safety is simple in design and construction — it requires only a trigger safety. Because of the long pull of the trigger, it is as difficult to have an accidental discharge with the Glock as it is with a revolver.

Recently, a Midwestern police department was looking at the Glock 17 for use by its SWAT team and the question of an AD caused by a sharp blow to the front of the barrel came up. This can sometimes happen to weapons with inertia firing pins, and although the Glock does not have a firing pin of this type, a test was conducted to see whether the Glock 17 was susceptible to the same malady.

A primed case (no powder, no bullet) was loaded into the chamber. The weapon was then struck on the muzzle



# COMBAT WEAPONCRAFT

by Jack Thompson

## Glocks for Cops



**Is the Glock 17 the ideal replacement for the police service revolver?**

several times with a mallet. The weapon did not fire. Next, the pistol was punched against a wall — muzzle first, several times — to simulate a falling police officer with weapon in hand. This also failed to discharge the pistol. Enough said.

**RELIABILITY** — At the Austrian army trials the Glock fired 15,000 rounds without a single stoppage or malfunction. I have yet to talk with a

### COMBAT EXPERIENCE

Jack Thompson has dealt with weapons and warfare most of his adult life and his experience has spanned the globe. He served in the USMC in Vietnam, fought in Rhodesia with both the SAS and the Selous Scouts, trained troopers in Central America and provided bodyguard services for diplomatic personnel.

Glock owner who has had a stoppage or malfunction, and I have personally fired over 500 rounds through a Glock without a problem.

**ACCURACY** — Firing the Glock 17 off a sandbag at 25 meters with ball ammo produced a five-round three-inch group. At 50 meters a 12-inch plate hit the dirt six times out of six.

If the inherent accuracy of the weapon is good, then the practical accuracy is excellent. The Glock 17 is blessed with some of the fastest out-of-the-box sights I've ever used. The black front sight post has a white dot which leaps into view whenever the pistol comes to eye level. The square notch of the rear sight is outlined in white. This combination makes for fast sights that are especially easy to use in low-light conditions.

**FIREPOWER** — This is the Glock's strong suit. With 17 rounds in the magazine plus one in the chamber, a single fully-loaded Glock has the firepower of a revolver-toting police officer plus his basic load. Along with two extra magazines (52 rounds), the

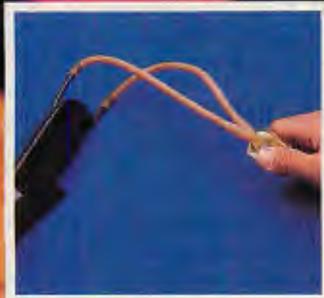
*Continued on page 109*

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**A** significant number of military small arms attract dust or serve as expensive paperweights because their owners cannot locate proper ammunition for them. Take the famous Steyr-Hahn military pistol, or the Steyr-Solothum submachine guns as examples. Chambered for the 9mm Steyr cartridge, the last box of that 1912 antique I examined was in El Salvador. It was manufactured by RWS in 1935 and you can be sure that most of it has turned bad.

Worse yet, how about the 7.62mm Russian Nagant revolver cartridge with its bullet seated entirely within the case? Just try to reload that grotesque number on a Dillon RL550.

Well, you don't have to. Fiocchi of America, Inc. (Dept. SOF, 1308 W. Chase, Springfield, MO 65803) stocks factory-fresh ammunition in both of these calibers, as well as a few other strange ducks, like .455 Webley (Mk II), .30 Luger and 7.63mm Mauser.

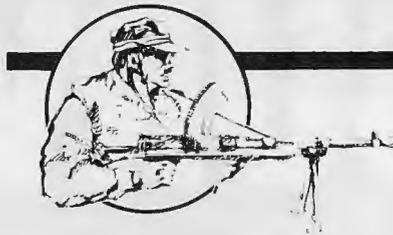
And there are several other valuable sources for arcane ammunition — like 7.5mm Swiss (for Schmidt-Rubin straight-pull rifles and the PE-57 assault rifle) or 7.92mm Kurz (for the MP44 assault rifle).

Navy Arms Co. (Dept. SOF, 689 Bergen Blvd., Ridgefield, NJ 07657) stocks 7.92mm blanks, and Hansen Cartridge Company (Dept. SOF, 244 Old Post Road, Southport, CT 06490) carries WWII vintage Japanese 6.5mm rifle and 7.7mm machine gun ammunition packed in Hotchkiss trays. The latter cannot be fired through Japanese type 99 rifles.

Century International Arms, Inc. (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 714, St. Albans, VT 05478) can supply 7.5mm French, 8mm Lebel and 7.62x54R Russian ammunition at reasonable prices.

There are a lot of surplus Walther PP Super pistols available and they require a diet of 9x18mm Ultra fodder. Geco loads this cartridge with a 95-grain FMJ lead-cored bullet that has a truncated-cone shape. Although this bullet has a diameter of only .355 inches, it will still wobble safely down the barrel of your Makarov pistol or WZ63 machine pistol. Don't try to reverse the process and fire 9mm Makarov ammo with its .364-inch bullet in your Walther PP Super. 9x18mm Ultra ammunition can be purchased from the Old Western Scrounger, Inc. (Dept. SOF, 12924 Highway A-12, Montague, CA 96064). They also inventory 6.5mm Italian Carcano, 6.5x53R Dutch Mannlicher, 6.5x58mm Portuguese-Vergueiro, 7.35mm Italian Terni and other obsolete military calibers.

And if all else fails, Richard Doolittle of Cartridge Specialties (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 28067, Detroit, MI



## FULL AUTO

by Peter G. Kokalls

# Arcane Ammo and Tough Targets



**Peter Kokalls' tips this month include arcane ammo sources, cheap blasting ball, targets and Bilsom hearing protectors.**

48228) can custom load some really off-the-wall stuff, like 9mm Nambu revolver, 9mm Largo, 8mm Lebel revolver and 7.65mm French Long pistol ammunition.

### Blaster Ball

What about those of us who shoot less esoteric items, like MAC-10s, Stens, UZIs, HK MP5s and S&W Model 76s? 9mm Parabellum submachine guns consume mammoth quantities of ball ammo. But it doesn't need to be Winchester or Remington. It just needs to be cheap.

Bill Petri (Dept. SOF, 26 Brookhill Lane, Norwalk, CT 06851) can provide blasting ammo at the right price. How about \$109 for 1,008 rounds? It's British (headstamped: 'H broadarrow N,' '44,' '9mm IIZ') and even though it was manufactured in 1944, only about two percent have dead primers. The 115-grain FMJ bullet will still squirt out of an MP5's barrel at 1,227 fps and that's not one whit slower than factory-

fresh Winchester-Western. It's Berdan primed and corrosive, so you'll have to scrub the bore with hot soapy water afterward. I've been burning corrosive ammo down barrels for a quarter of a century with no problems.

Stay away from Bill's Italian 9mm Parabellum (headstamped: 'M38,' '9'). The case lengths are erratic and some will not chamber in submachine guns like the MP5. Petri also sells .303 British, .30-06, 7.62x51mm NATO, 7.92mm and 5.56x45mm NATO at machinegunners' prices.

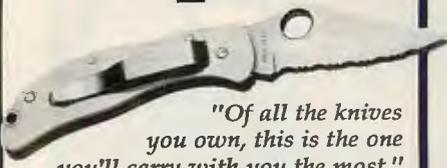
Once difficult to locate and expensive, 7.62x39mm ComBloc ammunition has dropped to affordable levels. Your SKS or AKS rifle can consume large quantities of PRC ball when it's priced at only \$159.95 per 1,000 from Pacific International Merchandising Corporation (Dept. SOF, 2215 'J' Street, Sacramento, CA 95816).

### Targets

Now that you've stocked up on enough ammunition to supply a battalion, you'll need something to shoot at. Most law enforcement agencies use lifesize friend/foe targets by Duélatron. I find them to be a bit too cartoonish in

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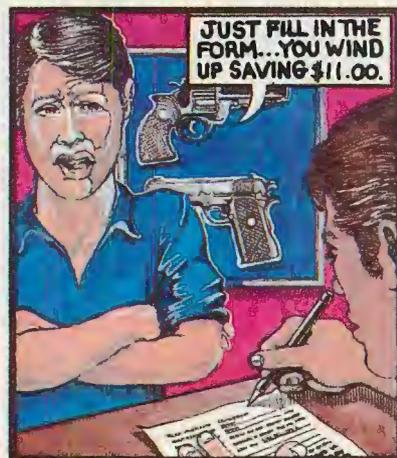
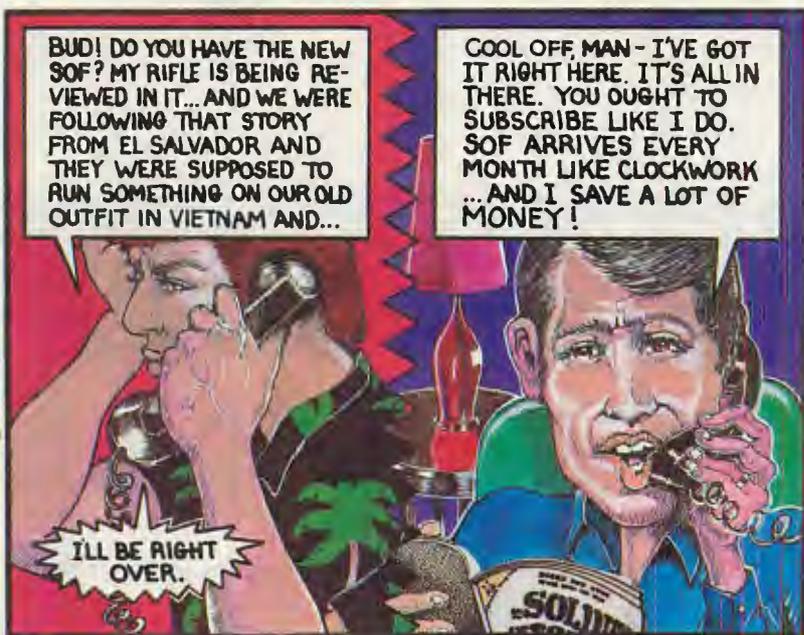
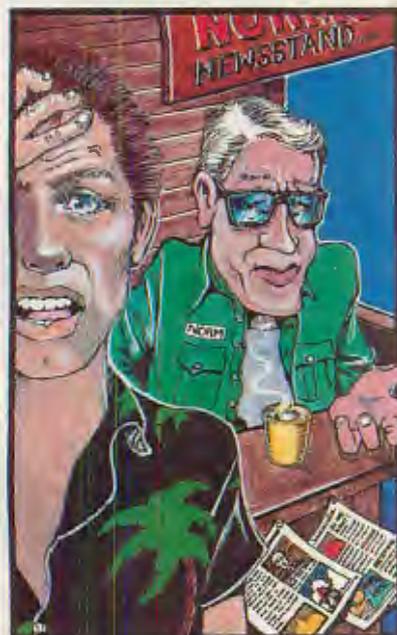
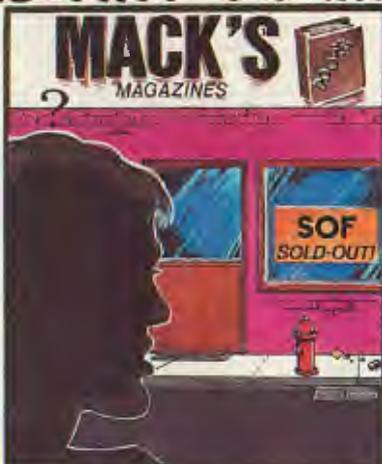
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appearance. There are two excellent alternatives. Know Your Enemy (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 794, Anaheim, CA 92805) can provide lifesize, full-color "Ivan," "Terrorist" and "NVA" targets that will make your blood boil. They're \$2 each plus \$2.50 for HIS of any quantity. They're all foes and you take no hostages.

Those of a gentler persuasion, or police personnel, might prefer the extremely lifelike targets offered by Realistic Training Systems (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 254, Faribault, MN 55021). They're all dirtballs, six in all, of both sexes and every ethnic type. You can turn them into pussycats with a series of friendly overlays. A trial pack of 30 targets and 30 overlays costs \$60, F.O.B. Faribault. The price goes down as the quantity of your order goes up.

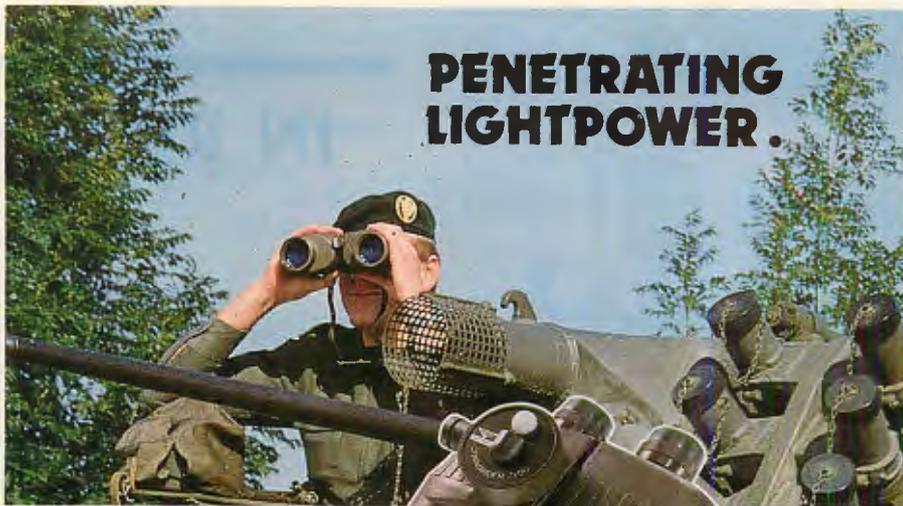
If you want something more substantial to beat on, Action Crafters (Dept. SOF, 1010 S. State Street, Tacoma, WA 98405) weld up the beefiest knockdown and dueling metal targets I've ever thrown lead at. They fabricated the standard IPSC-type "pepper poppers"; high-stress, man-on-man balance beams; automatic-reset targets; and "five on line" knock-down combat silhouettes. These mild steel reactive targets are not cheap, but they'll last longer than you will.

#### Bilsom Hearing Protectors

When you start blazing away at the target of your choice, you'd better stuff something in your ears unless you want to end up deaf. Bilsom International, Inc. (Dept. SOF, 11800 Sunrise Valley Drive, Reston, VA 22091) makes a large variety of hearing protection, from disposable, single-use earplugs to premium ear muffs. Bilsom is a leading manufacturer of industrial hearing protection and one of the principal contractors to the U.S. armed forces and federal law enforcement agencies.

Bilsom's low-priced SOFT ear plugs use soft fibers and foam covered with a thin, dirt-repellent film to attain a noise reduction rating of 26dB. Their Per-Fit soft silicone plugs with conical shape and ribbed hood can be boiled or sterilized in alcohol. Long lasting, they offer excellent protection and comfort. Bilsom has six different ear muffs available that range in price from only \$9.60 to \$24.95. They all have wide, lightweight foam cushions. Top-of-the-line Viking and Comfort muffs have fully-rotating padded headbands that offer three wearing positions. They also sell high-style safety glasses from \$6.95 to \$54.95.

Hearing loss is not a joke. Noise-induced hearing deficiencies can never be restored. But it's never too late to protect whatever you have left. I wish I had started using something like Bilsom's hearing protectors 30 years ago. ☒



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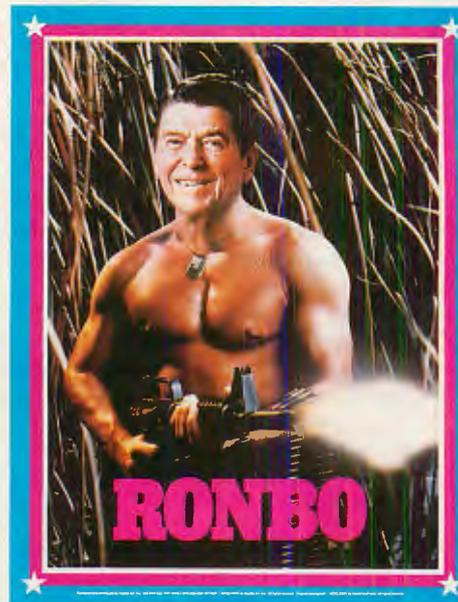


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## Selous Scouts

Peter Stiff



**SELOUS SCOUTS — A PICTORIAL ACCOUNT.** By Peter Stiff. Galago Publishing (Pty) Limited, Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 404, Alberton 1450, Republic of South Africa. Hardcover. 176 pp. \$25.00. Review by John Coleman.

“**A** RMPITS with eyeballs,” superb bush fighters or, if you’re so inclined, terrorists. Call the Selous Scouts what you will, but they were Rhodesia’s sharpest spear point during the country’s fight for national survival.

Peter Stiff has done an excellent job with *Pictorial* in chronicling the history, men and operations of the Scouts as they battled ZANLA and ZIPRA terrorists through their unique brand of “pseudo gang” warfare. The regiment’s clandestine nature makes it tough to document, but Stiff’s research is comprehensive: He draws material from the few remaining official files of the unit, interviews with former Scouts and security force members, and his own service with Rhodesia’s BSAP.

As a basic look at counterterrorist operations in southern Africa and for an appreciation of the men who fight its “dirty wars,” you won’t find a better starting point for a subject study than *Pictorial*.

**SUPER CARRIER.** By George C. Wilson. Macmillan Publishing Company, Dept. SOF, 866 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10022. 1986. Hardcover. \$19.95. Review by Gary B. Crouse.

**W**HILE debate rages over the future of the Navy’s aircraft carriers, the efforts of the officers and men who go to sea in these ships are forgotten. George Wilson’s detailed and moving account of his seven months onboard

## IN REVIEW



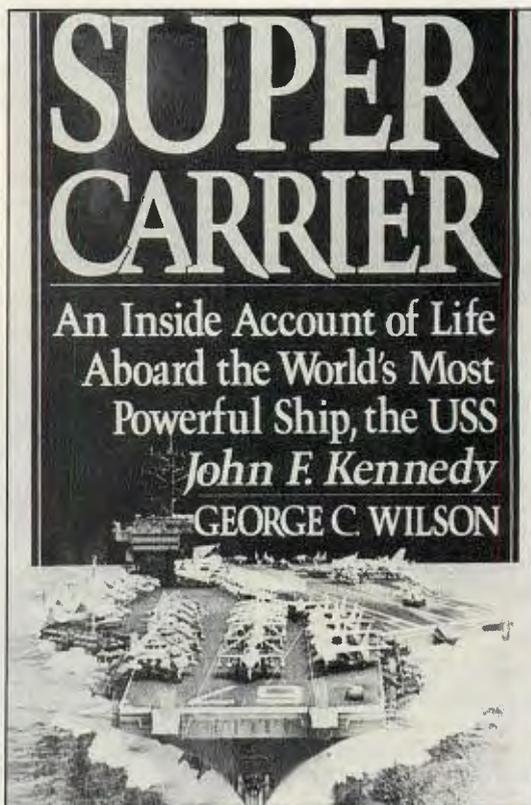
the aircraft carrier USS *John F. Kennedy* may help to correct that.

As a journalist, Wilson was onboard from September 1983 until May 1984. His cruise included many dramatic moments, among them the U.S. bombardment of Lebanon following the destruction of the Marine headquarters in Beirut. But throughout his book, Wilson maintains his focus on the lifeblood of the *Kennedy* — its men. His ability to gain their trust and friendship is what makes his book work.

Wilson covers the *Kennedy* from the

keel to the signal bridge, from the foc’sle to the fantail. He talks with the skipper, the boilermates, the aviators and seemingly anyone else who would stand still long enough to share their thoughts.

It’s rare that the demands of journalism and the best interests of our military are compatible. But Wilson has managed to bridge the gap and in doing so has performed an invaluable service to a country that too easily forgets the efforts of its fighting men.



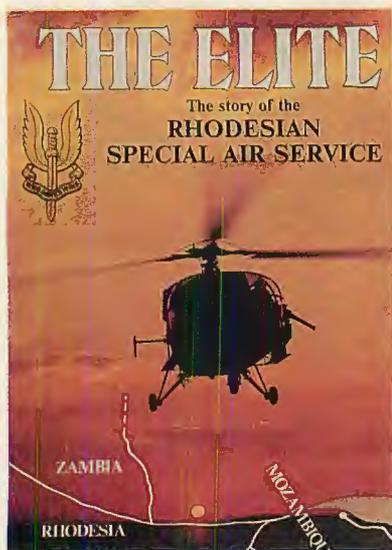
**THE KOREAN WAR: PUSAN TO CHOSIN; AN ORAL HISTORY.** By Donald Knox. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, Dept. SOF, 111 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10003. Hardcover. \$24.95. 697 pages. Review by James L. Pate.

**T**HERE are many ways to tell a war story. The oral history format is one of the best. When properly blended, one gets from numerous individual

accounts a perspective from the foxhole looking up all the way to the proverbial big picture seen by general officers.

Donald Knox, well-known to military readers as co-author of Colonel Charlie Beckwith’s book, *Delta Force*, has in his latest book produced a monumental work of oral history research on the Korean War. Knox interviewed hundreds of Korean War vets, from privates all the way up to general officers. He transcribed the interviews, organized them into chronological



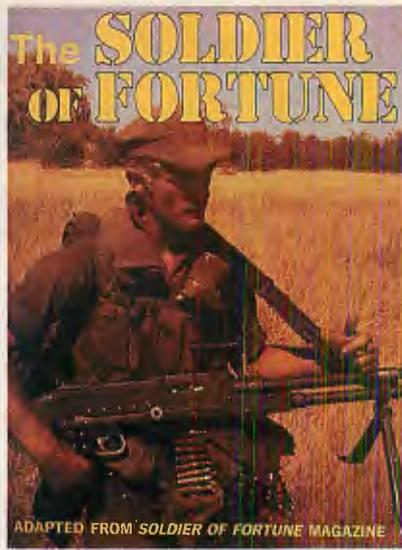


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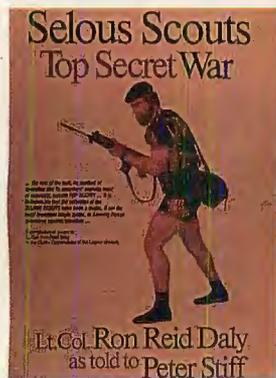
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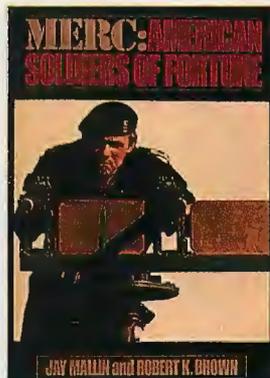
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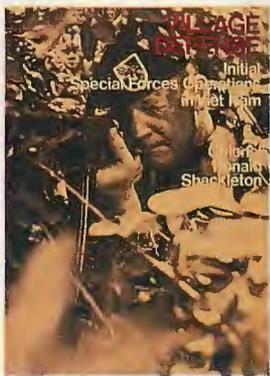
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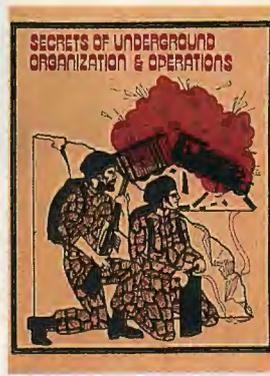
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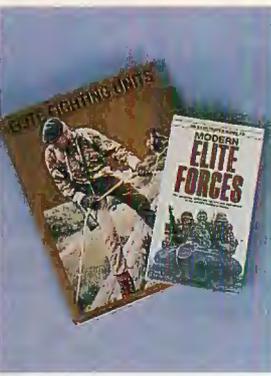
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order and then broke up the interviews in such a way that the reader goes from the front lines to the CP to general headquarters and back again.

Further enhancing this work is the massive collection of photos. Hundreds of personal accounts are accompanied by period photos of the storytellers, all supplemented by many combat photos gleaned from military archives and personal collections.

Best of all, though, this is a story told in the words of the men who were there. Knox's effort must rank as one of the most authoritative accounts of the Korean War to date.

**JANE'S YEARBOOKS — 1986-87. Edited by the Jane's staff. London: Jane's Publishing Company, Ltd. Jane's Publishing, Inc., Dept. SOF, Fourth Floor, 115 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10003. 1986. Review by William B. Guthrie.**

**J**ANE'S Yearbooks are studied by the CIA, used daily by SOF editors, and a pirated edition has recently surfaced in the People's Republic of China. From industry and intelligence to the press, Jane's Yearbooks provide the best overview of military hardware that a citizen can get without a security clearance.

Yearbook entries on individual weapons and equipment are compact, precise and usually accurate. Before the reader jumps to the conclusion that these references are being damned with faint praise, it should be pointed out that Jane's publishes 18 volumes of about 1,000 pages each, every year, covering everything from freight containers to battleships. Each volume is generally regarded as the encyclopedic authority in its area.

SOF staff most often use **Jane's Infantry Weapons** in their work, but they also regularly refer to **Military Vehicles and Ground Support Equipment, Weapon Systems, Armour and Artillery, All the World's Aircraft and Fighting Ships**. Each volume saves several bookshelf feet of more detailed but less comprehensive references. Methodical organization of each volume also saves hours of research on most editorial projects.

**Infantry Weapons** will, no doubt, prove more interesting and more useful to SOF readers than most of the other volumes. It's priced well above conventional firearms books (\$136), but for the student of current military armament and affairs, this yearbook is probably a better investment than any other dozen small arms references. ✎

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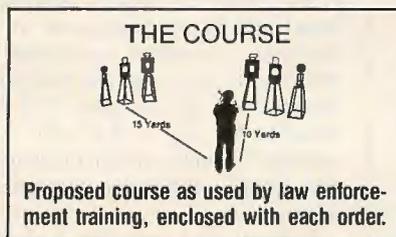
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The Combat Silhouettes are by far the best free standing steel targets anywhere for handgun training, qualifying or pleasure shooting. Simply shoot the head and the head falls back, to reset the head, shoot the center plate. No springs, no chains, no ropes, no nonsense. Just a complete target ready whenever you are.

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**I**T was 0100 on the second day of the Tet Offensive and we had been patrolling for seven hours through the narrow streets and back alleys of Saigon. Our infantry company was operating with two tanks from the 3/4 Cav, working our way through the city toward the outskirts of Cholon, when we came upon a smoldering barricade of debris and rubble. Several men moved up either side of the street to check out the barricade while the rest of us rolled from the tanks and took up positions in the doorways and beside the battered old cars that lined the street. The exhausted men slumped indifferently behind whatever cover they could find.

We had just left the Iron Triangle after a grueling 37-day operation, barely having time to grab a shower or change of clothes before being loaded onto choppers for a hurried flight to Ben Hoa air base to reinforce the Air Force ground and support personnel. But plans suddenly changed and we were assigned the task of patrolling downtown Saigon, spending the night going house to house digging out lone snipers and clearing barricades.

For the most part, the evening passed quietly with little incident. But in a matter of seconds the night was shattered by two deafening explosions as RPGs hit the lead tank in a shower of sparks. Green tracers poured from the buildings on either side of the street, filling the air with the sizzle and crack of hundreds of pieces of hot metal slashing and whizzing overhead. A wave of sound and smoke rolled over us as we frantically burrowed deeper into whatever cover we could find.

I chanced a look over the fender of the burnt-out Ford Galaxy I was crouched behind and in the light of a distant parachute flare spotted a thin shape holding what appeared to be an AK-47. He saw me at the same time, turned and darted down a narrow alley. For reasons I still can't understand, I jumped up and ran after him. He must have been just as surprised by my actions as I was because he stopped for an instant and turned to look over his shoulder before taking off again.

We pounded down the alley at full speed, turning abruptly into another dingy alley. My boots slipped out from under me on a pile of rotting garbage but I was up in a flash, oblivious to my skinned and bleeding knee.

The man suddenly skidded to a halt, whirled around and fired a long burst from the AK. I leaped to my right, slamming into a wall as I scrambled for cover behind a garbage bin. Rolling onto my stomach I brought my M16 up to my shoulder and sighted onto the figure just as he stepped through an open doorway. I ran to the side of the



# I WAS THERE

by Douglas Edwards

## In a Pig's Eye



**Patrolling the streets and back alleys of Saigon, our infantry company worked its way through the smoldering barricade of debris and rubble.**

door and pressed myself up against the wall and listened.

I could hear him inside, scuffling around and bumping into furniture in the dark. The parachute flares which had been burning continually overhead suddenly ended, leaving the street and surrounding area in total darkness. I steadied my nerves and tried to calm my breathing before stepping through the doorway. This time I stood to the side of the door — so I wouldn't be silhouetted if the flares began again — and stared into the darkness.

With my M16 at my hip, I swept the room with the barrel before cautiously stepping forward. A rushing, scurrying of feet was the only warning before my legs flew out from under me and I was thrown to the floor. My M16 dropped

to the floor along with my helmet, which clattered and bounced against the wall. A dim outline rushed toward me and I reached out to grab its neck. Too late — I was kicked violently in the stomach and sprawled backwards, the wind knocked out of me. As I fumbled for my knife the figure rushed toward me once more.

Outside, flares began dropping and for the first time my attacker was visible in the dim light that spilled through the door. Standing in front of me was a pig — an enormous pig. With a final snort the pig stormed past, slamming into my shoulder as a final insult, and disappeared out the door.

In the light of the flare I saw that the back wall of the room was blown out, providing an easy escape for the soldier I had chased. Slowly, I got to my feet, found my rifle and helmet and started through the maze of alleys back to my unit. I was left feeling ridiculous. Fortunately, no one missed me and no one had witnessed my little escapade with the communist killer pig. ✕

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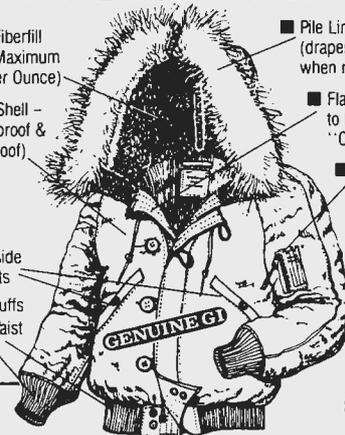
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## CAMOUFLAGE

### Commando Camouflage

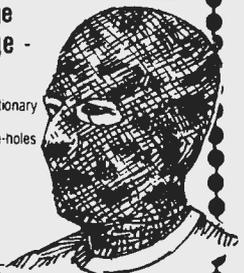
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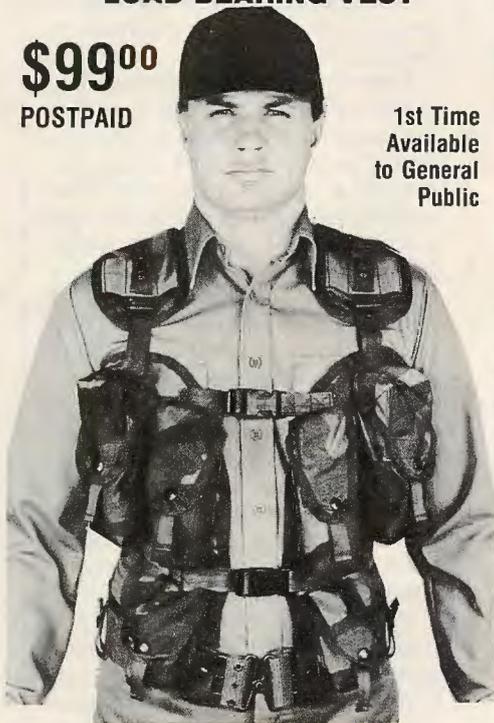


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**I**T is true that some knives cut a lot better than others, but can a fighting knife really cut a hand off with one stroke, or split a skull to the chin with one blow?

Granted, most knives don't have this powerful capability, but a first-class battle blade does. The gurkhas split skulls in WWII with their kukris, and American frontiersmen lopped off limbs with their bowie knives. The difference, however, was that these men knew how to swing their blades.

Simply owning a first-rate fighting knife does not guarantee that you will be able to make these kinds of cuts. There is a bit more to this cutting business than meets the eye, and here are a few things to think about the next time you have some serious slashing ahead of you.

I'll assume that you already have a knife that is properly made and has adequate leverage, good balance and bevels that are correctly set. Now you need a basic understanding of what the knife user must supply in the cutting equation.

The first and probably most important component is the speed with which the blade moves. Like a high velocity bullet, a cutting edge moving at high velocity will do greater damage than the same bullet or edge moving at a slow rate of speed. The second component is continuing force, or follow-through. The final aspect is the angle of attack of the blade to the medium being cut. All of these elements — executed properly and in concert — provide dramatic results. Let's examine these components in more detail.

The first step in a fast, proper swing is the correct grip. The knife should be held in a modified saber grip. Thumb and fingers should be behind the guard, with the thumb lying slightly to the side of the handle rather than directly behind the guard, on the top part of the handle. The index finger should be on the opposite side of the handle. The middle, ring and little fingers should be relaxed, even away from the handle slightly. What you are trying to achieve at this point is a grip that will allow the knife to pivot in your hand as you hold it between your thumb and first finger. Notice how the blade tip rocks back and forth as you move your wrist. Now hold the knife still and snap your fingers shut. If you are holding the knife correctly, the tip of the blade will snap forward as your fingers close around the handle. This snapping action imparted by the fingers, coupled with the whip of the cocked wrist, adds an extra dimension to the cutting capability of your blade.

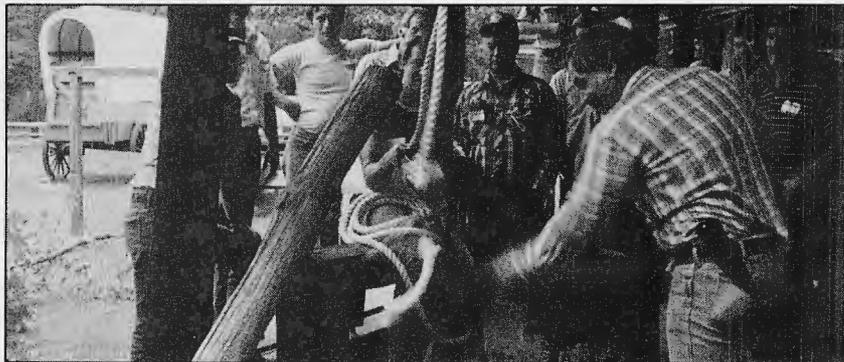
A skilled knife user will impart extra velocity to the tip of his blade at the



# BATTLE BLADES

by Bill Bagwell

## The Swing Is the Thing



**A first-rate fighting knife will do you no good if you don't know how to use it properly.**

instant of impact — when it is needed most — with a snap of the hand and wrist. This technique will add about 50 percent to your cutting power, so it is well worth learning and practicing.

Here's how it works. As your swing hits the target, follow through with a snap of the wrist. The hidden power is the action of the hand on the knife handle at the instant of impact. A heavy cut is started with a light, relaxed grip. At the instant before impact, the fingers of the hand are snapped shut as the wrist begins to break forward in the follow-through. The closing of the hand muscles causes the blade to move forward even more, adding a third form of acceleration to the blade.

To actually deliver a devastating chopping blow, relax the hand as you raise the knife to strike. The wrist should be cocked slightly backward as the knife comes up. As the delivery of the blow takes place, the wrist is snapped violently forward as the fingers of the hand are snapped shut.

Therefore, velocity is achieved by both the amount of force employed in the blow and by proper hand and wrist action. Simply put, the faster your blade moves, the harder your knife hits. So, to make a difficult cut, don't spare the muscle. Really unload on the target with as much force as you can muster while still controlling the blade.

Every effort should be made to hit *through* the target, and one's concen-

tration should be focused on the point of impact. This pretty well covers the basic mechanics of striking the blow. The final aspect concerns the angle of attack of the blade to the medium being cut.

Knives are most effective when they *cut* things rather than split them. For this reason it is desirable to have the cutting edge of the knife engage the material at a slight angle rather than perpendicularly. This causes the edge to slice like a razor rather than wedge its way through in the manner of a chisel. This is accomplished either by hitting at a slight angle, or by employing the more subtle technique of striking with a slight pulling or almost circular drawing motion. This technique requires some practice to master, but ensures that the blade slices when it hits. Done correctly, this effectively combines the slashing stroke with the chopping stroke — two of the most devastating cuts that can be administered with a knife.

Properly administered strokes give maximum results with a minimum expenditure of effort. Regular use and practice pay off, and a little time spent clearing brush, employing the same cutting techniques that work on hostile targets, will yield very real dividends when it comes time to get down and dirty. If either your knife or your technique is deficient, the time to find out is *before* the chips are down, not after. If a knife is part of your gear, get a good one and learn how to use it. Then practice to keep proficient. ✂

# THE OUTLAWS EXPLORE NEW MUSICAL FRONTIERS!

After three years of silence—THE OUTLAWS are back with their new album, "SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE"!

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**PASHA**

Produced by Randy Bishop with Spencer Proffer for PASHA. Management: Charlie Brusco.

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## COLT'S COMBAT ELITE

Pistolsmiths specializing in the Colt M1911A1 pistol have been turning out dual-tone versions of the Government Model for years. Shooters who opt for two-tone finishes will be pleased to hear that Colt has introduced a variation of "old slabsides" called the Combat Elite. A blued side has been combined with a stainless steel frame.

The slide sports high-profile fixed sights and an enlarged ejection port that will appeal to reloaders who don't like their brass dented. The trigger, also blued, has no serrations.

All other major components except the barrel and springs are stainless steel. The magazine well has been relieved to assist rapid magazine changes. Pachmayr one-piece rubber grips cover the front strap. Those intending to use this pistol for serious work should consider replacing these with checkered, wood grip panels.

Complete with one stainless magazine, the Combat Elite carries a suggested retail price of \$654.95. For further information contact Colt Industries, Firearms Division, Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 1868, Hartford, CT 06101.

## LEATHER FLYING JACKET

Originally designed for open cockpit flying in the early days of aviation, leather field jackets quickly became popular for everyday use. Leather jackets are rarely found in the cockpit today, but their rugged features and classic styling have made them an enduring favorite. Adventure Supply has re-created a jacket true to the classic design of the original that helped make these coats popular.

For durability, they are hand crafted from distressed goatskin, an abrasion-resistant leather. All the details of the original are here — bi-swing back for free movement, inside map pocket, adjustable waist straps, heavy-duty black oxide zipper and double entry cargo-handwarmer pockets.

## SWISS COMPASS WATCH

ProSpec, a company working to bring back precision design watches used in specific professions, has introduced a professional quality compass watch. It is ideal for most wilderness activities, divers and the military.



The watch features a black chrome anti-magnetic case, water-resistant to 100 meters. For easy reading at night or underwater, the watch has oversized luminous hands and markers. A scratch-resistant crystal protects the face from rough use and protects the mechanism down to 100 meters. A salt water-resistant strap keeps the watch tightly in place.

Under the watch itself is an airtight, watertight compass, accurate to plus or minus one degree. The

The jacket sells for \$294.88, slightly more for tall sizes. For more information contact Adventure Supply, Dept. SOF, 24285 Sunnymead Blvd., Suite 274, Moreno Valley, CA 92388.



# ADVENTURE QUARTERMASTER



by G.B. Crouse

compass has a shockproof needle and a luminous point on the needle for night viewing. For easy navigation there are five luminous orientation points on the compass dial with grid markers integrated on the crystal.

The watch is made in Switzerland to exacting specifications using accurate Swiss quartz movement. For more details write to ProSpec, Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 1000, Kings Park, NY 11754.

## COVER AND CONCEALMENT

Anyone who has rubbed his skin raw applying camouflage face paint and then had to use diesel fuel to get it off three days later will appreciate this new item from Kaufman's West. These elastic garments, called Spandoflage, are made for wear on the hands and face. They eliminate the need for messy and uncomfortable paints to keep your smiling face from attracting hostile fire or sending wild turkeys scrambling for the next county.



Spandoflage comes in a variety of patterns including woodland, desert and black. Made from dyed elastic material, the headcovers and hand/arm covers stretch to conceal identifiable shapes. Although they are sold as one size fits all, they can be cut to fit without the rest of the garment unraveling. The ventilated fabric helps keep you cool in the summer and warm in the winter.

Headcovers sell for \$6, hand/arm covers for \$11.25. For more information, contact Kaufman's West Army & Navy Goods, Dept. SOF, 1660 Eubank NE, Albuquerque, NM 87112. ☒

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"The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting."

Czech novelist Milan Kundera, whose name and work no longer exist in his homeland.

**I**N a speech on Nicaragua, President Reagan invoked the Truman Doctrine, the United States' first attempt to oppose expansion of the Soviet empire through its revolutionary surrogates. In 1948, I marched against the Truman Doctrine, part of which holds that communist aggression must be contained. And as a former Leftist, I defended the communist revolutions in Russia and China, in Eastern Europe and Cuba, in Cambodia and Vietnam — just as the Left defends the Sandinistas today.

The arguments and "facts" that were used by leftist activists then have not been forgotten by the misguided liberals of today. I remember what the other side said, too — the presidents who came and went, and the anti-communists on the Right, the William Buckley and the Ronald Reagans. Without exception, time has proved the Left wrong in every case, wrong in its views of

the revolutionaries' intentions and wrong about the facts of their revolutionary rule.

And just as consistently the anti-communists were proved right.

Today the Left dismisses Reagan's warnings about Soviet expansion as anti-communist paranoia, a threat to the peace and a mask for American imperialism. We said the same things about Truman when he warned us then. Russia's control of Eastern Europe, we said, was only a defensive buffer, a temporary response to American power — first, because Russia had no nuclear weapons; and then, because it lacked the missiles to deliver them.

Today, the Soviet Union is a nuclear superpower, missiles and all, but it has not given up an inch of the empire which it gained during World War II — not Eastern Europe, not the Baltic states which Hitler delivered to Stalin and whose nationhood Stalin erased and which are now all but forgotten, not even the Kurile Islands which were once part of Japan.

Not only have the Soviets failed to relinquish their conquests in all these years — years of dramatic, total decolonization in the West — but their growing strength and

## SEEING THE LIGHT

David Horowitz was one of the founders of the New Left 25 years ago, and helped organize the first campus protests in the United States against its government's anti-communist policies in Cuba and Vietnam. He was the editor of the leftist *Ramparts* Magazine and a founder of the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign. His early books include *Student* (1962) and *Empire and Revolution: A Radical Interpretation of Contemporary History* (1970). More recently he co-authored (with Peter Collier) *The Rockefellers: An American Dynasty* and *The Kennedys: An American Drama*. A somewhat different version of this article was read at Berkeley on 4 April at a conference entitled "U.S./Nicaragua: Explor-

the wounds of Vietnam have encouraged them to reach for more. South Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Ethiopia, Yemen, Mozambique and Angola are among the dominoes which have recently fallen into

## SOF POLITICAL ANALYSIS

# Time Sways a '60s Radical

by David Horowitz

# FROM LEFT



**BELOW LEFT:** Marching for "peace" in Vietnam at a Washington rally in 1967. A bloodbath ensued in Southeast Asia after U.S. withdrawal, but the altruistic souls seen here were silent. So much for hypocrites and fools. Photo: AP/Wide World

ing the Possibilities for Peace.”

“I offer no apologies for my present position” as a reformed leftist, Horowitz told SOF. “It was what I thought was the humanity of the Marxist *idea* that made me what I was then; it is the inhumanity of what I have seen to be the Marxist *reality* that has made me what I am now. If my former comrades who support the Sandinistas were to pause for a moment and then plunge their busy political minds into the human legacies of their activist pasts — most recently in Southeast Asia — they would instantly drown in an ocean of blood.”

This is Mr. Horowitz’ first article for SOF. Given his background, the editors feel his opinions are particularly poignant. Welcome aboard, Mr. Horowitz.

the Soviet orbit.

To expand its territorial core — which apologists still refer to as a “defensive perimeter” — Moscow has already slaughtered a million peasants in Afghanistan, an atroc-

**BELOW:** The author, David Horowitz, foreground, during a Berkeley press conference in 1972. Then a radical leftist and editor of *Ramparts Magazine*, Horowitz had not yet seen the light that exposed the lies of communist propaganda. He is now subject to vehement verbal attacks by his former comrades. Photo: AP/Wide World

ity warmly endorsed by the Sandinista government.

Minister of Defense Humberto Ortega describes the army of the conquerors — whose scorched-earth policy has driven half the Afghan population from its homes — as the “pillar of peace” in the world today. To any self-respecting socialist, praise for such barbarism would be an inconceivable outrage — as it was to the former Sandinista Edén Pastora. But praise for the barbarians is sincere tribute coming from the Sandinista rulers, because they see themselves as an integral part of the Soviet empire itself.

In all the Americas, Fidel Castro was the only head of state to cheer the Soviet tanks as they rolled over the brave people of Prague. And cheering right along with Fidel were Carlos Fonseca, Tomas Borge, Humberto Ortega — the trio who founded the Sandinista Party while living in Havana — and other creators of the present Nicaraguan regime.

Of course the Left either overlooks or has forgotten this. It chooses to ignore the fact that U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia produced not self-determination, but more Soviet satellites. The National Liberation Front, or Viet Cong, whose cause the Left supported, no longer exists. Its leaders are dead, jailed, exiled, or powerless in their own country. After the pullout of U.S. forces, Hanoi’s army became the fourth largest in the world and Vietnam became an imperialist aggressor in its own right. So when it comes to its

own crimes and its own criminals, the Left has no memory at all.

To the Left I grew up in, along with the Sandinista founders, Stalin’s Russia was a socialist paradise, the model of the liberated future. Literacy to the uneducated, power to the weak, justice to the forgotten — we praised the Soviet Union then, just as the Left praises the Sandinistas now.

The Left conveniently ignores warnings from Nicaragua, such as that from Violetta Chamorro, the publisher of *La Prensa*, the paper which led the fight against Somoza, and a member of the original Sandinista junta: “With all my heart, I tell you it is worse here now than it was in the times of the Somoza dictatorship.” (President Daniel Ortega forcibly closed down *La Prensa* in July.)

It is the same way in which I and my former comrades in the Left dismissed the anti-Soviet “lies” about Stalinist repression. In the society we hailed as a new human dawn, 100 million people were put in slave-labor camps, in conditions rivaling

*Continued on page 103*

**BELOW RIGHT:** Leftist peace marchers said there would be wonderful self-determination in Southeast Asia if only the U.S. would withdraw. The U.S. withdrew and part of the “self-determination” that resulted can be seen in this photo of a communist death camp in Cambodia. Photo: AP/ Wide World

# TO RIGHT



# SADF'S BUSHMEN

## Desert Nomads on SWAPO's Track

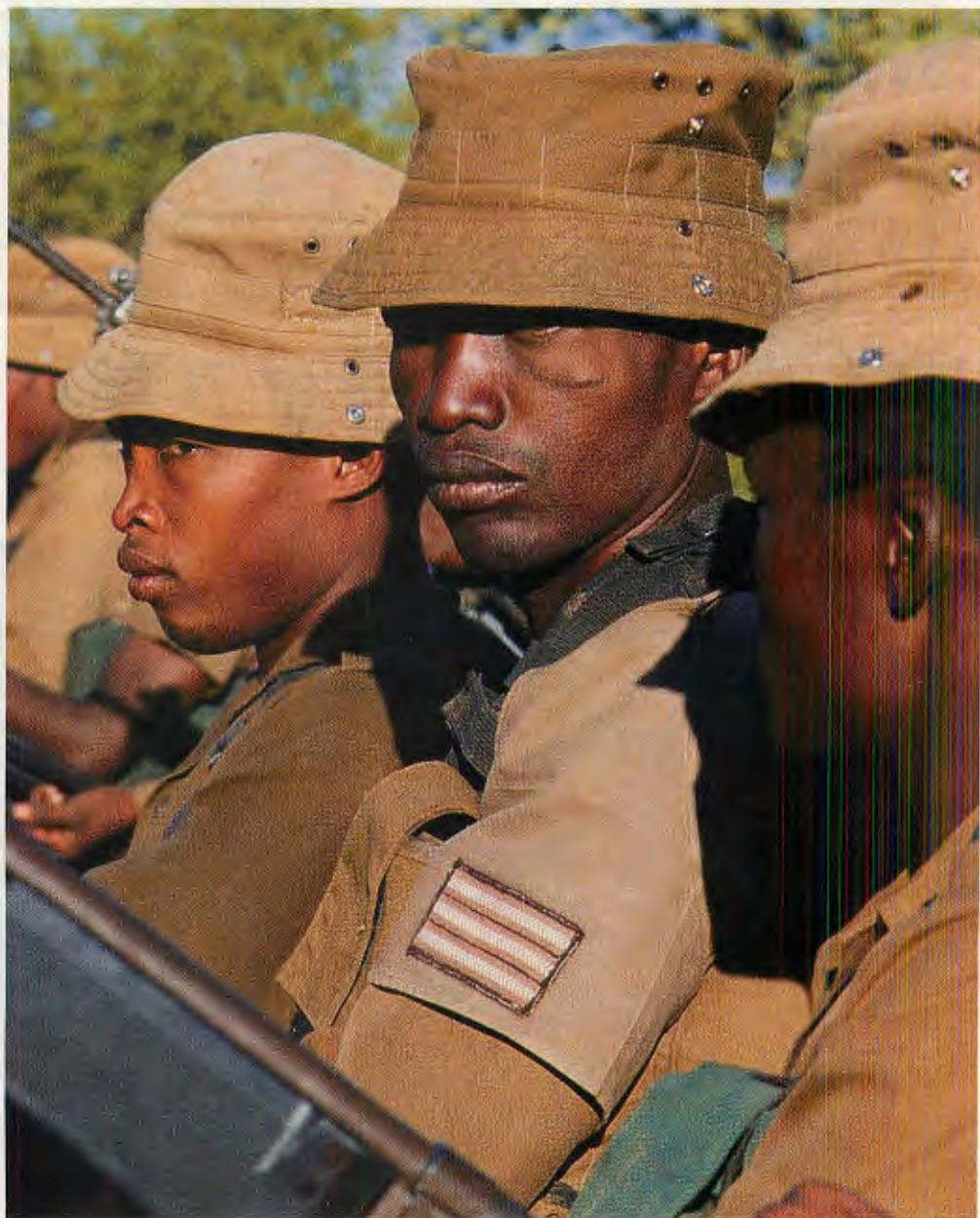
Text & Photos by David Mills

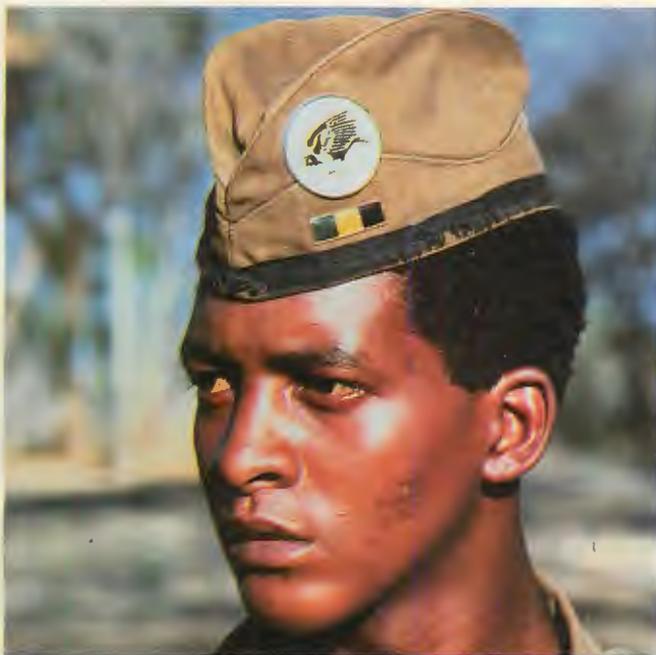
Bushmen now operate as a homogeneous unit. Earlier attempts to form composite forces resulted in cultural and language difficulties.

**T**HERE'S a definite parallel between Vietnam of 1975 and Angola of 1974. When the United States pulled the plug in Saigon, it left thousands of Vietnamese who had assisted the U.S. effort to the not-so-tender mercies of the victorious communist armies. Their fate? Exile or political "re-education" if they were lucky; death — or worse — if they weren't.

Cut to the southwest African country of Angola, just a year or so earlier. Portugal had recently changed political hands during a bloodless coup in Lisbon and its dwindling African colonial empire, including Angola, was cut loose to fend for itself. Portuguese troops began drifting home, leaving in their wake hundreds of primitive Bushmen who for years had faithfully served the colonial cause.

The Portuguese called the Bushmen who worked for them as trackers and security police *Fleches*, or arrows, because of the poison shafts they used on their quarry — both human and animal.





**Faces of the Bushmen.** Many nomadic bands have come together to form the battalion.

These little soldiers opted to become a form of security police for the Portuguese in their fight against black nationalist UNITA, FNLA and MPLA forces. Not only did they act as the eyes and ears of the Portuguese intelligence community inside Angola, they also organized into hunter-killer groups. Using their centuries-old knowledge of the Angolan bush, they tracked down and killed blacks who, in their time, had tracked down and killed the Bushmen.

Now, in the vacuum created by the departure of their colonial protectors, the African status quo had returned — with a killing vengeance. Bushmen became targets not only of the ruling MPLA government, but of the two locked-out pretenders to the throne, Savimbi's UNITA and Roberto's FNLA, as well.

This hatred of these diminutive, nomadic hunter-gatherers stemmed in part from their temporary alliance with the Portuguese,



**FAR LEFT:** Bushmen operated in Angola as hunter-killer teams for the Portuguese, but became targets themselves when the black MPLA government took power in the mid-1970s.

**LEFT:** White member of the Bushmen Battalion hits the road. Extended follow-up operations against SWAPO demand physical fitness as a critical element of success.

**ABOVE:** Tracking instructor makes a point to Bushmen students. After the advanced course, it's assumed that trackers will *never* lose enemy spoor.

but its roots trace back into unrecorded history. Bushmen, who at one stage inhabited the hunting grounds of tropical East Africa, eventually drifted west and south until they roamed all over the territory south of the Zambezi River. Encroachment from the pastoral Hottentots and other black tribes from the north, and European influx from the south eventually pushed them into an enclave bounded by Angola in the north, Botswana's Kalahari Desert on the east, and the lower regions of South-West Africa in the south.

There, Bushmen found themselves caught in the middle of the growing and violent clashes between black tribes and European settlers. Both sides viewed these desert nomads, with their hit-raid-and-run tactics against cattle herds, as little more than vermin in need of

**BELOW:** Soldiers in the Bushmen Battalion are proud of their unit, and morale is uniformly high.



**ABOVE:** On patrol: Bushmen use a variety of vehicles to cover the vast expanse comprising their sector of the operational area.

extermination. So for the Angolan Bushmen an uneasy alliance with the Portuguese became a necessary measure for simple survival — until 1974.

Enter the South Africans. For years they had maintained a close relationship with the Portuguese inside Angola, and had carefully noted the effective use of Bushmen during military operations. And the military attachés were not unaware of the fact that a valuable asset to the South African Defense Force



**ABOVE:** Weapons inspections help form the core of every disciplined military unit — and the Bushmen Battalion is no exception.

**LEFT:** Break time. Even Bushmen, known for their endurance across rugged *veldt*, take five on occasion.



Although they've been Westernized to a degree through their contact with the Portuguese in Angola and the South Africans, Bushmen troops still feel at home in the veldt.

(SADF) would be literally killed off and lost forever unless quick action was taken to save the outcast Bushmen. (One Bushman sergeant stated that at least one quarter of his band was killed off by Angolan blacks in retribution for their work with the Portuguese.)

In coordination with the Red Cross, hundreds of Bushmen and their families were moved to the then-neutral western Caprivi Strip, a salient of South-West Africa which juts between Angola, Zambia and Botswana, under what was known as the Alpha Project. There, Alpha Camp, which provided security and protection for the Bushmen, was established; it also gave SADF a focal point to begin basic military training for their new charges.

Bushman troops, called Alpha Group, went back into Angola in 1975 with the SADF on Operation Savannah, an attempt to help UNITA and FNLA forces overthrow the socialist MPLA government. Withdrawal of Central Intelligence Agency support and other political constraints aborted Operation Savannah, but Bushmen did spread the word about the hospitality they'd received from the South Africans.

By 1976 the influx of Bushmen was so great that a new camp, Omega Camp, had to be set up to accommodate them all. Today, Omega Camp is the home of the Bushmen Battalion, comprising some 1,000 soldiers and 4,000-5,000 family members.

## ON TRACK

Tracking is not a born skill. It's an art which must be learned and finely honed. And in the context of a bush war, it can be a life-saving ally. Trackers who lose the spoor, or forget their job for even one moment, run the risk of coming off second best in a face-to-face encounter with a terrorist's AK-47.

Troops of the Bushmen Battalion are perhaps the best indigenous trackers in southern Africa today. Much of their skill comes from the Bushmen's inherent tie with the land, their nomadic hunter-gatherer heritage which ensured that only those with the sharpest eyes, best hearing and most empathetic feel of the bush survived.

But Bushmen aren't at war with nature — they live with it. And the animals they traditionally track don't carry guns or know how to actively evade trackers. Even their contacts with other men, both black and white, have been sporadic and rarely on any kind of permanent basis. That is, until recent years, when modern war came to settle on their land. Their new role as warriors demands that the Bushmen add a new twist to their tracking skills. Now, like it or not, their bush skills have been employed by the South Africans in their fight against SWAPO. And, to survive the type of war where bullets replace poison-tipped arrows, diminutive Bushmen now learn techniques one step beyond those taught by their fathers: the art of modern combat survival.

The basic tracking course run by the Bushmen Battalion generally lasts 3-4 weeks, depending upon the skill level of the students, and its purpose is to make the Bushmen aware of SWAPO combat techniques and tactics. To bring students more on line with current

SADF military practices, they also receive fundamental training on navigation, map reading, communications, basic tactics and medical aid.

The emphasis of the course, though, is to help the Bushmen improve on their own ability to track. Beginning around 0900, students take off on spoor laid by other members of the course and will keep on the track for 50-70 kilometers. Bushmen and white instructors accompany the trackers, using the exercise to sink home lessons that may keep their charges alive in the operational area.

Students who display proficiency during the basic drill are then sent along to the advanced tracking course. Here, a high degree of tracking prowess is assumed, and students are introduced to various techniques to help them regain spoor if it's lost and to overcome the methods SWAPO uses to anti-track. A week-long survival phase is also built into the course, and graduates are of such caliber that it's assumed that they will *never* lose spoor once they're on it.

Once qualified, a Bushman student can advance to become an assistant instructor on the tracking courses. He will AI two basic and two advanced courses, during which time he must convince the chief instructor that he has the capability to run courses on his own. Under the CI's watchful eye, the fledgling Bushman instructor will oversee two courses, and if it's deemed that he's met all the requirements of bush knowledge and survivability, he will then become a full-fledged instructor.

Think the requirements are tough? You bet. At present, there are only 11 men in the entire defense force qualified to wear the red badge of an army tracking instructor.

In their earliest deployments, Bushmen were used as a highly mobile light infantry force tasked with locating and destroying SWAPO/PLAN (South West Africa People's Organization and their military arm, People's Liberation Army of Namibia) targets. This evolved into company-sized operations which gained a fair degree of success, and further evolved into what was termed the reaction force concept.

**RIGHT:** Mobility and quick reaction form the basis for present-day Bushmen Battalion operations.

**BELOW:** The Bushmen have lived with the land for centuries and they know its every secret.



**RIGHT:** FN's are a far cry from the Bushmen's traditional bow and poisoned arrow.

**CENTER:** Bushmen boat operations along parts of the Angolan border with South-West Africa help deter infiltrating SWAPO forces.

Under the reaction force, elements of the Bushmen Battalion, 101 (Ovambo) Battalion and the Paras were combined to create a composite force. In essence, Bushmen would act as the eyes and ears of the force while the Paras would supply the firepower. Ovambo Battalion troops, because of their familiarity with both languages, basically acted as the link between the groups. But this ethnically-diverse composite force raised a series of insurmountable problems.





Ethnic and cultural differences proved to be the major obstacle, levels of training another, and effective leadership a third. White Para commanders didn't understand — or trust — the asset they had in the Bushmen; conversely, the Bushmen didn't understand or trust officers they hadn't trained with or come to know.

After a critical look at the situation, SADF opted to allow the Bushmen to operate as a homogeneous unit — a wise choice considering that the Bushmen Battalion was one of the most successful units in the defense forces in 1983.

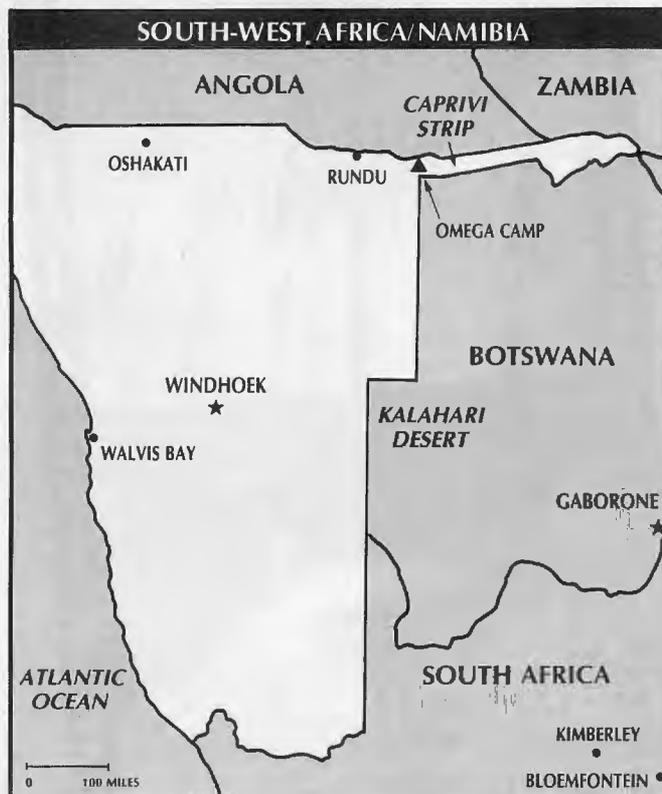
The battalion is organized into two operational groups, each commanded by a major with a captain as second in command. Each group is further broken down into three companies,

**BELOW:** Ownership of South-West Africa/Namibia is still hotly contested on both the military and political battlefields. Along with other SADF units, troops of the Bushmen Battalion operate along the Angolan border — and occasionally inside Angola, when the mission calls for it.

commanded by a captain or lieutenant, of about 100 men each; each company having three platoons. Depending on the mission, company commanders can deploy platoons separately; if there's a requirement for semi-conventional operations against a SWAPO/PLAN base camp, 81mm mortars and air support can be attached to the company for the attack.

To round out the battalion's op area capability, a Recce (reconnaissance) Wing was formed to act as the eyes and ears of the unit. Totally integrated with Bushmen as well as whites, the Wing usually operates in five-man teams on internal or external detailed reconnaissance missions. Or, depending on tactical requirements, they may become the follow-up group which runs SWAPO insurgents to ground.

Today, the Bushmen Battalion again finds itself pulling *Reaksie Mag*, or reaction force, work along the border of Angola. This time, however, they deploy as their own unit and generally work independently under guidelines from their sector's commanding brigadier. Given the heritage which has set them apart from other tribes on the continent for centuries, it's a method of operation these bush nomads no doubt prefer. ☒



## COMBAT PHOTOGRAPH

David Mills is a 12-year veteran of the British Army. He is currently a free-lance photo-journalist, specializing in military operations. His work for SOF has taken him to such diverse areas as Northern Ireland, Belize, Angola, Germany, Thailand and Cambodia.

Mills spent nine months with the SADF and traveled the entire length of Namibia.

# "HEARTBREAK RIDGE"

## Eastwood Wins One for the Corps

by James L. Pate

**C**OMBAT veterans remain at a premium within the U.S. armed forces. There are Vietnam vets still in the ranks, but the vast majority of them never saw combat. Even among senior NCOs it's getting harder and harder to find many men who have "faced the elephant," an expression for engaging in combat that gained wide circulation during the U.S. Civil War. Facing the elephant separates those who've been to war from those who've been to war zones. Let's face it, battle-tested warriors still in uniform are a rarity these days.

That's the focus of Clint Eastwood's latest film, "Heartbreak Ridge," due for release in December. Eastwood plays Marine Corps Gunnery Sergeant Tom Highway, a tough, hard-drinking traditionalist nearing the end of his career. Gunny Highway finds himself right back in the same recon unit where he started, this time as an instructor.



With some exceptions "Heartbreak Ridge" is a film to which military veterans past and present can relate. With a combative personality oriented toward getting a job done as quickly and efficiently as possible — a typical wartime attitude — Gunny Highway is frustrated by all the red tape of the peacetime military. This is only partially shared by his men, who grumble mostly about nocturnal alerts that end with the inevitable order to stand down, and endless training that in the absence of war seems meaningless. Highway is further disturbed when he realizes he is one of a vanishing breed in the ranks: a combat veteran.

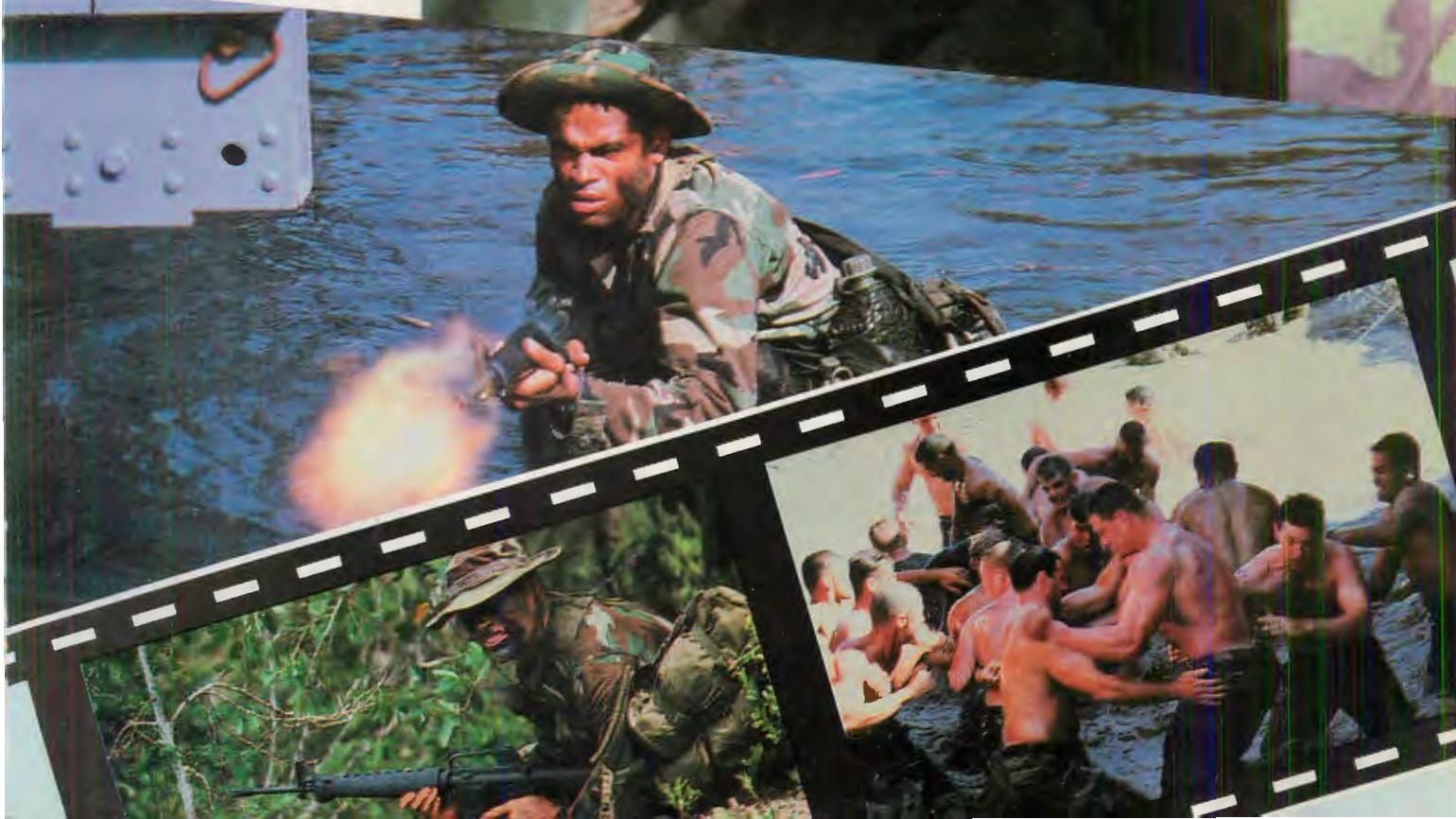
This is no Tinsel Town fantasy. Only about six percent of the present active-duty Marines served in Vietnam, a headquarters spokesman said. Fewer still are actual combat vets.

Eastwood, as Gunny Highway, realizes near the end of the Marine Corps road that no one is taking the place of combat veterans.

But like most films about the military, "Heartbreak Ridge" has its share of little distractions that, to the knowledgeable viewer, could easily have been corrected. Among the implausibilities are Gunny Highway's two COs, whom he finds just as frustrating as his men. His platoon commander is supposedly just out of Marine Corps OCS, highly unlikely — if not impossible — in a unit such as reconnaissance. The commander of the unit — in the movie the 2nd Recon Battalion — is a major, when the real billet is for a colonel. And *this* major — CO of a recon battalion — has *no combat experience*. His background is in supply. Certainly this is done to further contrast the personality of the highly decorated, grizzled veteran of the Korean and Vietnam Wars (Eastwood). But it could only happen in Hollywood.

**RIGHT:** Gunny Highway returns to a recon unit to find his Marine Corps is not the same.

**BELOW:** Gunny Highway was surprised to learn his men were hell-for-leather combat Marines after all.





Highway and his men are deployed in the film's battle scenes more in a shock troop role rather than the real mission to which a recon unit would be assigned. But no doubt the real 2nd Recon guys out at Camp Swampy's Onslow Beach will let out a big ooh-RAH! when they hear their unit is in an Eastwood flick. They'll be surprised to learn they've been relocated to Camp Pendleton, though, where much of the film was shot.

Some Army vets from the Korean War aren't as pleased. They're mad because they say the film inaccurately credits the Marine Corps with winning one of Korea's bloodiest battles.

"It's a pretty rotten deal," said Seymour Harris, who told *USA Today* that very few Marines fought at Heartbreak Ridge. Harris was there as a member of the Army's 23rd Infantry Regiment, which took the Korean landmark.

The film wrapped in late July and Mayor Clint has closeted himself in Carmel to do the final editing. So we won't know until it gets to the box office what changes, if any, were made in the final version.

"Heartbreak Ridge" opens with Gunny Highway returning to his Marine Corps genesis under a completely new set of circumstances. He's not a newbie anymore, but a leader, wearing the Medal of





Honor and about every other decoration for valor you can think of. As he resettles into his old digs, the Eastwood character encounters old friends and new problems, the biggest of which seems to be a generation gap between himself and his men, who don't seem to be focused on being warriors.

The most poignant character in this conflict is one of Highway's men, a black, jive-talking hustler nicknamed "String" who thinks he's Jimi Hendrix reincarnated. String — whose biggest goal is to be a rock star, not another "Sgt. Rock" — and Highway immediately clash. String is played by Mario Van Peebles, who like so many others is being provided by Eastwood with his first real break in film acting.

**LEFT:** Recon Marine contemplates facing the elephant with an M16A1, equipped with an M203 grenade launcher.

**BELOW:** Hey, diddle-diddle, right up the middle — the Marine Corps way.



Another conflict arises for Highway when he encounters his ex-wife, "Aggie," played by Academy Award winner Marsha Mason. Old animosities are there, but it's obvious the flame hasn't gone out between them. Highway's troubles with the peacetime Marine Corps are interspersed with his typically cool attempts to reconcile with Aggie, who remained in the area after divorcing the gung-ho young leatherneck.

Highway's ally in all this turmoil is another ghost from his past, an old buddy who is now a master sergeant. They've spent much time together at war and both have combative personalities. The Top proves himself a positive influence as he helps Highway deal constructively with conflict — and military red tape.

The plot slips into high gear when yet another alert turns out to be the real thing. Gunny Highway packs up his men and ships off for Lebanon. After deployment, the orders are mysteriously changed and the Marines are issued live ammo and advised they're about to assault a small island in the Caribbean. Sound familiar? If this sounds like the real-life 22nd Marine Amphibious Unit, you guessed it.

**TOP: Up close and personal: Attitude adjustment on the parade deck.**

**CENTER: Gunny Highway and his grunts pound the ground at Camp Pendleton.**

**BOTTOM: Familiar scenario: Marines ship out for Lebanon, then are diverted to "a small Caribbean island nation."**



Much of the beach assault footage was shot using real Marines in live-fire exercises on Vieques Island, a USG facility off the eastern tip of Puerto Rico. The Marine Corps provided extensive cooperation, which adds a great deal of realism to the film. Other footage comes from the Navy's semi-annual "Ocean Venture" exercise, again further enhancing the film's credibility.

The connection to Grenada in the film is explicit. Highway's recon unit is assigned to spearhead an amphibious assault. Here again, footage of real Marines (in a helo assault at Vieques) plays a key role. Members of the 82nd Airborne and 75th Infantry Rangers who fought on Grenada are bound to grumble, as they get short shrift in the film. But then "Heartbreak Ridge" is a personal story about a Marine gunny, not a historical documentary.

The film climaxes as Marines (not U.S. Army Rangers) rescue American students trapped in a school after some moderately tough fighting. String proves himself to be a hell-for-leather combat Marine, which instantly seals a friendship between him and his gunny. There is a symbolic passing of the warrior's mantle from one generation to another as String decides he'll make a better Marine than rock guitarist and decides to re-enlist.

The final conflict is, of course, over the woman. Can Tom and Aggie patch things up? Will Tom talk her into trying to make another go of it? Will Mayor Clint get the girl? Or will she become the "Heartbreak Ridge" which he cannot conquer?

To find out, go to your nearest theater in December. It'll make Clint's day. ✕



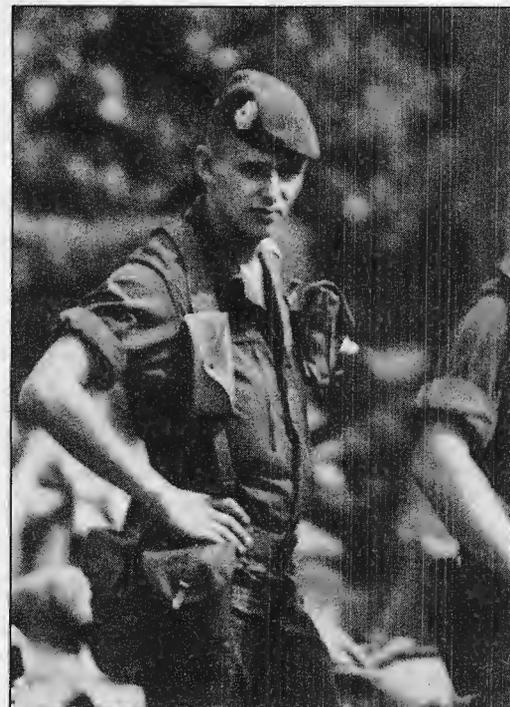
**SOF MILITARY AFFAIRS**

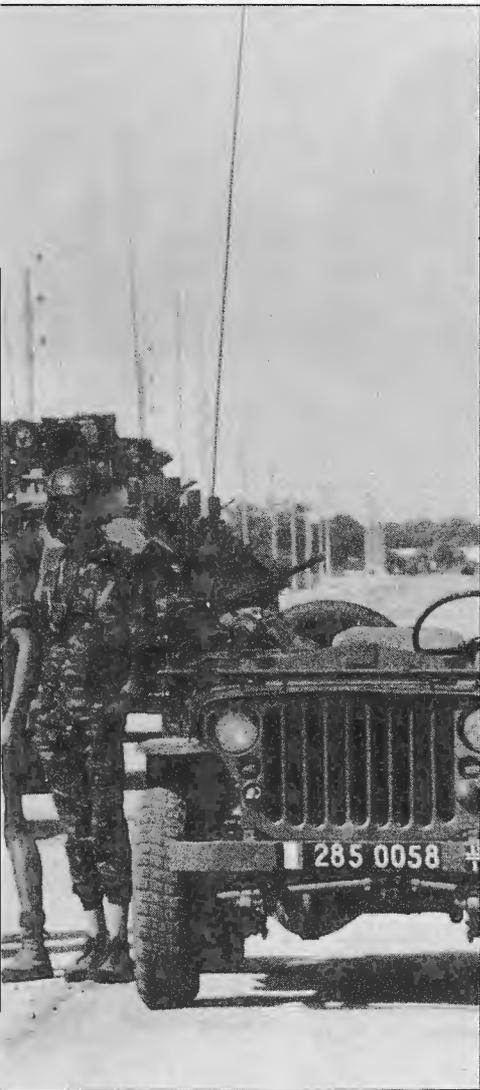
ABOVE: Before their light armor column moves out, French and Chadian soldiers in N'djamena discuss tactics. Photo: Gamma

# FRENCH REACTION FORCE

Keeping a foothold in Africa

by Al J. Venter





BELOW: Freshly deployed French troops await orders during the 1983 fighting in Chad. Photo: Gamma



**I**N an age of instant media pronouncement and satellite television linkups, we can see at a moment's notice any of the ongoing conflicts around the world. But they missed one. There is a military presence in Africa that has widely been considered one of the most successful low-key units of the 1980s. And no one knows anything about it.

The unit is on red alert virtually around the clock; it can ship out 100 or 1,000 fully trained and equipped airborne troops to any point on the African continent within hours. It is also on standby for any one of a dozen African nations that might need help. Yet, because of their low profile, EFAO could easily become lost in the maze of military acronyms.

EFAO means *Elements Français D'Assistance Operationnelle* and comprises an elite marine infantry and paratrooper force that is based in Metropolitan France and at Bouar in the Central African Republic (CAR), one of the biggest French military bases abroad.

Ask about the EFAO at the French Defense Ministry in Paris and you will be given the run-around. To the public they're a "technical assistance" force active in "those black states which need them." And it goes on: "They repair dispensaries, schools, roads, and provide medical assistance to the local population." When pressed, the PAOs mumble something about how these men provide technical assistance to the armed forces of the CAR.

In recent years the French have projected force to many parts of formerly Francophonie Africa. Although the French Army and Foreign Legion intervention in Zaire is well-known, not many people are familiar with the fact that the French Army also went into the impoverished desert state of Mauritania (north of Senegal) in the 1970s to preserve the status quo.

### AFRICA CORRESPONDENT

Contributing Editor Al J. Venter is one of SOF's most prolific writers, covering conflicts in Africa, the Middle East and Central America. His books include *The Terror Fighters*, *War in Africa*, and *Zambezi Salient*.

It is significant that while France does not have as many men in uniform in Africa as does Cuba (Castro has about 35,000 soldiers in Angola and more than half that tally in Ethiopia), French troops are certainly more widely deployed throughout the continent than those of any of the other former colonial powers.

The authoritative *Africa Research Bulletin* (quoted by London's *Observer*) has stated that there are "more than a thousand" members of the EFAO based at Bouar, though it does not say exactly what they are doing there. They also mention other French detachments permanently based on the Dark Continent.

There are an estimated 4,000 men in French Army uniforms (including Foreign Legionnaires) at Djibouti on the Red Sea. France keeps a sizable force there, ready for any eventuality because of the sensitive nature of developments in the region. In nearby Ethiopia, which almost completely surrounds Djibouti, there is a full-scale civil war on the go. Soviet surrogate forces are well represented in Ethiopia — so well that France also maintains two *Mirage* squadrons and a squadron of Puma helicopters in the territory.

The French are also aware that, for several decades, Somalia — to the immediate south — has had territorial designs on Djibouti. But most importantly, the French use Djibouti, with its eavesdropping facilities, to monitor Soviet Navy and intelligence-gathering activities in the Indian Ocean.



Kolwezi, Zaire, May 1978: Colonel Erulin, commander of the 2nd REP, points out the itinerary his legionnaires are to follow to reach Lumumbashi. Photo: Gamma



**ABOVE:** After hours of pedaling a manual power generator, this French soldier relaxes with a book. Photo: Gamma

**BELOW:** There are around 100 French military advisers in the Central African Republic, most of them stationed in Bouar. These soldiers are responsible for providing humanitarian aid and services to the population. Photo: Gamma

**BOTTOM:** Jaguar and Mirage fighters were sent to Chad during Operation Manta, to support French troops fighting Libyan-backed rebels in 1983. Photo: Gamma





**Kolwezi, Zaire: Legionnaires of the 2nd REP arrest several suspects in the village of Metaba. Photo: Gamma**

**BELOW: A French para amuses a native boy by reading from a book. Winning hearts and minds is as important for the French in Africa as it was for the Americans in Southeast Asia. Photo: Gamma**



Other countries playing host to French military forces include Gabon (based at Libreville), as well as the Ivory Coast (500 soldiers and a small naval detachment). One of the most important strategic locations is at the Cape Vert base in Senegal which, in recent years, has been built up as a transit and staging center for France. Here, on the outskirts of Dakar, France has based a half dozen Jaguar fighter/bombers, a fleet of C-160 Transall troop carriers as well as a Breguet-Atlantic maritime listening and command post.

There is also a French naval unit stationed at Dakar. It's interesting that throughout the Falklands crisis, Dakar played a vital, almost clandestine role in providing Britain with staging facilities en route to Ascension Island several thousand miles to the south. Ascension was the last stop on the way to the embattled island.

Throughout Francophonic Africa, the traveller encounters youthful, enthusiastic European military men serving under the Tricolor. The majority are conscripts, spending their two years in Africa. France allows those on call-up who do not wish to serve in uniform to spend a longer time in Africa working on a variety of aid projects. This can include anything from teaching to running a self-help program.

It was significant that, during the war in Chad, where several thousand French troops were involved before President Mitterand pulled them out again, much of what these soldiers needed, in military hardware terms, they got from the Americans. Most of their food and other requirements were flown in from France, though a good deal else — including a rotgut red wine that curled hair — was brought overland from Cameroon.

France obviously guards its interests in Africa jealously. It is very much aware of the economic hold it continues to have over the majority of its former colonies, a rich source of exports for French manufacturers of basic items such as cars, machinery and expendables. Travel to any former French colony — including Algeria and Guinea, where relations with the former motherland haven't been spectacular — and you will see French cars on the roads to the exclusion of almost all other national makes.

It's the same with military matters. Africa provides French arms manufacturers with rich pickings. Paris provides excellent credits, which are paid for in vital raw products. In this regard the French are reasonably generous.

But all is not necessarily well for the French position in Sub-Saharan Africa. Israel has dealt itself into the post-colonial game. For years France was the principal supplier of arms to Zairan President Mobutu Sese Seko. But because Zaire has a history of association with Jerusalem, it was in France's interest to attempt to have the two countries tilting at one another. For their part, the Israelis were having none of it — they wanted good relations with Zaire.

In 1982, Mobutu allowed Israeli security personnel to take charge of his personal security, and then entered into a spate of discussions about new arms purchases. It was a bad omen for French arms salesmen.

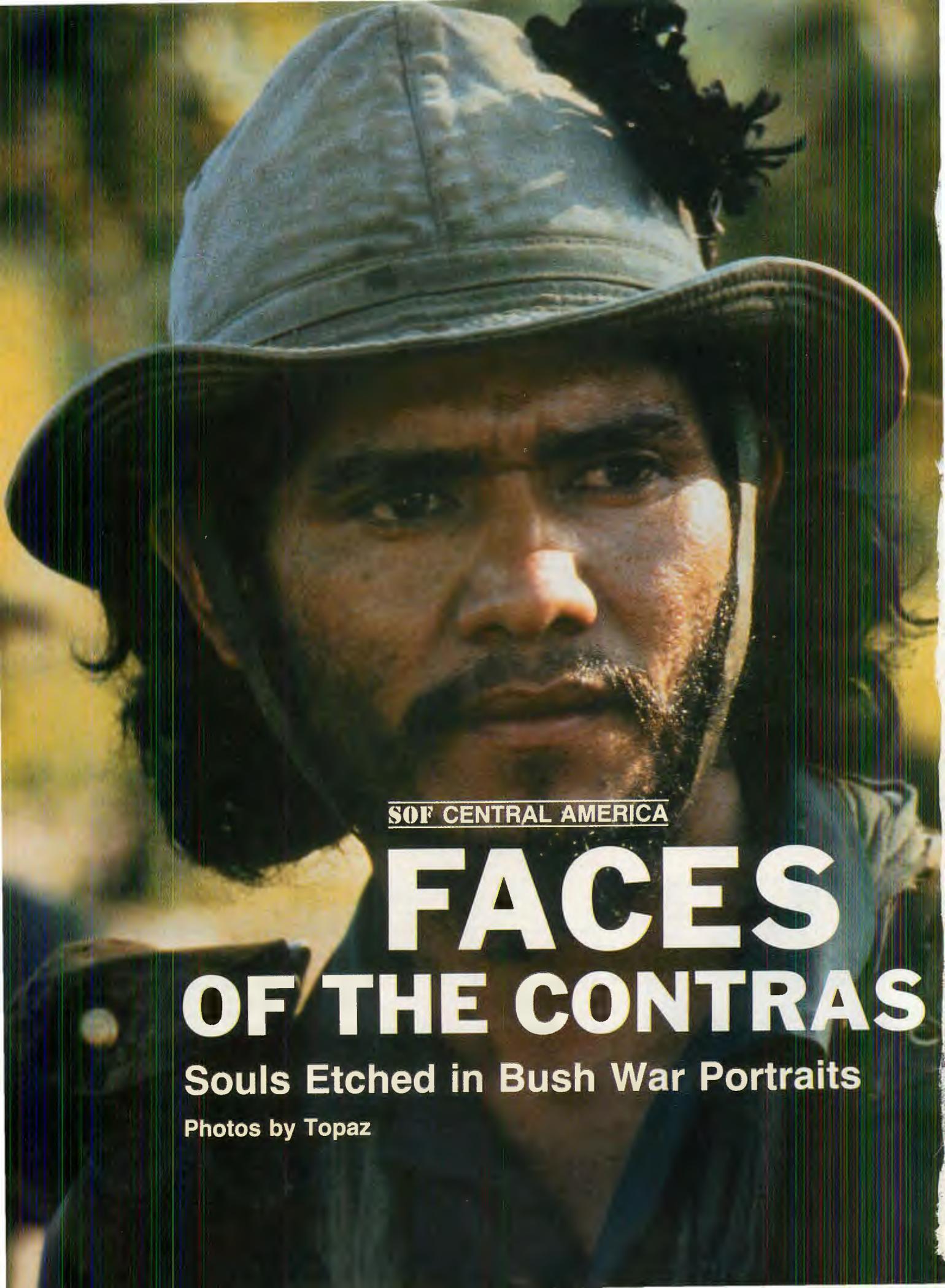
Although they haven't been able to reverse the arms issue in Zaire, France is doing its best to keep the Israelis out of other former possessions. But here, too, 1985 provided a setback. The year saw the Ivory Coast joining Zaire as the second Francophonic state to exchange diplomats with Jerusalem.

Militarily, Israel will never replace France throughout much of Africa. It just does not have the resources. But such upsets do help to keep the Elysees Palace on its toes, for as recent history has indicated, Africa is sacrosanct ground when it comes to French interests.

And a succession of well-balanced military forces, stretching in tiny pockets from the Atlantic to the coast of the Indian Ocean, proves that Paris intends to keep much of Africa within its sphere of influence. We have not seen the last of France's military adventures on the African continent. ✕



**The Moussoro camp north of N'djamena, Chad, is an important rear area base for the French. The camp guards logistical lines around the town of Salal. Here, the camp commander performs a routine inspection. Photo: Gamma**



**SOF CENTRAL AMERICA**

# **FACES OF THE CONTRAS**

**Souls Etched in Bush War Portraits**

**Photos by Topaz**

RIGHT: Wearing the scars of war, this trooper exudes a fierce determination fired by bitterness.

BELOW: She may look like a child with a gun, but she's proven herself a trusted mounted courier and deadeye shot.



*Wrinkles should merely indicate where smiles have been.* — Mark Twain

**F**ACES of Nicaragua's anti-communist rebels stick in the memory of those who meet them. First-time visitors to their camps inevitably are struck by the simple determination and *esprit de corps* etched on the faces of the men and women who are fighting for freedom in Nicaragua. They display courage even when hope for the means to continue their struggle seems bleakest.

Smiles don't come easily to the faces of thousands of Nicaraguans — many of them old and wrinkled, more still who are adolescents robbed by war of their childhood, all battling the Marxist tyranny of the Sandinista regime. Yet they do smile, and do so with an honesty that is remarkable considering their meager circumstances.

Even with the recent \$100 million aid package approved by Congress, Nicaragua's freedom fighters face an uphill battle that may last many

years. Still, one is impressed on meeting the troops — men and women, young and old — the people who are doing the fighting and dying. At times it has seemed that they've kept going on sheer, dogged optimism, a blind conviction that if they persist, that if they keep the faith, somehow, some way, some day they will march into Managua triumphant.

In the meantime, there is much suffering to be done, bitterness to endure. And the visitor sees this in their faces, too. Theirs must be a



The confident look of an experienced light machine gunner armed with a Soviet RPD.

INSET: Women have proved themselves capable warriors in the FDN's ranks.



bittersweet existence, the exhilaration of being part of a crusade mixed with the agony such an endeavor by necessity demands. These people aren't just soldiers. They are refugees. They are people torn away from otherwise quiet lives.

They are families dispossessed. Many have their wives and children with them in the field, usually living in ramshackle frame dwellings covered with plastic or thatch. It is disquieting to the visitor, and even to battle-calloused vets, to lie in a darkened tent and listen to a young mother in a hootch 15 meters away try to comfort a yowling infant terrified by the sound of distant machine-gun fire.

In such times and places, a smile from these people somehow seems more noteworthy, more meaningful.

Topaz, a *nom de guerre* for the former

Special Forces medic and *Soldier of Fortune* trainer/photographer, has shared many smiles and laughs in the months he has traveled in various contra camps. As he ministers to their needs, treats their wounded, delivers their babies, helps bury their dead, Topaz has shared their happiness and their misery. These photos, taken by Topaz in various base camps of the Democratic Force of Nicaragua (FDN) are interesting because they were made prior to passage of the recent congressional aid package, at a time when FDN leaders searched desperately for resources to continue feeding, clothing and equipping this volunteer army.

Even when the chips were down, the contras managed to keep alive the indomitable human spirit that continues to fight for liberty. ✕

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This wounded trooper was luckier than most — he was able to recuperate in the relative luxury of this FDN base clinic.



# COPYCAT COLTS

## Springfield's M1911A1

Text & Photos by Peter G. Kokalis

**I**T makes no difference that at age 75, its contemporaries are long since dead and buried in collectors' vaults. It doesn't matter that it is single-action only and has a magazine that holds but seven rounds. And even though plastic whiz bangs stuffed with enough cartridges to accommodate a sub-machine gun stand ready to take its place, the Model 1911A1 .45 ACP pistol refuses to die.

In 1904, there was widespread dissatisfaction with the .38-caliber M1894 Colt New Model Army revolver. The celebrated Thompson-LaGarde board was formed to conduct a series of tests to determine the most effective bullet for a military pistol. Although the test procedures now seem dubious, colonels Thompson and LaGarde were instrumental in convincing the U.S. Army that no caliber less than .45 should be adopted.

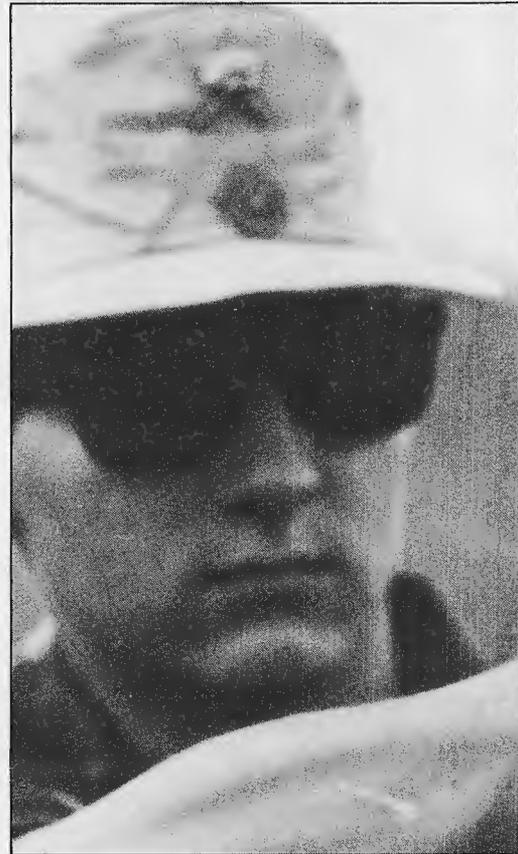
All but the Savage and Colt .45-caliber

A side-by-side comparison of the Springfield Armory M1911A1. The .45 ACP is on the left, the 9mm Parabellum on the right.

semiautomatic pistols were eliminated in the early trials of 1907. Savage was unable to match Colt's technical and financial resources. On 29 March 1911, the Colt Browning pistol was adopted as the "U.S. Pistol, Automatic, Calibre .45, Model 1911." It was altered to the Model 1911A1 configuration in 1926, but its mystique never faltered. If imitation is flattery, the Colt .45 has won more compliments than any handgun.

One such imitation is manufactured by Springfield Armory (Dept. SOF, 420 West Main Street, Geneseo, IL 61254), using parts manufactured in Brazil. Springfield's version of the M1911A1 pistol comes in either .45 ACP or 9mm Parabellum. It is every bit the equal of any M1911A1 produced during World War II. No investment castings here. Barrels are hammer forged and all the other parts are milled forgings.

Springfield produces these duplicates of the M1911A1 military pistol with amazing detail. Military phosphate is standard finish, but for a few dollars more you can have salt bluing. Hammers are of the spur type.



The manual safeties have small checkered thumb tabs just like the original U.S. military versions. They were fitted with precision to our 9mm and .45 ACP test pistols and could be manipulated without effort. Complete with lanyard rings (once required by horse-mounted cavalry), the arched mainspring housings have the usual vertical serrations. Front and rear sights are like those issued with the M1911A1. And like the original, they are inadequate. Most serious pistoleros will replace them with fixed, high-profile combat sights.

An especially attractive feature is the one-piece milled trigger (cross-checked)

The disassembled view of Springfield Armory's 9mm Parabellum version of the M1911A1.





on our .45 ACP specimen), usually found only on pistols made in early World War II or before. By the middle of the war they were changed to the current two-piece triggers with stamped, sheet-metal rear straps.

Slides are marked with "SPRINGFIELD ARMORY" and their crossed-cannons logo on the right side. "MODEL OF 1911-

A1" and either "CAL .45" or "CAL 9mm" are stamped on the left side. Frames are marked on the right side with "SPRINGFIELD ARMORY," "GENESE0 IL. USA," "NM," followed by the serial number.

A trivial departure from U.S. service pistols is the use of black, rather than brown,

grip panels. All else remains GI Joe..

Springfield's 9mm Parabellum versions differ somewhat from its .45 ACP pistols. For instance, Springfield's one-piece milled trigger on the 9mm has vertical serrations instead of cross-checkering. The 9mm's slide tops are flattened by milling and carry longitudinal serrations. The 9mm barrels are belled at the muzzle so that the .45-caliber barrel bushing can be installed. And 9mm magazines are significantly different. Because the 9mm and .45 ACP frames are completely interchangeable, the external dimensions of either magazine must be identical. As a result, 9mm magazine bodies are blocked with a steel insert at the rear. In addition, these magazines are fabricated with a two-piece, removable floor-plate and peculiar forked follower. They hold eight rounds.

Looks aren't everything, though. The Springfield look-alikes have some internal deficiencies. For instance, the bushings on both of SOF's test specimens were sloppy-fitting. That's not unusual. Most military 1911A1s were assembled in this manner to enhance reliability. But unless you plan on dropping yours in a mud bath, a Micro-type bushing should be hand-fitted to the barrel. Nothing affects the accuracy potential of an M1911A1 pistol more than the barrel bushing's interface with the barrel's muzzle. A tightly fitted bushing will insure the barrel's return to exactly the same position, relative to the sight plane, at the end of each counter-recoil stroke.

Military and commercial versions of the M1911A1 series pistols most commonly come equipped with heavy trigger pulls. Our test models proved to be no exception. The 9mm had a scratchy 4.75-lb. pull, while the .45 required an unacceptable 7.5 lbs. of pressure before release. But that's about par for the course. Any competent pistolsmith can correct this problem.

Functional reliability is mandatory for any handgun destined for use in a life-or-death situation. These Springfield Armory cap snappers make the mark. We pumped every type of military FMJ (Full Metal Jacket) ball ammo we could lay our hands on through the 9mm pistol. This included 1944 British (headstamped 'H broadarrow N 9mm IIZ 44') manufactured at R.O.F. Hirwamm, Austrian Hirtenberger, Portuguese ('FNM 70-3 with NATO cross in circle'), Italian ('M38 9'), Yugoslavian ('11 52 with two stars'), and two types of Spanish ball ('FNT 1952' and 'PS 1951'). Not a single bobble.

The Italian ammunition won't even chamber in an HK MP5 and the 'PS 1951' Spanish ball (manufactured by Pirotecnia Militar de Sevilla), oversize and overloaded, exhibited abnormal extrusion of the

### SPRINGFIELD ARMORY M1911A1 SPECIFICATIONS

Calibers	.45 ACP and 9mm Parabellum.
Operation	Locked breech, short-recoil operated. Two locking lugs on top of barrel engage recesses in the slide. Exposed hammer. Single-action, semiautomatic only. Manual thumb safety, grip safety and half-cock notch on hammer.
Weight, empty	35.6 oz.
Length, overall	8.6 inches.
Height	5.4 inches.
Width (over grips)	1.3 inches.
Barrel	Hammer-forged. 9mm; four grooves with lefthand twist; .45 ACP: six grooves with righthand twist. Both rates of twist one turn in 16 inches.
Barrel length	5.04 inches.
Grip panels	Black plastic.
Sights	Fixed; rounded, serrated front blade and open square-notch rear.
Finish	Phosphate or blued.
Magazine	Detachable, single-line box type with seven-round capacity in .45 ACP and eight-round capacity in 9mm Parabellum.
Price	\$362, phosphate; \$383, blued.
Manufacturer	Springfield Armory, Dept. SOF, 420 West Main Street, Geneseo, IL 61254.

*Continued on page 101*

# NEW PEOPLE'S ARMY

## Waiting to Strike Again

Text by Almerigo Grilz

Photos by Albatross Press Agency



ANGUS McSwan, a Reuters correspondent just arrived in Bacolod, joined us for an after-dinner drink in the coffee shop of the Sugarland Hotel. Bacolod is the capital of Negros, the Philippine province hardest hit by a communist insurgency that is the fastest growing in Asia. Like any newly arrived journalist, McSwan began to bounce off us the latest rumors he'd heard. Our chat droned on about faces and places we'd all seen. It seemed like another quiet, uneventful evening.

Then the phone rang. We were surprised that the caller was looking for us.

"The insurgents stormed a hacienda near Murcia, some 15 km from Bacolod," an excited voice told me. "A firefight has been reported. Is this interesting for you?"

You bet. We rushed out of the hotel and piled into the first available taxi. "We want to get to Murcia as fast as possible," we practically shouted in unison.

The New People's Army (NPA) had indeed attacked — the Integrated National Police (INP) HQ confirmed it. They had hit Hacienda La Roca early that evening. The NPA, the military arm of the Communist

Although the training that NPA guerrillas receive is often primitive, the experience they ultimately gain in battle is valuable.

Party of the Philippines, has as many as 15,000 insurgents in the field, most on the island of Mindanao. The small NPA patrol which had attacked Hacienda La Roca had surrounded the rural compound and began exchanging fire with the privately-hired security force. It was the fourth such local incident in as many days. The government had dispatched reinforcements, but they would probably be too late.

As the reports came in, our driver

### COMBAT REPORTER

Almerigo Grilz, reporter for the Italian Albatross Press Agency, has covered conflicts in Afghanistan, Cambodia, Angola, Lebanon and Burma. His first article for SOF, "UNITA Wins, FAPLA Flops" appeared in the May '86 issue.

changed his mind about the trip. "It's too dangerous at night. I don't want to get ambushed," he said.

As we argued and tried to entice the driver with more money, we were interrupted by the noisy arrival of a truckload of armed men who had just come from the scene of the attack. Lieutenant Edilberto Tonog, local INP commander, was with them. He at least had more details.

Tonog told us 30 or more rebels approached the hacienda in a large farm truck without being spotted. The 10 or so security guards held the rebels at bay, preventing them from stealing the cattle and other food supplies they needed. The lieutenant estimated that two communists were killed or seriously injured. One hacienda guard, Wilfredo Alesbo, was also wounded.

When the 11 INP policemen and 30 soldiers of the Philippine Constabulary (PC, a force organized into 180 provincial companies with 43,500 troops) arrived, the NPA band had already disappeared into the countryside.

Lt. Tonog said he'd resume the search for the NPA guerrillas at first light. At his invitation, we joined in.

As we headed off to the ambush site, the accompanying troops peered into the heavy foliage lining each side of the road, obviously worried about an ambush. The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) have over 30 V-150 Commando APCs, but most ground troops must travel in open trucks — such as the one we were in — jeeps or jeepneys. These latter vehicles offer little protection from ambush.

When we reached Hacienda La Roca, the pride of the private guards at repelling the intruders was apparent. Typical of a well-run insurgency, NPA units move in small, highly mobile groups which are extremely difficult to track in the rugged mountain jungle. This spreads government forces thin, and has made privately-organized security forces more popular in some areas. Some of the better-funded private groups are heavily armed, but most, like the one at the hacienda, are farmers with shotguns and a few rifles.

Captain Joel Goltiao, commander of the 331st PC Company, showed us a battered Springfield rifle with a blood-spattered buttstock dropped by one of the insurgents during the firefight. Judging from this weapon, he said he thought the attackers were not NPA regulars, who probably would have been better armed — and who probably would have had the firepower and experience to overrun their objective. Because of antiquated weapons like the captured Springfield, he guessed that the attackers were probably local irregulars, but NPA sympathizers nonetheless. Goltiao soon organized his troops for a patrol into the countryside, ostensibly to search for the rebels, but more to show the flag to local villagers.

Like most Philippine security forces in the field, these constabulary members were not wearing proper uniforms, but were clad

in a hodge-podge of camouflage jackets, OD and civilian shirts, jeans and balaclavas. They were armed with M16s, .45-caliber pistols and hand-grenades.

The PC patrol stopped occasionally to search houses at random and question inhabitants. After about 30 minutes of walking, two suspects were arrested and brought back to Bacolod for interrogation. No real evidence of the attacking rebel force had been found, however.

Goltiao said the NPA is still too weak to face the AFP in full-scale battles. This is basically true. But Goltiao's claim that there are no areas completely under control of the rebels is highly questionable. Reliable intelligence and news reports have confirmed that the communist insurgents control major portions of some islands. Goltiao's assertion that the NPA has no permanent installations is also hard to swallow in light of the NPA's ability to strike almost at will.

We had seen the Philippine government security forces, but we had really come to hook up with the elusive NPA. Getting the word to the NPA guerrillas about our interest in meeting them wasn't difficult because of their widespread network of sympathizers. Getting their approval to actually do so, however, was another matter. They are extremely security-conscious because in most areas they must operate in the midst of heavy government military activity. Meeting the press usually does not involve reporters creeping across any border into a "liberated zone." NPA leaders most often must deal with the fourth estate in the same zones where the government troops are looking for them.

After much waiting, we finally received a mysterious call from someone promising a meeting at 2000 hours that night. We waited in our hotel room for hours past the appointed time, finally falling asleep in our clothes. We were awakened the next morning by our NPA contact, who phoned to say that government informants were observed in and around our hotel. We were given another contact date. This one proved successful.

We were driven north to Victoria, a town in the province of Negros del Norte, home to some of the Philippines' biggest sugar mills. After being dropped off, we continued on foot along paths across sugar cane plantations toward the hills. We stopped at a peasant's house to rest, then were told we would spend the night there. One of our escorts went ahead to make sure we had permission to continue the next morning.

Our host for the night, a woman, served us a meager dinner, all the while telling us how the insurgency had grown during recent months. The NPA presence was relatively new in her area, she said, and her neighborhood was one of the newest guerrilla fronts opened by the communists in the Philippines.

"The first time I saw a group of them, [they were] hiding in the plantations [in] the

A Philippine Ranger in Negros del Norte.



rain in December 1984," she said. "Before we only had gotten some rumors that underground cells were active, studying the local situation. But they contacted a few select people. In March 1985, political organizers were already openly operating to raise a network of supporters. In August, a government informer was killed, and another suspected [of being] one was moved away . . . to avoid the same fate . . . . In December, the military came in for the first time, arresting about 10 people. They had to release them afterward due to the lack of evidence."

Despite the occasional presence of its military troops, the government in Manila failed to mount its own propaganda campaign to counter that of the communists, we learned. The area where we spent that first night on our way to meet the guerrillas is only about 15 km from Victoria. But the presence of government forces there apparently is only sporadic, compared to

continuous agitation and cultivation of the local populace by the communists.

We saw a good example the next day after reaching a small village in the foothills. A Political Organizing Team (POT) from the CPP was meeting with the local people, listening to grievances, taking notes and preaching "liberation through revolution." Most cadre members were young, armed with a single-shot homemade shotgun and rusty revolvers. Later they staged a propaganda theatre for everyone's amusement, miming an "upheaval of the masses." They closed by singing "L'Internationale," weapons and clenched fists raised in defiance.

This communist propaganda team apparently lived only a 20-minute walk from the village, in a wooden hut hidden in the thick vegetation. Typical of this grassroots-level organizing, the CPP cadres preach a Marxist-Leninist gospel based more on rote memory than logical deduction

or scholarly study. Like most social and cultural dilemmas subsequently exploited by communist movements, the unrest being nurtured by the insurgents in the Philippines grew more out of empty stomachs and pocketbooks than any garden of supposedly noble political ideas.

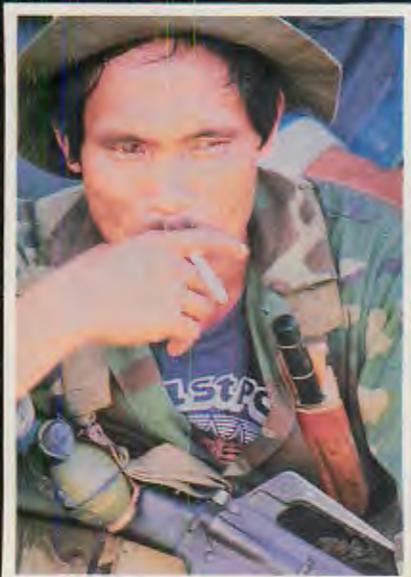
This POT and its followers were no different. Apart from repeating some slogans, the NPA sympathizers weren't able to elaborate much on what communism is, neither do they know what communist rule exactly means. What they inevitably come back to is that there "isn't enough food in the countryside, and the sugar cane workers can't afford to feed their families with their daily salaries." The government and landowners — capitalism and free enterprise — are the enemy, they are told, and a "people's revolution" will inevitably correct the problem.

These propaganda teams are the "fish swimming in the ocean," as Chairman Mao



A member of the Philippine Constabulary (PC) rests following a counterinsurgency operation mounted when NPA guerrillas raided haciendas near Murcia, Negros Occidental.

The long trudge of patrolling rail and commercial links is necessary to prevent sabotage by rebels bent on further disrupting the economy.





Private guards who the night before repulsed an NPA attack pose proudly with their weapons. Members of the PC are in the background.

Lt. Tonog, left, chief of police in Murcia, and Capt. Goltiao question rural residents the day after NPA guerrillas attacked a nearby hacienda.





referred to them, and they are in charge of maintaining day-by-day indoctrination and support of the locals, the first level of any classic communist insurgency.

But the actual fighting is done by NPA regulars. They aren't armed with old shotguns and rusty pistols, though. They have M16s and RPGs. One NPA detachment had just departed that area, we were told. They apparently stay on the move to avoid undesirable confrontation with government troops.

The POT cadre told us a messenger had been sent ahead to seek final approval for our requested meeting from that particular NPA unit commander. We waited in this village for several days without a response and finally returned to Bacolod.

A week later we were contacted again. We began to feel like this might be a productive trip when we were told that we would only travel at night. The walking was much less pleasant than before, stumbling along in the dark through intermittent rain over paths slick with deep mud. Our guide said he was a member of the guerrilla unit we sought. He led us farther into the hills to the area in which he had been born and which he knew well.

We arrived at another village, where the rebels were housed by sympathetic residents. We were told an entire 40-50-man NPA platoon was in temporary residence here. Their small number and high mobility allowed the rebel unit to launch hit-and-run attacks against government patrols and isolated outposts. They claimed to have ambushed a jeepney near Silay town a few weeks before, killing four soldiers and "liberating" their weapons. One member said his unit had been operating in Negros del Norte province for five months. He said it was not committed to the area until the support network was strong enough to provide an adequate system of food collection, safe houses, security and intelligence.

This particular platoon was newly organized, formed from a nucleus of veterans from other battle-tested guerrilla units, who served as a training cadre for local recruits. The commander, Ka (Comrade) Nilo, 37, is a veteran of operations in central Negros. His personal story is typical.

Nilo is a former student who had friends active in radical politics, he said. Eventually he helped them organize urban laborers in Negros. That experience led him to become an official CPP member. His participation went from the political to the military realm in late 1982, when he joined a regular NPA unit.

"The regional party organization wanted to expand our activity," he said. "In October last year it was decided to open the new front in northern Negros."

We witnessed our first guerrilla training session the following morning. Veterans

**There is no shortage of eager young men with nothing better to do than be recruited by the NPA.**

## AQUINO'S MILITARY

President Corazon Aquino is working toward significant change in the Philippine government. She hopes to make it more responsive to real needs and to purge the deep-seated corruption serving special interests that developed under the cronyism of the Ferdinand Marcos regime. The military is no exception. Not surprisingly some of the names are different: General Fidel V. Ramos has replaced General Fabian C. Ver, the former military chief of staff who ignominiously fled the country with the Marcos entourage.

The most notable changes in the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) are that they are a little bigger than under Marcos, and have been restructured in a couple of key areas.

According to Pentagon figures, the AFP — army, navy and air force — had a manpower level of 115,000 regular troops as of February 1986. The AFP is supplemented by another 42,000 persons serving in paramilitary capacities, reserves of 48,000 and another 75,000 persons available for duty through local militias. Men become eligible for selective service at age 18 and remain subject to call-up until age 49.

Included in the above figure for paramilitary forces are 40,000 persons in the Philippine Constabulary (PC) organized into 180 provincial companies. Counted within the 75,000 persons available if needed are 70,000 in the Civil Home Defense Force (CHDF), an irregular militia. General Ramos has been toning down and de-emphasizing the CHDF because it has come under fire for alleged heavy-handed tactics against civilians and abuses of power.

For her part, President Aquino has come under criticism from parts of the military sector for being too conciliatory toward the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its military arm, the New People's Army (NPA). While she has offered to negotiate with the communists and, as a gesture of good will, has freed hundreds of political prisoners, Aquino has quietly allowed her military leaders to restructure some commands to better meet the growing challenges of the NPA.

And when Rodolfo Salas, at various times identified as the head of both the CPP and the NPA, was captured in late September after visiting a Manila hospital, Aquino's spokesmen said he would not be released, but would be tried on criminal charges against him. Among many other things, the 38-year-old Salas is alleged to have led an NPA hit team that killed five U.S. Navy officers on Bataan peninsula on 10 April 1974. A \$12,500 reward had been offered for Salas' capture.

The NPA has somewhere between 10,000 and 20,000 troops in the field (no reliably specific figures exist) and it is widely believed to be Asia's fastest growing communist insurgency movement. The steps that Aquino takes in the next few months will in large part determine whether the NPA's lure to the masses is defused or its growth rate sustained.

Figuring most prominently in Manila's bush war with the NPA is the Philippine Army, which has increased its manpower from 60,000 to 70,000 since Aquino took office, with reserve strength at about 12,000. The army has an independent infantry brigade gradually undergoing mechanization and five infantry divisions.

The biggest change has been in the Special Services Brigade of the Marcos regime, restructured under Aquino into a Ranger Regiment consisting of five Scout Ranger Battalions and one Mountain Ranger Battalion. This Ranger Regiment already spearheads the military effort against the NPA insurgency and will play an even larger role if the war escalates.

The Ranger Regiment will be part of a special strike force being set up to deal more specifically with terrorist incidents such as kidnappings, hijackings and bombings. A special training program has been established for select troops dedicated to the counterinsurgency task. According to the *Defense and Foreign Affairs Handbook: 1985*, this training "stresses 'special reaction' techniques in dealing with terrorists, and places emphasis on a psychological consideration of the *modus operandi*."

Other parts of the army remain virtually unchanged. These include two engineering brigades, a light armored regiment, four artillery regiments and an air defense battalion equipped with Hawk surface-to-air missiles.

Because of Aquino's successful visit with President Reagan in September, the army's equipment inventory was in a state of flux as this went to press. But her army has about 40 tanks, mainly Scorpions; 81mm and 107mm mortars; a dozen or so 155mm howitzers and at least 200 105mm howitzers; and a wide assortment of APCs, including M3s, M113s, V-150 Commandos and others.

The UH-1H helicopter is the backbone of army aviation assets. With only 54 Hueys in the inventory to cover 72 farflung provinces scattered over thousands of islands, the lack of tactical support helicopters easily qualifies as the single largest deficiency in the Philippine military inventory. NPA commanders readily acknowledge that heliborne assault troops represent the biggest threat — some of them say the *only*

threat — from the government in Manila.

According to AFP General Staff estimates, the military needs 256 helicopters. Each Regional Unified Command (RUC) should have 16 Hueys available in order to be able to respond properly to any NPA incident and still have air assets locally available, the estimate states. This includes medevac and other non-combatant functions.

The navy and air force have maintained the status quo during the transition from Marcos to Aquino. The navy's manpower still stands at about 28,000, including 9,600 marines and naval engineers, and 2,000 coastguardsmen. Naval reserves stand at 12,000. The air force has 16,800 members — including 500 pilots — and a reserve force of 16,000.

Primarily based out of its main installation at Sangley Point, the Philippine Navy has a fleet of seven frigates, 10 corvettes, 15 deep sea patrol vessels, 37 inshore patrol craft, two command ships, over 160 landing craft, over 30 landing ships, a floating dry dock and the usual assortment of support vessels. Naval aviation assets consist primarily of 10 B-N Islanders for antimuggling patrols and five MBB Bo-105 helicopters for liaison duties.

The air force has increased its single fighter squadron from 20 to 22 F-8Hs in the past year. At the same time, its interceptor squadron acquired three more F-5As, bringing the total to 19. That squadron also has 3 F-5Bs. The fighter training squadron has 22 T-34As.

The five COIN squadrons are composed in varying proportions of 16 SF-260WPs, 32 T-28Ds, 12 AC-47 gunships and 18 UH-1D helicopters. There are two SAR squadrons, one doubling in reconnaissance and the other using 12 UH-1H helicopters. There is also a presidential transport squadron, five transport squadrons, one liaison squadron and three training squadrons. The primary air-to-air missile is the Sidewinder and the addition of more advanced COIN aircraft is expected. For instance, in addition to more Hueys, the air force also has in the pipeline or has already acquired 11 F-5Es, two UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters and 18 OV-10 Broncos.

Translated for uninitiated civilians, this all means the Philippine armed forces are taking steps to meet the special requirements for fighting a counterinsurgency war. Whether these steps go far enough — or whether President Aquino will even authorize an all-out offensive against the NPA's communist guerrillas — remains to be seen.

— James L. Pate



could be spotted by the captured army fatigues they wore, some still bearing the patches of particular government units and the name tags of dead Philippine soldiers. They were armed with an assortment of captured weapons that included M1 Garands and M16s, M203 grenade launchers and .45-cal. pistols.

Some foreign policy observers have suggested that the NPA receives minimal support from outside the Philippines. About all of the weapons we saw — such as M16s made in the Philippines under license by Elisco Tool — appeared to have been obtained locally by the NPA.

The training was unsophisticated. On this particular day, they said they were planning an assault against an unspecified government outpost. They conducted several dry runs against a crude mock-up of the target. After each exercise, Ka Nilo would work with squad leaders to correct mistakes and modify the plan.

Later, the first word came of nearby government military patrols. Ka Nilo ordered the troops back to their respective huts to rest in the cool shadows. Since the Silay ambush, the provincial military commander

**TOP: The NPA enjoys relative freedom of movement throughout the Philippines. The army doesn't have enough resources to be everywhere at once.**

**ABOVE: The NPA usually picks the time and place to fight.**

was anxious to avenge his loss and regain the face he had lost to the ragtag guerrillas. He wanted to spill some communist blood for a change.

We were ordered into hiding also. As we waited, the unmistakable sound of Huey helicopters grew louder and two UH-1Hs approached our village. They circled the immediate area, slowly and at a few hundred feet. The same thoughts must have gone through the minds of the guerrillas as went through ours. Did the government know about this location and were preparing to attack? Maybe this was just a probing operation. The government would certainly have needed up-to-date information. But this unit had only arrived the day before, a few hours before we did.

Soon sympathetic peasants brought us the news. An infantry patrol of 35-40 men had disembarked from the helicopters in the

jungle nearby. Ka Nilo had enough men and guns to take on such a force, but he said he declined to do so on the spur of the moment, not knowing what other government forces might be waiting a short helicopter ride away.

"Our tactic is to fight only on our own initiative, after securing absolute or relative superiority, and using the element of surprise. It's by sticking carefully to those criteria that we ensure our successes," he said.

We heard a few single, scattered shots, apparently fired by the choppers' door-gunners. The tension mounted somewhat. Our communist hosts assured us it meant little or nothing — it was more "to intimidate the people" than to do any real harm, they said. The shots may have been precautionary covering fire, it turned out, as the helos set down to quickly pick up part of the patrol for removal to another area. Runners soon came in to report that 16 Philippine government troops were left behind not far away.

Ka Nilo ordered his men to grab their gear and head for the bush. The 16 government troops most likely would soon sweep through the village looking for signs of guerrilla activity or support. We were sent with the Gs to hide along a steep, heavily vegetated slope in the nearby jungle. The troops paused for an hour or so in the village and moved on, never approaching our position.

The helicopters present the NPA with their biggest problem, said Ka Nilo. They have become a particular bother since the 9 February election in which Corazon Aquino rose to power. Despite the critics who charge that Aquino should spend more time killing guerrillas and less negotiating with them, Ka Nilo said the military pressure has grown since she took power, especially from heliborne forces.

"Before the presidential elections," Ka Nilo said, "we saw troops only three times on this front. Ground troops are no problem, but when they fly around in the Hueys, we can't know where they're heading to, and they move very fast."

To play it safe, Ka Nilo decided to keep his entire unit — and his journalistic guests — under wraps in the bush for the night. We had been passed over initially, but there was no guarantee the government troops wouldn't come back. I certainly did not relish the idea of standing between the two opposing forces and trying to explain who I was and what I was doing there.

The next day seemed quieter, but information continued to come in indicating that Manila's counterinsurgency sweep was not over. Ka Nilo decided it was more sensible to postpone the already planned attack and withdraw to a safer area. After sunset, the guerrilla column withdrew silently toward the mountains with our group of reporters in tow. After seven hours of river-fording, sliding over slippery slopes and limping along stream beds, we finally reached the rebels' mountain *sanctuario*. It was another nondescript grouping of thatched huts, but much more isolated than

our previous bivouac and in a tactically safe position.

Indoor accommodations were scarce here. Apparently there were other units here besides Ka Nilo's platoon. Like many of his troops, the reporters had to spend the cold, windy night under the large overhanging roof in front of a hut, protected more or less from rain but still essentially in the open. No blankets were available. I awoke at dawn shivering after a restless sleep. A couple of the Gs made a fire. We hunkered down next to it, trying to dry our wet boots and socks.

Just as we thought things might actually get somewhat comfortable, the sun rose rapidly over the mountain jungle. The day went from a penetrating cold dampness to a debilitating wet heat that wrapped itself around everything and made any attempt at movement seem senseless.

Despite our own perception of their environment, though, the insurgents were unmistakably more relaxed while camping here. They spent much of their time resting and chatting. More attention was devoted to ideological and political indoctrination — a large selection of revolutionary writings apparently were available here and discussions droned on for hours.

The NPA was officially formed on 29 March 1969 as the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines, or CPP. Although basically Marxist-Leninists, young rebels when asked will say, "The Chinese experience is closer to us." But then they go on to mention Nicaragua's Sandinista Party, which largely takes its cues from Castro's Cuban government. It's doubtful many of them could locate Nicaragua on a map, but there are a couple of legitimate comparisons, such as the communists' exploitation of the radical clergy.

While heaping praise on the Sandinistas, the party faithful we talked to still were critical of the Soviet Union, though not as much so as in the past. Ka Nilo said he opposes the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Soviet-backed occupation of Cambodia by the Vietnamese.

Despite his criticism, though, Ka Nilo remains a practical man. "If the Soviets would offer us weapons," he said, "I think we should take them. Because we need arms and ammunition."

The popularity of President Aquino — particularly the support given her by General Fidel V. Ramos, an ardent anti-communist who is chief of staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, and by Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile — was a major challenge to the insurgents. Many villagers who had supported the NPA as the only alternative suddenly found new hope in President Aquino's final victory.

"Cory Aquino and Marcos are basically the same," warns Ka Benson, 29, a guerrilla in Negros del Norte. "Ultimately it is U.S. imperialism that controls the Manila government anyway."

Still, Aquino took steps not only to negotiate with the communists, but to demonstrate her sincere intention to do so in



**NPA communist rebels in the jungle display stolen government weapons. They also are wearing parts of captured government uniforms still bearing unit patches and the name tags of the former owners.**

good faith. She began by releasing 500 political prisoners, many of them jailed members of the CPP and the NPA.

"There are still a lot of other issues," insists one young, hardcore NPA trooper. "The fall of Marcos was only a first, temporary victory."

Among the conditions the communists say must be met before they will give up armed struggle is the complete withdrawal of U.S. forces from strategic installations such as Clark Air Force Base and the massive naval complex at Subic Bay. If for nothing but purely economic reasons, President Aquino is in no position to meet this condition even if she wanted to.

In any case, the NPA troopers with whom we traveled in northern Negros seemed in no way disposed to lay down their guns. We remained with them for several days in their mountain hideout, safely monitoring government troop movements. The NPA would merely wait for the right opportunity to march down again to attack the government post they had targeted.

As for our own visit, it seemed that the guerrillas would have to wait until after our departure to initiate any action. Ka Nilo kept receiving intel about government troop movements. He finally decided to go on a reconnaissance mission himself. We were told we must await his return, which ended up being several more days. So we froze by night and suffered the heat of the day, breaking the monotony only with meals consisting of cassava roots, yams and dog meat.

Eventually Ka Nilo returned. He said the AFP apparently planned to continue its activity in the area for an extended period. This made his plan to attack an outpost recklessly perilous at best. After a meeting with other top military commanders it was decided that the camp would disperse for two or three weeks and then reassess the situation in the hopes of a tactical improvement.

But before our departure, Ka Nilo, possibly feeling a loss of face, sternly reminded me that

this area was a new front, and that in the island's southern region the NPA regulars moved about with much more impunity.

I had seen government statistics to back up his boast. In Negros, the AFP had 31 troops killed in NPA ambushes on 31 January and 22 February 1986. No less an authority than Colonel Isegani de los Santos, commander of the Task Force Sugarland and assigned overall command of island COIN ops, estimated that the NPA has 500 regulars operating in Negros. The colonel said this regular communist force is supplemented by a support element numbering about 2,000 people, who provide tax collection, dissemination of information and propaganda, and security and intelligence.

To counter this NPA threat on Negros, the AFP is fielding roughly 4,000 troops (two Infantry Battalions, seven PC companies, one Scout Ranger company, one Composite Reaction Force, one Regional Special Action company, plus the INP and the local militia — the Civilian Home Defence Forces). I later witnessed army operations in the aftermath of several guerrilla incidents. In all cases the guerrillas succeeded in slipping away, completely avoiding capture.

Government military commanders blame their lack of success on a lack of helicopters, a position strengthened by the communists' admitted fear of heliborne troops. Colonel Francisco Agudon, provincial commander of Negros del Norte, said he usually had only two of them available for all three provinces on Negros. Still, critics will argue, an abundance of helicopters in Vietnam could not guarantee area security in Vietnam. Be that as it may, helicopters have always made it easier to stay one step ahead of highly mobile guerrilla bands, and to hunt them down and kill them.

Later on we accompanied heliborne troops flying around in their effort to locate the guerrillas — men I'd already located and lived with for days. Looking down from the chopper, the rice paddies, rolling sugar cane fields and villages all looked the same — innocuous and peaceful.

Ka Nilo's platoon, however, was down there somewhere, undetectable among the peasants, and waiting to strike again. ✕



## SOF WEAPONS

**Bullpup-configured FA MAS — the French military's official infantry weapon.**

# FA MAS BULLPUP

## France's Unmusical Bugle

Text & Photos by Peter G. Kokalis

**F**RENCH soldiers refer to it as "le Clairon." But this bugle spits bullets. It is not a pretty weapon — in fact, it's downright ugly. Esthetics, however, are of small consequence in the design of efficient weaponry.

France's newest service rifle, the FA MAS (Fusil Automatique, Manufacture d'Armes de St. Etienne), has already demonstrated itself to be an effective and generally well-conceived piece of ordnance. First introduced in 1973 and subsequently modified, the FA MAS was adopted by the French armed forces and placed into production in 1979. Manufactured by GIAT (Groupement Industriel des Armements Terrestres) at their St. Etienne arsenal, a

**Firing the FA MAS from the prone position. As a bullpup, it can be fired from either shoulder.**



semiautomatic-only version of this interesting assault rifle has been imported in limited quantity by Century International Arms, Inc. (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 714-C, St. Albans, Vermont 05478).

After generations of discordant calibers — such as the 7.5mm rifle and 7.65mm Long pistol cartridges — the French finally

### FA MAS DISASSEMBLY

The FA MAS is not difficult to disassemble. At least it wouldn't be if the instruction manual's garbled English and peculiar translations didn't get in the way. Terms such as "mobile assembly" and "inertia amplifying lever" are a mystery to me, and I doubt if many readers will understand them either. So let's start over in the King's English.

Remove the sling and magazine and clear the weapon. Withdraw the long buttstock retaining pin by pushing it to the left. Pull the buttstock to the rear and separate it from the receiver. Snap off the cheekpiece. Withdraw the short retaining pin at the rear of the carrying handle which passes through the rear sight base by pushing it to the left. Don't lose these pins. Shove the carrying handle forward and pull it up and off the barrel and retracting mechanism. Push the hammer mechanism's captive retaining pin to the left and drop out the hammer mechanism.

Pull back on the retracting handle just enough to relieve the pressure on its transverse retaining pin at the rear of the bolt carrier. Push this pin to the left and slide the bolt group out the rear of the

decided to play in NATO's orchestra and chambered the FA MAS for what is essentially the U.S. 5.56x45mm M193 cartridge. It differs only by virtue of its Berdan primed steel case. Compatibility with NATO has been served and France now has a cartridge with proven efficiency in causing casualties.

Hands-on use of this weapon has produced compliments — SOF's Paul Fanshaw, who employed the FA MAS rifle extensively while serving as a platoon sergeant in the French Foreign Legion, awards it a clean bill of health in all regards.

Of so-called bullpup configuration, the FA MAS measures only 30.28 inches in overall length. Complete with flash suppressor, the barrel is 19.5 inches long. Oddly cut with only three grooves, the rifling's

RIGHT: FA MAS field stripped.

BELOW: FA MAS bolt group.



receiver. Move the bolt to the back of the carrier until the delay lever's arms are vertical. The bolt assembly will now drop out of the carrier. Rotate the delay lever until its arms parallel the bolt's axis and separate it from the bolt body. The firing pin will now fall out the rear of the bolt body. Pry up the bolt head's retaining pin and separate it from the bolt body. The bolt's head can now be withdrawn from the bolt body. The extractor and dummy extractor plug will fall away from the bolt's head and the ejector and spring will drop out the rear.

No further disassembly is required. The plastic furniture appears to be impervious to all the solvents we applied, including perchlorate ethylene. Since this weapon is not gas operated, feel free to lubricate everything your heart desires. Re-assemble in the reverse order. When you insert the assembled bolt group into the carrier, first rotate the delay lever until its arms are vertical. Then place the end of the firing pin into its hole in the carrier. Now you'll be able to lower the bolt into the carrier. When replacing the buttstock and upper handguard retaining pins, insert them from the right side if you're left-handed and the left side if you're right-handed.

rate of right-hand twist remains one turn in every 12 inches. An optional pitch of one turn in 9 inches is available as a compromise to accommodate the SS 109 projectile. But in spite of its compactness, the FA MAS weighs 8.0 lbs. empty and minus the bipod — at the outer limits by today's standards. Steel parts are phosphate finished and the receiver has been anodized gray.

Firing from the closed-bolt position, the method of operation is by means of delayed blowback. While this principle smacks of Heckler & Koch (early prototypes of the FA MAS were pictured with the G3 bayonet), the delay system has been taken directly from the French AA 52 General Purpose Machine Gun.

A black plastic lower handguard, pinned

### FA MAS SPECIFICATIONS

<b>Caliber</b> .....	5.56x45mm NATO; M193-type ammunition.
<b>Operation</b> .....	Retarded blowback using H-shaped delay lever. Fire from the closed-bolt position.
<b>Cyclic rate</b> .....	N/A, imported in semiautomatic only.
<b>Feed</b> .....	25-round detachable staggered box-type magazine.
<b>Weight, empty</b> .....	8.0 lbs.
<b>Length, overall</b> .....	30.28 inches.
<b>Barrel</b> .....	Three-groove with a right-hand twist of one turn in 12 inches.
<b>Barrel length</b> .....	19.5 inches, including flash suppressor.
<b>Sights</b> .....	Blade-type front; adjustable for windage zero; mounted on column pinned to barrel; sliding plastic cover with peep aperture for night fire (service versions equipped with luminous bead). Peep aperture rear sight; two hinged caps (front and rear) offer two aperture diameters; adjustable for elevation zero; three battle-sight positions: 300, 400 and 500 meters. Both sights protected by carrying handle on upper handguard.
<b>Finish</b> .....	Phosphate; gray, baked finish on alloy receiver body.
<b>Furniture</b> .....	Black plastic.
<b>Accessories</b> .....	Sling, spare magazines, spare parts and cleaning kit; military-issue carrying case (\$99); bayonet and scabbard (\$37.95).
<b>Status</b> .....	Currently in production; selective-fire model in service with French Armed Forces.
<b>Price</b> .....	\$999 to FFL holders, complete with bipod and all accessories, except carrying case and bayonet.
<b>Manufacturer</b> .....	Groupement Industriel des Armements Terrestres, Dept. SOF, 10, place Georges-Clemenceau, 92211 St. Cloud, France.
<b>Exclusive U.S. Distributor</b> .....	Century International Arms, Inc., Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 714-C, St. Albans, Vermont 05478.



to the barrel and receiver, extends back to the magazine well and cannot be removed. To accommodate the bullpup configuration, the trigger mechanism and pistol grip have been mounted to the lower handguard, forward of the magazine well. The ergonomically-designed pistol grip has three finger grooves and a storage trap which contains a plastic bottle of lubricant.

The sheet-metal trigger guard can be

pulled away from its rear retaining pin and rotated 180 degrees for firing with gloves under arctic conditions. The trigger is connected to a long, thin strip of sheet-metal which rides in a slot on the right side of the receiver and reaches the hammer mechanism located at the rear of the receiver. Trigger pull-weight was a spongy and variable 8 to 9 lbs. on our test rifle. On the semiauto-only FA MAS, pressing the trig-

## RISING ABOVE THE COMPETITION

Rising above the bore's axis by three inches, but fully protected by the upper handguard's carrying handle, the FA MAS sight system is the best non-optical effort to date in response to the combat environment of the modern battlefield.

A spring-steel, blade-type front sight has been fixed by means of an allen-head screw to the steel front column which, in turn, is pinned to the barrel. Windage zero is controlled by a notched wheel (on the left side of the sight blade) with a white index dot, that can be rotated when a plastic tab (attached to the sight blade) is pushed to the right until its detent clears the wheel's notches. To move the point of impact to the right, back off the threaded wheel and the blade will bend to the left. To move the point of impact to the left, turn the wheel clockwise and the blade will shift to the right. Each notch will move the point of impact 6 centimeters at 200 meters, to the right or to the left.

A sliding, plastic, peep aperture in front of the sight column can be pushed up to appear above the sight blade. It's used for night firing. On rifles manufactured for military issue, this sliding bar contains a painted, luminous bead, employed in conjunction with a second rear sight assembly (riveted to the carrying

handle in front of the standard rear sight assembly) with two promethium dots — all of which have been omitted from the semiauto-only version.

The rear sight is also mounted on a steel column, this time over the recoil spring's cylinder in front of the receiver. Elevation zero is adjusted by a plastic notched wheel in front of the sight column. There are index marks numbered 1 through 6 which can be most conveniently reached with the upper handguard removed. Each notch raises or lowers the point of impact by 6 centimeters at 200 meters. Raise the sight to raise the point of impact and vice versa.

Three battlesight positions, marked 3, 4 and 5 - for 300, 400 and 500 meters, respectively - can be selected by a plastic knob at the rear of the sight column. Five hundred meters is most certainly the outer practical limit of this caliber without optical assistance.

There are two hinged rear sight apertures. Under normal lighting conditions, both apertures remain upright. The eye will select the small aperture in front, which is surrounded by a small sunshade. When firing in subdued light, flip down the front aperture to take advantage of the larger aperture in the rear. At night both apertures are turned down to use the luminous sight system. The sight radius is 12 inches.

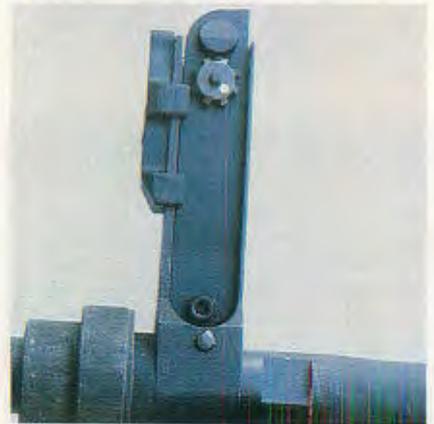
It may be ugly, but the FA MAS is a practical and proven assault rifle.

ger draws this spring-loaded bar forward to pull both the primary and secondary sears away from the hammer's notch.

A spring-loaded, plastic catch in front of the magazine well must be pressed back to remove a magazine. Magazines are inserted by pushing them straight into the well. No rocking motion is required. There is no hold-open device. But who cares? Thirty million Kalashnikovs have been manufactured without one, as well as millions of G3s and Galils. And they all seem to do just fine in combat.

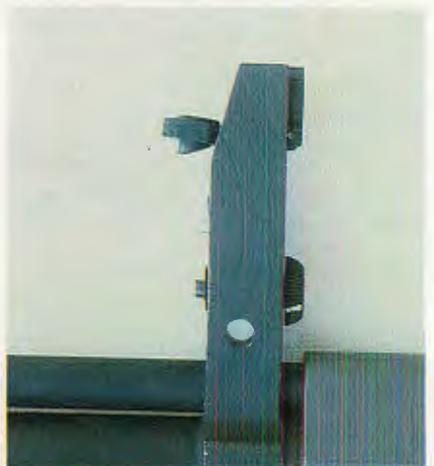
FA MAS magazines hold 25 rounds and, in my opinion, are superior to those of the M16 series. While not as heavy as Galil or Beretta Model 70 magazines, the sturdy steel bodies are straight-line, without any curvature, with substantial locking tabs punch-welded to the exterior, front and rear. Two-piece floorplates insure rapid disassembly. Only the follower is plastic.

Because the firing pin is withdrawn from the bolt face by the delay lever's rotating cross-piece, there is no need for a spring. Other components of the bolt group include a removable bolt head with a spring-loaded, centrally located "bump"-type ejector, and an extractor and dummy extractor plug.



ABOVE: FA MAS front sight assembly.

BELOW: FA MAS rear sight assembly.





**ABOVE:** FA MAS bayonet is the same design as the rifle's predecessor — the MAS 49/59 semiauto.

**BELOW:** FA MAS cleaning kit and spare parts.



Being a bullpup, the FA MAS can be modified to fire from either shoulder. To change the FA MAS from right- to left-hand ejection, withdraw the bolt head after removing its notched retaining pin on top of the bolt body, insert the extractor into the left side of the bolt head and the dummy plug into the right side. The extractor will now spin empty cases out to the left. Nothing else is required for left-hand ejection, other than to snap the cheekpiece onto the right side of the buttstock.

This cheekpiece was neoprene-covered sheet-metal on early specimens. It is now a light plastic molding, but still quite comfortable. Both ejection ports are cut into the plastic buttstock molding - one or the other being blocked by the cheekpiece. A spring buffer in the top of the buttstock compresses about an inch before rebounding. To reduce costs, it has been eliminated on the semiauto-only version as its cushioning effect on the reciprocating parts is not required in semiautomatic fire. There is a stippled, neoprene buttplate with fixed sling swivels on either side.

The upper handguard certainly contributes more than its share to this rifle's grotesque appearance. It also acts as a carrying handle and protects the sights which rise 3 inches above the bore's axis. A lightweight tubular aluminum bipod has been bolted to a bracket under the handguard. The non-adjustable legs, with plastic feet, fold along the sides of the handguard when not in use. To employ, simply pull out on the leg and rotate to the extended position. This useful feature adds only 6 oz. to the overall weight.

*Continued on page 98*

## TECHNICAL DATA

The FA MAS is not an overly complex weapon. But since this rifle is unlike the standard NATO weapons that most people are accustomed to, it might be a good idea to go over its internal mechanics. So let's start with the bolt group.

A delay lever with two parallel, angled arms, joined by a rounded cross-piece, connects the bolt body to the carrier. When the bolt is in battery, the lower ends of these arms butt against two protrusions on the bolt body and a hardened steel pin across the receiver, very much like the locking shoulders on the Bren Gun or FN FAL rifle. The upper ends ride in open camways in the bolt carrier.

After firing a cartridge, pressure from the expanding gases throws the cartridge case against the bolt face to initiate its rearward movement. The moving bolt causes the delay lever to rotate backwards. As the top delay lever arms are longer than the bottom arms, they drive the bolt carrier rearward at a greater velocity than the bolt itself. Thus, while the available energy is largely expended in accelerating the carrier backward, the bolt's rearward travel is retarded until chamber pressures drop to a safe level. At the same time, the delay lever's cross-piece rotates and engages a notch in the firing pin to pull it back away from the bolt's face.

On full-auto versions the bottom of the delay lever's left arm also presses down on a spring-loaded rod which releases the safety sear. Should the delay lever break, the rifle will cease to operate. This rod and provision for its installation in the receiver have been omitted from the semiautomatic-only version. Although the bolt is never really locked in the conventional sense, and some have feared premature extraction when pressures are still high enough to cause severe case deformation, the system works reliably — whether brass or steel cartridge cases are fired.

During recoil, when the bolt carrier rolls back the hammer, the hammer's notch first engages the secondary sear. Should the action short-cycle, the secondary sear acts as a disconnecter to prevent full-auto fire. As the hammer continues to pivot rearward, the primary sear engages and the trigger must be released and pulled once more to fire another shot. Constructed of high-impact plastic, the hammer and sear housing are held to the receiver by a single captive pin.

The selector lever lies within the trigger guard directly in front of the trigger. Pivoting the lever so that it is parallel to



**FA MAS retracting handle and recoil spring cylinder.**

the barrel's axis locks the trigger in the safe position. Rotating the lever to either the right or left will provide semiautomatic fire. On service models the left position will produce full-auto fire. In addition, a separate burst-fire controller of the re-setting ratchet type, removed from our semiautomatic-only test specimen, is located within the hammer assembly. It offers a selection of either three-shot bursts or unrestricted full-auto fire.

The retracting mechanism, somewhat reminiscent of the AR-10s, is mounted above the barrel. Its cylinder, permanently sealed and lubricated, contains the recoil spring. This cylinder slides into a hollow on top of the bolt carrier, where it is retained by a transverse steel pin held captive by a spring-loaded ball detent. The retracting mechanism thus reciprocates with the recoiling parts. A small amount of the recoiling energy is probably initially expended in the effort required to drive the spring-loaded retracting handle off its latch above the barrel, further retarding the blowback action.

A set of grooves at the rear of the bolt carrier permits it to slide on rails milled into the aluminum alloy receiver. Pinned to the receiver, the three-groove barrel has a fluted chamber. This feature, a characteristic also of the entire Heckler & Koch series of retarded blowback weapons, improves extraction by using the propellant gases as a lubricating film about the cartridge case.

A series of rings about the front end of the barrel, together with an adjustable collar, seat rifle grenades and control their position to vary the trajectory. These rings and the grenade sight in the upper handguard were eliminated from the semiautomatic-only versions at the insistence of the BATF. The barrel collar no longer rotates and serves only to hold the bayonet.

Patterned after that of the G3, the flash suppressor has six ports. Slotted for a fixed stud on the bayonet, the muzzle device rotates 360 degrees so the bayonet can be located in any position around the barrel.

# YANK IN AFGHANISTAN

## West Pointer Finds His Battle

by Gene Scroft

*EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the second part of a saga by Gene Scroft, the nom de guerre of a West Point graduate who served with the 82nd Airborne and 75th Rangers. He went to Afghanistan in 1984 (see "Holy War Combat Tour," SOF, December '86) to volunteer for military service with the mujahideen. After a short disappointing stay in the remote tri-border region, Scroft returned to Pakistan and joined a caravan headed toward Badghis, located in north central Afghanistan, east of the Morghab River and north of the Hari Rud.*

*This second trip took Scroft into the central Hazarajat — populated by pro-Khomeini, Shi'ite Muslims of Mongolian descent — and over the western edge of the Hindu Kush mountains, along trails rising from 6,500 to 14,000 feet. Scroft walked for 50 days through geographic extremes ranging from barren salt pans to green val-*

*leys lush beneath the abandoned drabness of 16th- and 17th-century mud forts squatting on ridgelines above. But like his first foray, in Badghis Scroft met resistance cells more interested in complaining about Soviet invaders than killing them.*

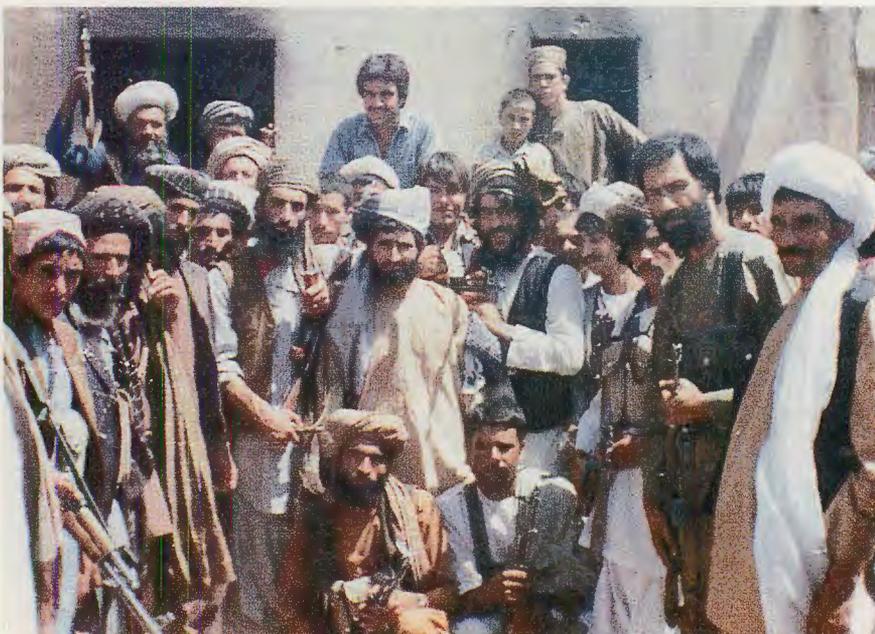
*Still hungry for battle, Scroft decided to strike out for Herat, a major city near the Iranian border. After announcing his intention, Scroft was robbed of his rifle while asleep and then sent under armed guard to a village near Baba Morghab. From there he went from village to village until he reached Herat.*

*Since Scroft was in Herat, the mujahideen leadership there have made public appeals for help in surviving particularly ferocious attacks by the Soviets and Afghan troops from the puppet government. The Afghan resistance typically exaggerates victories and minimizes losses, so such a*

*public appeal must mean the situation in Herat is particularly bad for the freedom fighters.*

*But while Scroft was there, the resistance was faring much better. And under tracer-lit night skies, Scroft found what he was seeking: combat. He helped the mujahideen attack a militia post one night. It was a mixed success. The target was overrun, but Scroft was almost killed because of difficulty distinguishing good guys from bad. In his second Herat firefight, he again came under friendly fire while clearing a building. But it was a more clear-cut victory, one that included a torched Communist Party school and the capture of 10 prisoners, eight assault rifles and a 7.62mm machine gun, all without losing a single man.*

*This second and final part of Scroft's story begins with the fate of those 10 prisoners.*



**P** RISONERS often are a problem. Guarding them is a manpower drain, usually more trouble than it's worth. And communist troops in Afghanistan rarely fight to the last man. Usually there are three options. All are aimed at producing assets and eliminating liabilities for the Afghan resistance.

Option one. Captured Herat residents are offered to their families for a ransom. The family must guarantee they will not return to enemy ranks. This option provides revenue to the mujahideen group, known in Herat as a committee.

Option two. Prisoners from other areas are offered the chance to join the mujahideen. This boosts manpower.

While in Herat, Scroft witnessed a mujahideen wedding. This after-ceremony shows the groom standing in the middle with a new blue turban. Even in the midst of war there is time for joy. Photo: Gene Scroft

Option three. A firing squad. This eliminates the need for guards. It also makes options one and two popular choices. Many of the best mujahideen warriors once served the communists.

Actually there is a fourth option — not really an option, as far as the prisoner is concerned — reserved for those avowing Communist Party membership, or who are subsequently identified as such. I witnessed one example.

We searched a prisoner and found a communist membership card in his pocket. His bare feet were tied to a pole. The mujahideen whipped his feet with a one-inch-thick stick. [This technique is known as *bastonado*, a Spanish word meaning “to hit with a stick.” The practice originated in the Orient, spread throughout Central Asia and finally to Spain.] The pain is excruciating for the subject, extremely effective for the interrogator. In 30 seconds the prisoner was crying like a baby. Before the minute was up, he had begun naming communist agents who had infiltrated mujahideen committees. Two days later, after he had given up all useful information, he was shot.

Some cases weren't as clear-cut. The communists often kidnap men from as far away as Jalalabad to serve in Herat. In a strange city they feel isolated and so are less likely to defect. When we captured a man in the bazaar, whom no one recognized and who refused to name his village, we decided he must be a transplanted communist.

After three days of beatings, he still couldn't, or wouldn't, tell us anything. One night he grabbed his guard's rifle and tried to escape. The mujahideen cut him down before he went three steps.

#### A Miraculous Escape

Prisoners of both sides in Afghanistan are subject to torture and execution. While I was in Herat, a mujahideen spy at an Afghan government facility was captured. He was beaten repeatedly, then hooked up for electric shock torture. After this failed to elicit the desired information, he was buried up to the neck. He remained this way for weeks and was subjected to ruthless questioning. One day an interrogator, overcome with frustration at the prisoner's refusal to talk, finally shot him in the head and walked away.

Darkness. He felt his eyes open. Darkness. It was a few minutes before the prisoner was convinced he was still alive. The bullet had passed through the right side of his head and exited through his cheek. Miraculously, nothing vital was damaged. He remained motionless in the darkness for a few more hours, still believing that this ultimately would be his grave. Amazed at his survival, he was still frozen by the fear that his would-be executioners were waiting. He finally dug himself out and half ran, half crawled through the fields to our committee.

Afghanistan is total war. There are no real rules of engagement or no-fire zones. Typical of modern guerrilla warfare, it's often impossible to tell the difference between civilians and combatants. War in Afghanistan is brutal and barbarous, the way war must be — lest we



**TOP:** Author, right, poses with two buddies from the mujahideen in Herat. The weapon on the tripod is a Chinese-made B-10 82mm recoilless smoothbore. Propped against it on the left is a Chinese RPG-7 used by the author to destroy a BRDM II. The author also used the RPG-2 on the right in another attack.

**ABOVE:** Dr. Amin, with back to camera, prepares to extract AK round from the stomach of a wounded freedom fighter in Herat. The man later died.

grow too fond of it.

#### The Third Attack

Abdul Ahmad, the commander of my committee, decided to attack an enemy post overlooking an important crossroads in Herat. About midnight we positioned our recoilless on a roof 100 meters from the post. We planned to attack through a garden, but the entrance was boarded up. I began to cut the wires holding the boards together with a Soviet bayonet when the recoilless opened fire.

I felt a sharp pain in my shoulder. The gunner had fired so short that I'd been hit by a fragment from an 82mm mortar round. It wasn't serious, but being hit by my own people pissed me off.

We pushed the debris from the door and

ran into a storage room in the garden. Unfortunately, a 12-foot-high wall stood between the garden and the post. The mujahideen immediately began to argue about what to do next.

After about five minutes of wasted talk, I ran into the garden to look for a way into the post. I was surveying the area from behind a well when a grenade exploded. The new Soviet grenades use a perforated wire for shrapnel — just like the American models — and one of the fragments hit me in the head. I could taste the blood pouring down my face. But the wound wasn't deep, so I just bandaged it with my scarf and ran into a row of rooms along the side of the garden.

Moving from room to room, I was able to get up against the inside of an exterior wall. I still couldn't see the post, though. After throwing some grenades over the wall, I ran back to the well. Another grenade was thrown from the post's second story and landed right in front of me. I ran for cover in the storage room. But I wasn't quick enough. It exploded, peppering my ass with shrapnel.

I was already dizzy from the head wound. Now the metal in my butt made it difficult to walk. But I didn't complain. These were mere scratches compared to some of the wounds I'd seen in Herat.

Our garden position was worthless, so we moved back to the recoilless. The enemy had fled after the 82mm finally found its range, so the only fire we received was from a 12.7mm machine gun a block away. Dodging the 12.7mm tracers that raked the rooftops, we dropped into the post.

We found one commie hiding in the compound. I was angry at being hit three times without getting a good shot at the enemy, so I took out my anger on this guy. I punched the prisoner in the nose, splattering blood over both of us. Abdul Ahmad killed him before we left.

#### Riding By The Russians

Weeks passed without an attack after this battle. As frustrating as it was, it was the old soldier's game: waiting. I was complaining about the inactivity to Dr. Amin when another of his guests offered to take me to fight along with his committee.

We hailed a *karachi*, a horse-drawn taxi, and headed for the eastern part of the city. *Karachis* continue to operate throughout Herat. It takes more than war to stop personal enterprise. We moved down a broad street directly toward a fort with a red flag flying from its tower. I asked if maybe we should turn off the main road to avoid getting shot. My escort just laughed and explained that this post was one of about a half-dozen that had a special agreement with the mujahideen: You don't bother us and we won't bother you.

I was well-treated at the new committee, but I could see that the commander wasn't overly committed to combat. One young mujahideen, about 18 years old, named Ibrahim noticed my disappointment and bravely offered to take me on an attack with him. I jumped at the chance.

I had no idea what we were going to attack. There were only four of us. But it felt good to be on the prowl again. We moved through back alleys for about an hour and then climbed to the rooftops. The inhabitants weren't too happy with our uninvited intrusion, but we just ignored them.

At 0900 hours we crawled onto a roof surrounded by walls four feet high. I looked over the wall and saw an enemy position less than 100 meters away. I thought our position was pretty good. We could blow the hell out of them with our RPG-2 and withdraw before they came to their senses. The RPG-2 is an old weapon but effective at close range.

#### A Tactics Lesson

My enthusiasm ebbed when I looked over the wall to our right and saw another communist position just across the street. Ibrahim had placed us in the perfect place to receive crossfire from both posts. This boy definitely needed a lesson in tactics.

All the mujahideen except for Ibrahim disappeared downstairs when I loaded one of our two rockets. I decided it wasn't important. Better one brave comrade than an army of cowards.

The rocket I fired hit just below the sandbags of the enemy position. Two of the enemy were cut in half as they had their



## METERS AND MUJAHIDEEN

When I returned to Quetta after 10 months inside, I made a courtesy call to the political officer who had set up my trip across the border. He was genuinely upset about my treatment in Morghab and let me stay in his guest room. I had every intention of returning to the States as soon as possible, but when he asked me to train his mujahideen I accepted.

The political officer was motivated toward training after he saw the movie "Rambo." He wanted me to teach his men the techniques he saw in the movie. Hell, I realized that Rambo's techniques were pure Hollywood, but at least they had motivated this man to want training for his men.

I stayed in Quetta for a couple of weeks, working on a training manual in Pashtu (the only one I know to exist). After the political officer helped get my visa squared away (it had long since expired), I was off to the training camp located southeast of Kandahar.

The camp was located in an area that was once a Baluchi insurgent base. The Baluchi guerrillas are fighting the Paks for an independent Baluchistan (an area that covers much of western Pakistan). The Paks are only too willing to give the mujahideen weapons if they keep the insurgents out.



Scroft works his worry beads while in Rabat.

Training the Afghans was a unique experience. They have little sense of accomplishment. I also had to be very careful making any assumptions about what they understood.

In one class I tried to explain the lead rule for aircraft. You know, 100 meters for fast movers, 50 meters for helicopters. I talked for 15 minutes before I realized that they didn't know what a meter was. I had to use landmarks to explain it to them.

When we broke for chow, a man came up, pointed at the chalk drawing of a helicopter I used in the class and triumphantly exclaimed, "That's a helicopter, isn't it?"

After lunch, I retaught the class.



morning tea. Both posts responded immediately and our roof erupted with machine-gun impacts. We were pinned down but safe from direct fire as long as we squatted against the wall.

Our situation on the rooftop reminded me of one of those war movies in which someone would put a helmet on a stick and hold it above the trench only to get it shot full of holes. I overcame my temptation to ape Ibrahim and fire blind over the wall. When I was in the army I always told my troops to either aim their fire or don't shoot. I wasn't going to let a little stress turn me into a hypocrite.

Holding my breath, I popped over the wall and fired three to four aimed shots before taking cover. I continued to engage the enemy in this way until my ammunition ran low. I don't know if I was any more effective than Ibrahim, but I did feel better for it.

After about 15 minutes of throwing grenades, exchanging rifle fire and yelling insults, we moved to a rooftop closer to the second post. I had to balance myself on stacked boxes in order to fire the RPG over a high wall. The rocket hit the post and wounded one of the militiamen. We finally withdrew when we ran out of ammunition.

On the way back, we had to cross a road the enemy had under fire. Feeling pretty cocky, I ran back and forth across the road yelling obscenities at the enemy. Childish, but great fun.

#### A Battle In The Bazaar

The next day we headed for the bazaar again. One of the men in Ibrahim's commit-

tee needed a rifle. Our plan was to kill a group of three communist militiamen who policed the bazaar and take their weapons. (Other bazaars in Herat are controlled by the mujahideen.)

At about 1400 hours we found an alley that lead directly toward the militia sentry post, which was located in a small room with a firing port cut into the wall. The committee member without a rifle, a kid about 16 years old, nonchalantly walked up the alley and threw a grenade at the room's opening. He missed. It exploded harmlessly in the street, alerting every enemy in the neighborhood.

I moved toward the room, trying to keep as flat as possible against the alley wall. Ibrahim was right behind me. We were dead if someone took an aimed shot out of that firing port.

At the end of the alley we began getting fire from the same two posts we had attacked the day before. The rounds impacted about a foot above our heads — if we bent at the waist. Giggling like school kids, we shouted insults at the enemy: *Kuni!* (homosexual), *Kaffir!* (infidel); things like that.

The room was five meters away across the bazaar road. I threw two grenades and they exploded inside the room. I was sure that the occupants were down, but I decided to throw another. I pulled the pin. Before I could throw it, Kalashnikov fire exploded all around me. Some sucker was still alive in there.

We quickly retreated down the alley. While we laughed at our close call, I noticed that I still had the pinless grenade in my hand. Luckily, I hadn't released the spoon. The enemy was too far away for an accurate throw, so I decided to roll the grenade in front of the room and use the dust to cover my second throw.

My roll was short and the grenade exploded at the end of the alley. I ran up behind the dust anyway and threw another grenade into the room. After the explosion, someone called out from the room, begging for us to stop throwing grenades. He threw his Kalashnikov into the street. That didn't do us much good. Tracer rounds from the

two posts flew back and forth directly over the rifle.

#### A Foolish Risk

The kid without a weapon was almost drooling as he looked at the rifle in the street. I knew that he was trying to decide if he should try to run out and pick it up. I then decided to do something a professional soldier should never do. I decided to take a foolish risk and grab the rifle myself.

By now I had a reputation for bravery and I wasn't going to be shown up by the kid. I laid my weapon down and ran across the street. My plan was to grab the rifle on the run, dive into the room and kill everything inside. Well, about mid-stride I thought better of it and decided not to slow down and pick up the rifle. I didn't want to be any more of a target than I had to be.

Because of this split-second decision, I entered the room unarmed. There was only one militiaman sitting in the corner. Even after three grenades exploded in that little room, he was only slightly wounded. But I had no trouble taking him prisoner. I removed his ammo belt and vest (I needed a vest) and tried to get him to stand up. He wouldn't budge.

I called out to the mujahideen that everything was OK and started hitting the commie in the face as an incentive to stand up. The kid who needed a rifle ran over and picked up the Kalashnikov, but when he saw me hitting this guy he ran back to the alley.

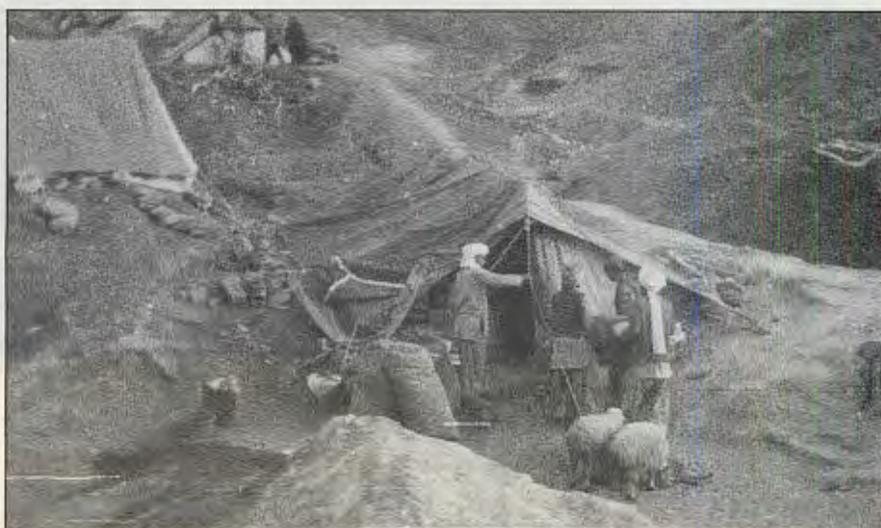
Finally I picked up the commie and threw him out the door. Instead of running into the alley, he stopped in the middle of the street and begged not to be taken prisoner. The mujahideen obliged — they shot him at least fifty times. A piece of his skull flew off and cut my arm. It was my only wound of the day.

#### RPG Roadwork

Four days later we decided to conduct an

*Continued on page 101*

A mujahideen supply tent in Rabat. The bags contain onions and flour. The sheep will provide a meat supplement to the meager diet of the mujahideen.





**Lt. Col. Weldon Honeycutt, 3/187th CO, directs his troops during Operation Apache Snow. Honeycutt was wounded three times during the vicious 10-day battle to secure Hill 937 — Hamburger Hill. Photo: Associated Press**

# OPERATION APACHE SNOW

## Grinding the NVA on Hamburger Hill



by Sam Zaffiri

**I**N 1969 General Creighton Abrams, the new MACV (Military Assistance Command, Vietnam) commander, decided it was finally time to go back into the A Shau Valley (a long-time bastion of the NVA,

Medevac! Troopers of the 101st carry a wounded buddy to waiting Huey. Hamburger Hill cost 56 Americans killed and 420 wounded for "a particular piece of terrain of no tactical significance." Photo: Department of Defense

### GRUNT'S-EYE VIEW

Sam Zaffiri knows his subject from both sides of the fence. He served as a mortarman in Vietnam with the 1st Infantry Division, and is a historical researcher with a master's degree in English. Zaffiri has published a number of articles on the Vietnam War, including "A Tale of Two Battles" for the September '85 SOF.

located along the Laotian border in northern I Corps) in force and neutralize once and for all the NVA operations there. Unlike previous assaults on the valley, which had been limited by time and manpower, the plan this time called for large numbers of troops backed by almost unlimited firepower to attack the entire length of the valley and sweep it clean of NVA troops and supplies.

Operation Apache Snow was to be one of the largest airmobile operations of the Vietnam War. The attack would be a direct challenge to the North Vietnamese cadre inhabiting the valley — they could either abandon their arms caches and base camps



Slicks unload troops of Bravo Company,  
3/187th at the beginning of Operation  
Apache Snow. Photo: U.S. Army



and flee into Laos, or they could defend them and face destruction.

Their decision to stand and fight set the stage for what many would call the toughest — and most notorious — single battle of the Vietnam War. It would take place at a then-unknown mountain the Vietnamese called Dong Ap Bia. On Army maps it was known as Hill 937. Troops who fought there would call it Hamburger Hill.

Among the units involved in Apache Snow was the 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry, 101st Airborne Division. Their landing zone (LZ) would place them about 1,800 meters from Dong Ap Bia, on the western edge of the A Shau. Their mission: recon-in-force (RIF) the surrounding area, and especially Dong Ap Bia.

Guided by their commander, Lieutenant Colonel Weldon Honeycutt, who orchestrated the assault while flying his own command and control ship, the first Rakkasans of the 187th Infantry began lifting off from Firebase Blaze at 0800 hours on 10 May 1969. After securing their LZ, the companies began to move toward the high ground.

Honeycutt set up his command post on a piece of high ground about 1,000 meters from the LZ. Mortarmen worked quickly to lay in their tubes while engineers using chainsaws and axes began toppling trees and preparing an LZ.

Events were moving rapidly. Only a short distance from the original LZ, Alpha and Charlie companies, though they had yet to make any contact with the enemy, were discovering huts and bunkers everywhere. A number of still-smoldering fires made it obvious that someone had deserted the area only minutes before. Overhead, the pilots of light-observation helicopters flying at treetop level were likewise sighting huts and



bunkers scattered in the area around Dong Ap Bia.

Honeycutt soon realized that his battalion had set right down in the middle of an enemy base area. He still had no idea how many enemy troops might be there, but he knew that if the North Vietnamese decided to defend it he was going to need all the help he could get. He requested that brigade release his Bravo Company, which was being held in reserve. By 1600 hours all of Bravo was on their way out.

Once Bravo Company was down on the LZ, they began to move up the ridge to the battalion command post (CP). Here they received orders to pass through the CP area and set up a night defensive position (NDP) about 500 meters south. In the morning, Bravo was to use the NDP as a jumping-off point for a company-sized RIF of Dong Ap Bia.

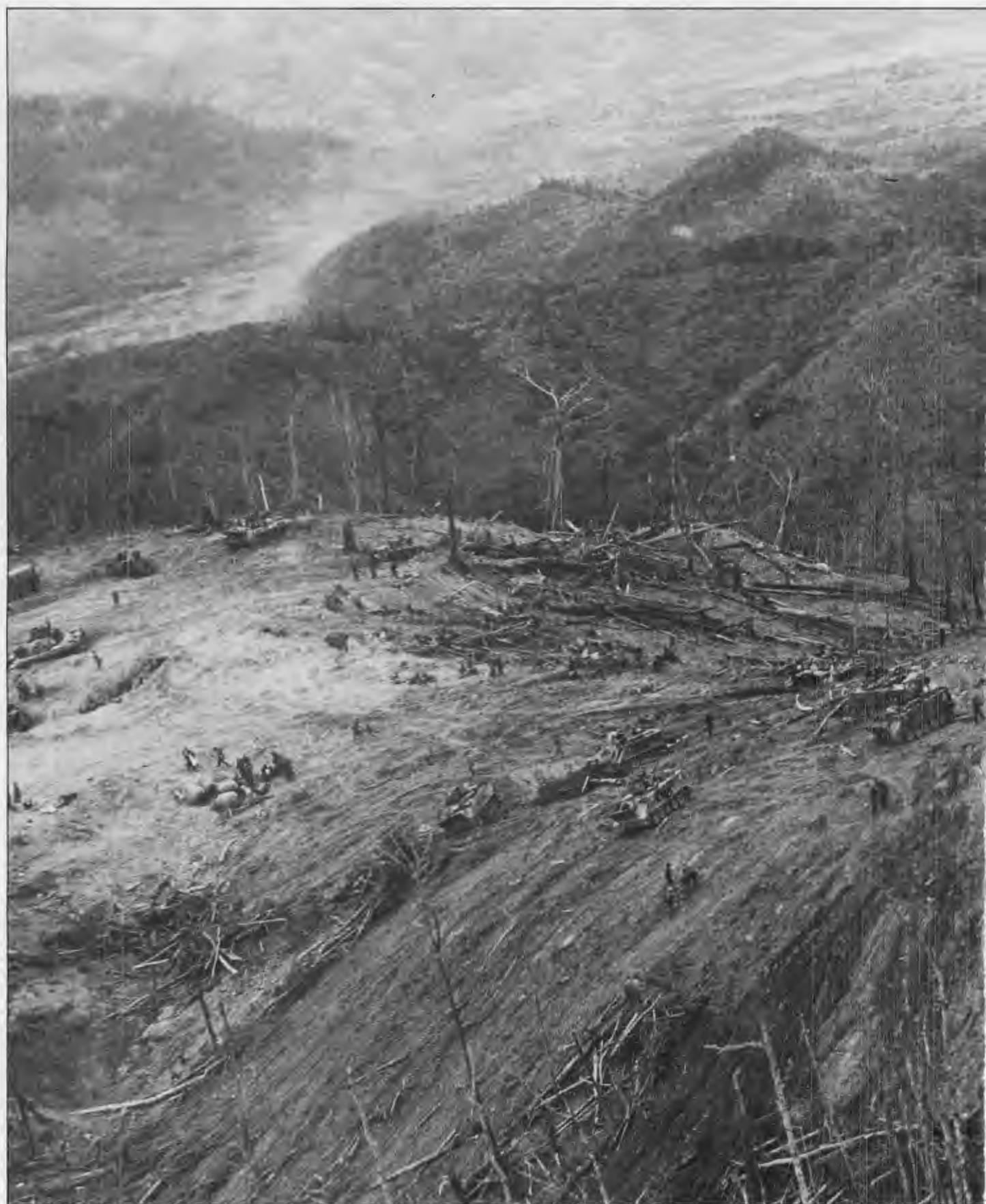
Though Alpha and Charlie companies were continuing to discover numbers of abandoned huts and bunkers, it was Bravo, still heading up the ridge toward the top of Dong Ap Bia, that had Lt. Col. Honeycutt most concerned. At 0910 they had reported finding two dead NVA and a small cache of weapons and ammunition, but for the last hour had been unable to find anything but a few blood trails. At 1100 they reported that the trail was littered with equipment and weapons. Every few steps forward, Bravo's point man discovered something different: bags of rice, satchel charges, AK-47s, RPG launchers, Chicom grenades and chunks of C-4 explosive. All the debris looked staged, deliberately placed in order to keep drawing Bravo Company farther and farther up the mountain.

Bravo was under orders to keep moving and that's what they did. At 1300 hours the lead element made the most startling discovery of the day — one they knew wasn't staged. Running parallel to the trail they found a number of communication wires neatly attached to trees. The wires were running east toward Dong Ap Bia and west down into a streambed and toward Laos.

By now, everyone knew that it was only a matter of time before the NVA hit them and hit them hard. There had to be something very important on this mountain for the enemy to run wire up it; Honeycutt suspected a large part of the 29th NVA Regiment was the answer.

On the morning of 12 May, Honeycutt began maneuvering his battalion to get it in position for a three-company armed recon of Dong Ap Bia, which he set for the 13th, but stiff opposition and dense jungle made progress nearly impossible. By the end of

**Exhausted 101st Airborne Division troopers display captured NVA 12.7mm heavy machine gun. Photo: U.S. Army**



After the battle: Sixty days later, Hamburger Hill still evoked a surreal, moonscaped image. Photo: U.S. Army



the day, with all three of his companies floundering in the jungle, Honeycutt realized that his recon of Dong Ap Bia would have to be postponed one more day.

With first light on the 13th, however, Honeycutt set his companies on the move again in an attempt to get them in position for his planned assault on the 14th. Preceded by bomb strikes and artillery fire, the companies once again started toward Dong Ap Bia. For a while each company advanced steadily but then the NVA opened fire, inflicting casualties throughout the battalion, and especially on Delta Company.

On the morning of the 14th, with Delta Company held up by casualties and the jungle, Honeycutt realized that he was going to have to make his first coordinated recon of Dong Ap Bia with just two companies. With Alpha securing the battalion CP against a possible enemy ground attack, Bravo and Charlie were going to have to go up the mountain alone. It was not a possibility the colonel relished, but waiting another day would give the NVA more time to strengthen their defenses on the mountain and bring in reinforcements from Laos.

The attack stalled. Command elements of Bravo Company were fired on by their own helicopter gunships and their momentum was lost.

Honeycutt was not angry about having to stop the attack — the intensity of the day's fighting had pointed out to him that his battalion was outnumbered and outgunned by the NVA unit dug in on Dong Ap Bia.

When the brigade commander visited the battalion later in the afternoon, Honeycutt requested additional troops. The 1st Battalion, 506th Infantry was ordered to move cross-country toward Dong Ap Bia, cut the

**Grunts weren't the only casualties during Operation Apache Snow. In many cases, NVA gunners atop ridgelines were able to fire down onto choppers landing in the A Shau Valley. Photo: Pratt Museum**

enemy infiltration route in and out of Laos and join the attack on the mountain.

Around noon on 14 May Honeycutt ordered Bravo and Alpha companies to start their move toward the mountain. There wasn't any contact until 1300 hours when the NVA on the mountain blew some claymores in Bravo's forward element, wounding several men.

By then both companies were in the first bunker line, and the grunts began spreading out from the trail and taking out the bunkers with grenades and recoilless rifle fire.

By 1330 hours they were through the first bunker line and rapidly advancing toward the second. The companies were on-line now, moving through an area littered with fallen trees and blasted stumps. In groups of three and four, the men jumped over the fallen trees or, if they were too high, crawled under them and kept advancing. There were NVA everywhere: in spider holes, in the treetops, in trenches and bunkers and bomb craters. The fighting was close-in and brutal.

But the men in the companies kept moving forward, blowing bunkers apart with their 90mm recoilless rifles or M79 grenade launchers, grenading NVA trenches and spider holes or shooting snipers off their treetop perches.

By 1400 hours both companies were through the second bunker line and moving up the side of the mountain. The grunts reconed by fire as they moved forward,



**TOP:** Troops airmobile into the A Shau Valley. Sixty-five UH-1H helicopters initiated Operation Apache Snow on 10 May 1969 by landing assault troops on five pre-selected landing zones. Photo: Department of Defense

**ABOVE:** Remnants of NVA 29th Regiment gear after the battle of Hamburger Hill. Some intelligence estimates put more than 2,000 NVA troops on Dong Ap Bia during the height of the fighting. Photo: U.S. Army

blasting away on automatic at everything in front of them.

Back in his CP, Lt. Col. Honeycutt couldn't believe how fast his companies were advancing, nor the radio messages he was receiving.

"We're only a hundred meters from the top," Captain Littnan, Bravo's CO, reported.

A few minutes later, Alpha Company's Captain Harkins radioed: "We're about 75 meters from the top."

About 1410 hours, just as Bravo Company was preparing to make their final push on the mountain, a pair of gunships called in to support the attack mistakenly fired their rockets into the company's command group. Two men were killed instantly and another 14 seriously wounded, including the CO, his forward observer and the first sergeant. The destruction of the command group had knocked the heart out of Bravo Company and turned what would have likely been a successful final assault into confusion and disorder.

North Vietnamese defenders, as if sensing that the momentum of the battle had again swung over to them, launched a counterattack. Groups of enemy soldiers began attacking Alpha Company's right flank while others rushed south down trails and tried to hit the company in the rear. Honeycutt told Capt. Harkins to put out fire to his flanks, then shifted all available mortar and artillery fire in close to the company's perimeter.

Still, even with the mortar and artillery support, Alpha had to fight every foot of the way back down the ridge. It wasn't until 1600 hours that they linked up with Bravo Company at the LZ and began digging in for the night.

The 3/187th was vastly outnumbered by the NVA on Dong Ap Bia, which by now had been positively identified as the entire 29th NVA Regiment. No one knew the number of casualties the 29th had suffered since the start of the fight, but the 3/187th already had 151 wounded and 24 killed — nearly 35 percent of the men who'd begun the operation. The Rakkasans had at most one or two hard fights left in them — after that they'd be finished as a battalion.

What they needed now was help and a lot of it, but it wasn't forthcoming. Even though 3rd Brigade, the controlling HQ for the op, had planned a two-battalion assault on Dong Ap Bia for the 16th, the 1/506th was still too far away to take part in it and was finding its advance continually slowed by NVA ambushes.

Brigade had decided to postpone the assault until the 18th when they learned that the 1/506th had only moved 300 meters in the last 24 hours.

On the morning of the 18th, at 0925 hours, troops of Alpha and Delta companies left their assault positions and, preceded by an artillery barrage, started forward. As before, the going was fairly easy until the companies got to within 200 meters of the mountaintop.

Then the NVA hit them, lashing the front of both companies with rifle and machine-gun fire. Simultaneously, a large group of enemy infantry began attacking down the draw between the two companies and curling in against their flanks. Another equally large group started down the ridge to the south of Alpha Company and began hitting their right flank.

The fight was heating up. Alpha Company, while continuing to advance, was being attacked on both flanks by NVA infantry.

"I'm taking heavy casualties," Capt. Harkins reported. "The bastards are all over the place."

"Don't try to advance any farther," Honeycutt cautioned. "Hold your position."

Delta Company was likewise in a hard fight. Advancing on-line, the grunts were fighting from bunker to bunker, taking out one enemy strong-point after another. In less than two hours Delta Company had 37 men wounded and five killed. In quick succession, two platoon leaders, two platoon sergeants and the first sergeant went down. Delta was gradually becoming leaderless.

But even in the midst of the 187th's attack, the NVA was counterattacking. Small

groups of enemy infantrymen were maneuvering down the mountain and charging into Delta's flanks. One group of five or six even managed to break into the company CP. Captain Sanders personally shot two of them and his staff got the rest. A short time later, Capt. Sanders was hit and turned over command to his second platoon leader, the only officer left in the company who wasn't wounded.

When Honeycutt heard that Sanders was wounded, he knew Delta Company was finished. Instead of pulling the company back, however, he ordered them to hold their position. He then radioed Captain Johnson, whose men had been hauling ammunition up the mountain, to move Charlie Company as quickly as possible up the ridge, pass through Delta's lines and continue the attack.

Charlie Company departed about 1130 and moved rapidly up the ridge for about an hour. Around 1230, however, some NVA, entrenched on a ridge to the south of the company's line-of-advance, opened up on them with a flurry of fire. They followed with RPGs and mortar rounds, and Charlie Company's advance ground to a halt. After a brief pause and some encouragement from Honeycutt, Charlie again advanced up the mountain.

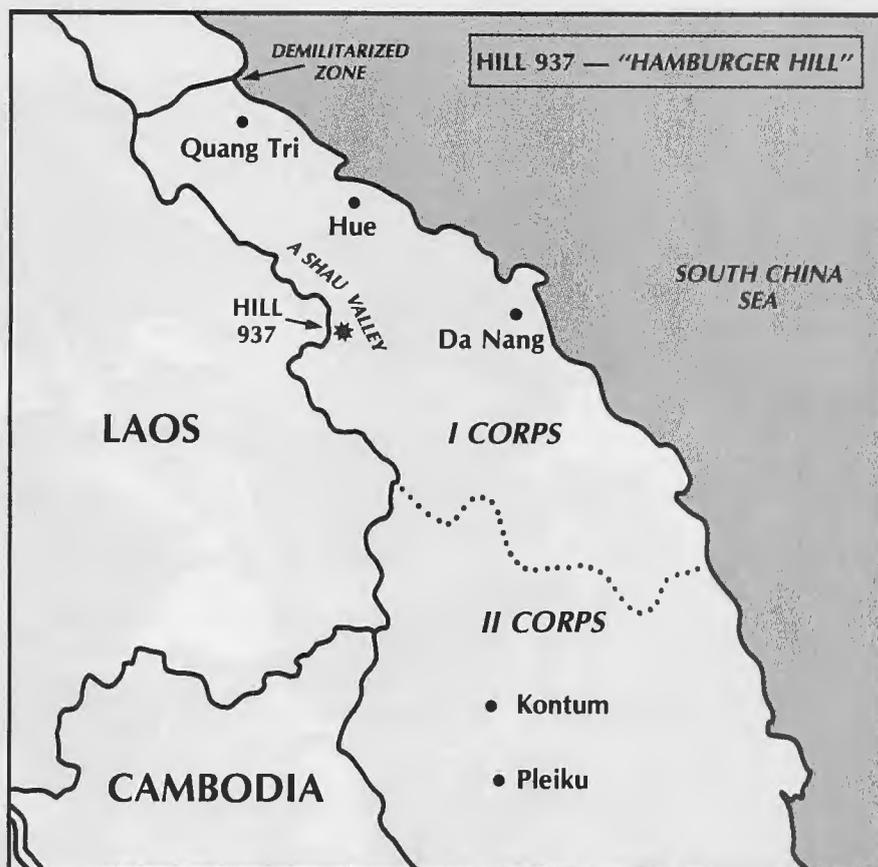
Honeycutt was informed that a Cobra gunship had shot up an ammunition-carrying platoon from Bravo Company, killing one man and wounding four. This was the third accident of the battle, and Honeycutt ordered all gunships out of the area.

The accident was an indication of things to come. Around 1300 hours, the colonel received news that the 1/506th, due to increasingly heavy contact, was not going to be able to reach Dong Ap Bia. To make it worse, it began to rain. Men who tried to move around sank up to their knees in the mud and found it impossible to see anything farther than a few feet away.

Back at the CP, Honeycutt realized that he was going to again have to stop the attack. If men could barely move in this kind of mud, how could they possibly attack uphill? And even if they did get to the top of the mountain, there was no way he could resupply them or bring up reinforcements.

After again coming so close to taking the mountain, the withdrawal was a bitter pill for the battalion to swallow.

Honeycutt wanted to continue the attack, but he had his doubts. Both Bravo and Delta companies had had their command groups shot away and were down to less than half their original strength. In Alpha Company more than half of the officers had been wounded, and better than 30 percent of the men killed or wounded. Charlie Company,



which had started the fight with 135 men, was now down to 60.

To be successful on 20 May, the battalion would need reinforcements. There was not enough time, however, to try to integrate new men into his companies. What Honeycutt needed was a completely new, fresh company. When he requested one from brigade, he was told that Alpha Company of the 2nd Battalion, 506th Infantry would be on its way out within the hour.

While the artillery hammered away at the enemy, Honeycutt gathered his company commanders together at the battalion CP and briefed them on the attack for the 20th. Unlike the last three assaults, he told them that they would not be going it alone this time; the plan called for a multi-battalion assault. The Rakkasans were to continue with their attack from the northwest and west, the ARVN's from the southeast, and the 1/506th, as before, would attempt a way up the mountain from the south and southeast.

After a prep of the mountaintop, the attack began at 1000 hours on the 20th. The companies moved out at a brisk pace: Alpha up the southern ridge, Charlie up the main one, while Alpha Company, 2/506th, started up the mountain from the north. By 1030, they were all within a hundred meters of the mountain and getting ready for the

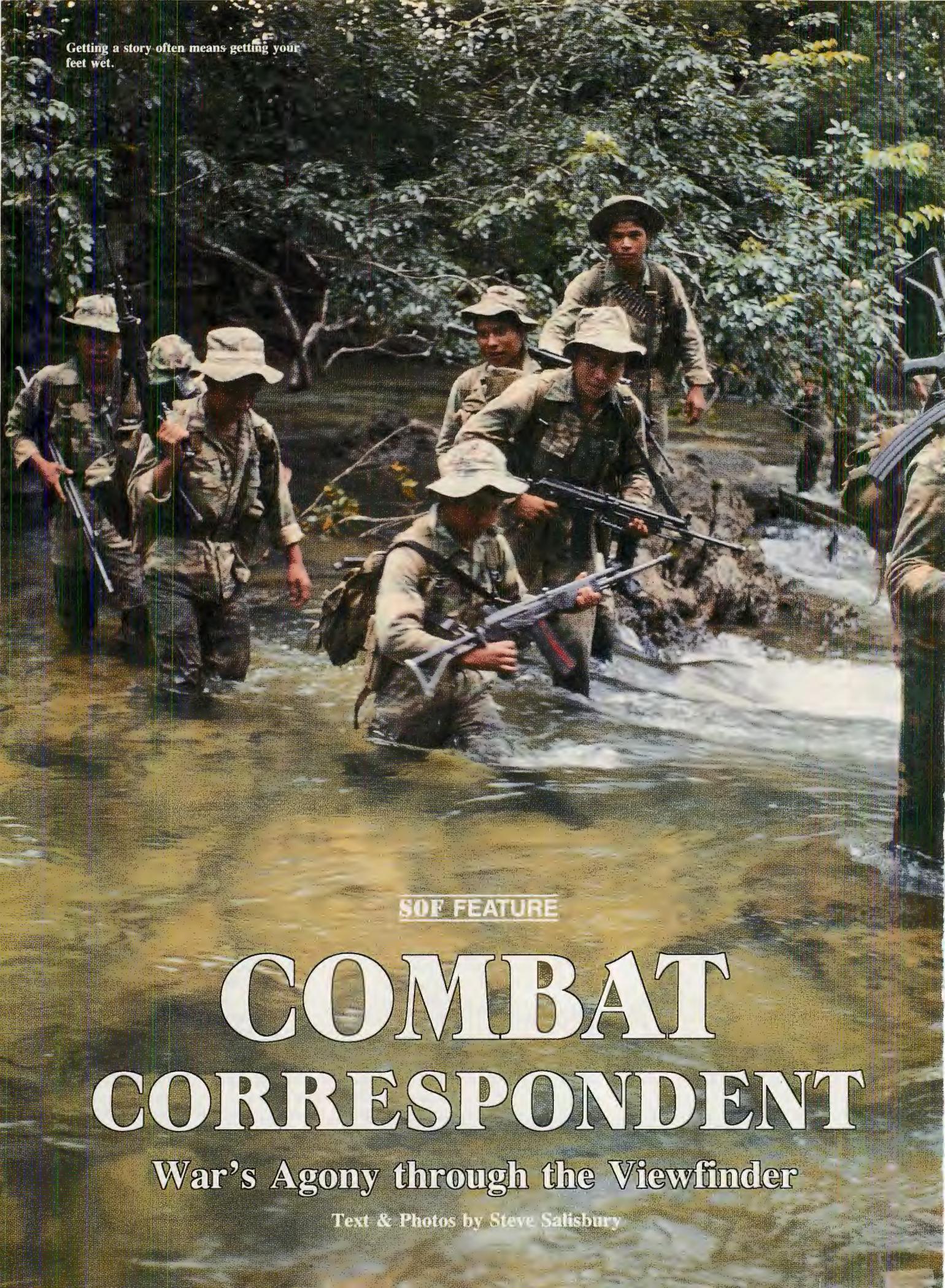
final push.

The NVA hit Charlie Company first. They had just reached the military crest of the mountain when enemy infantry in the last bunker line cut loose with RPGs and machine-gun fire and quickly pinned them down. North Vietnamese infantry then dashed into the open and began rolling grenades down on the company, wounding a number of men.

Flying overhead, Honeycutt told Capt. Johnson to keep advancing. They'd advanced a few feet before a withering volley of enemy fire drove them to cover again. Fire was coming from some bunkers to the company's front. Deciding to take some action of his own, Specialist 4th Class Edward Merjil from Charlie Company's second platoon jumped up and ran forward. With an HE round in his M79 grenade launcher, he blew one of the bunkers apart. He quickly reloaded, and with his squad now following closely behind, charged forward and blew up another bunker. A few seconds later, the squad was on the top of Dong Ap Bia, followed closely behind by the second platoon and eventually the rest of the company. After ten days and four assaults, the Americans were finally on the top of Dong Ap Bia. The time was 1145.

*Continued on page 110*

Getting a story often means getting your feet wet.



SOF FEATURE

# COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

War's Agony through the Viewfinder

Text & Photos by Steve Salisbury



**“YOU’RE lucky. There’s combat.”** The Guatemalan lieutenant colonel was briefing me in preparation for a trip to the field to cover the counterinsurgency effort in Guatemala’s Petén jungle.

Most people would find this statement something of a contradiction. The common man has been doing his best to avoid the ravages of war for thousands of years. Why would any civilian in his right mind willingly go in harm’s way? Why risk the loss of life or limb?

For me, the reason was clear — to get a story. And that’s the twisted logic behind being a war correspondent: the more shooting, shelling and bombing on the battlefield the better.

The terror and anguish that accompany battle are also important to the war correspondent. It’s not a moral question of right versus wrong, it’s just something that’s hap-

**The relief of completing a patrol is something a reporter can share with the troops.**

pening. And it needs to be recorded. War brings out the dramatic contrasts in the human race: love and hate, compassion and savagery, heroism and cowardice. A journalist not intrigued by the passions of war is not a curious journalist.

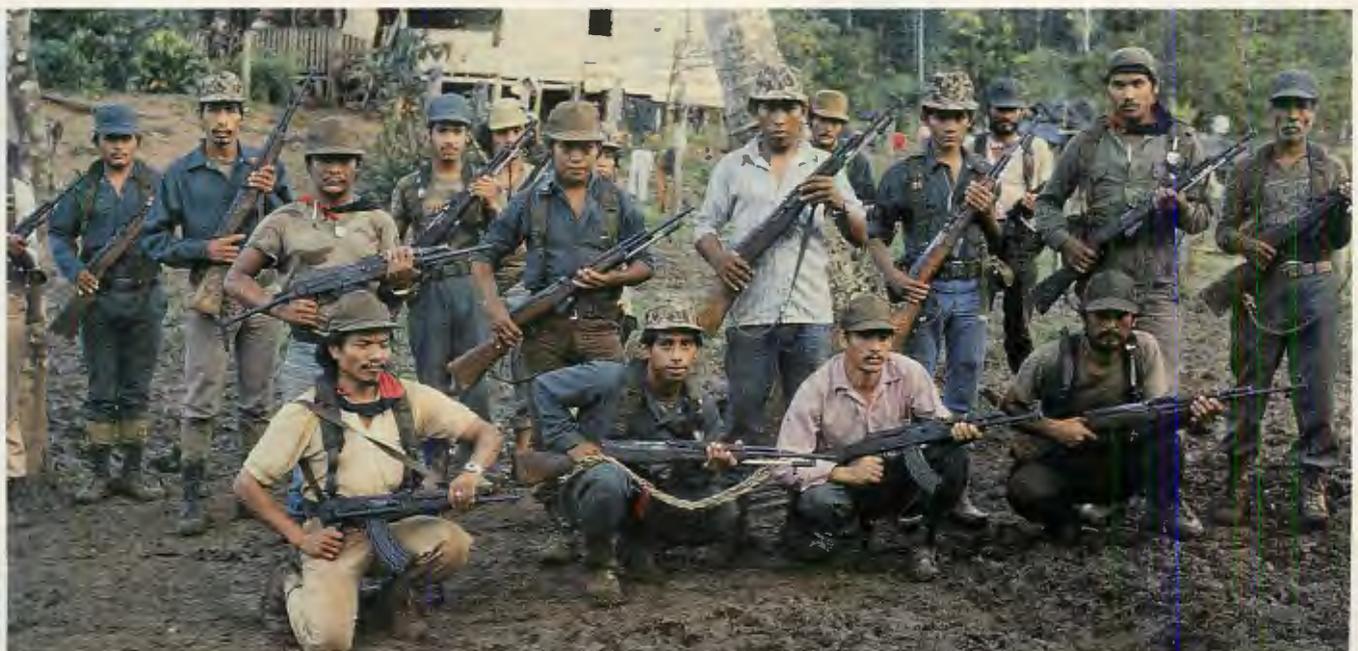
The road to becoming a foreign correspondent wasn’t easy. I had to pay my dues. I was hired because I could go and get the stories and photos. And I get them with hard work, street smarts, a lot of luck and by being honestly interested in the activities of the people and events I’m covering. Not

**One of the dangers of carrying a camera in the field — everyone wants their picture taken.**

many people are going to be amenable to your writing a story about them or taking their pictures if they don’t like or trust you.

I was a 20-year-old kid looking for adventure when I started covering the Salvadoran conflict as a freelancer in 1981. I thought combat would be like the fantasy I saw in the movies and I had a romantic notion that I would either become rich and famous taking the one-in-a-million photograph or I would be slain on the battlefield in storybook fashion. I had no room for fear. However, reality sobered me up pronto. Seeing the ugliness of war up close made me realize there was nothing romantic about being a casualty. But I liked the idea of reporting history as it unfolded and I believe most war correspondents accept the risks for this reason.

The popular image of war correspondents and combat photojournalists created by





Hollywood is one of glamor, with actors such as Nick Nolte, Mel Gibson and Jan-Michael Vincent sweeping lovely ladies off their feet, hobnobbing with world leaders and newsmakers, as well as getting involved in all sorts of intrigues when they are not dodging bullets.

But there's really only a small grain of truth to this portrayal. What the movies don't show is that the great bulk of war correspondence is mundane work — if not drudgery. My colleagues in the foreign press corps in Central America and I spend most of our time waiting in hot, stuffy rooms for interviews, fighting intransigent bureaucracies and travelling to some of the most godforsaken places in the region in pursuit of stories that often don't pan out.

Still, the moment of truth that really counts for war correspondents is anything but dull: witnessing combat and relating it

**A firefight: the reward for a frustrating pursuit of an elusive enemy.**

accurately through pen or camera, allowing the reader to feel he is on the battlefield. And the reporter has to be there — there is no substitute for being on the front lines, seeing the death and destruction, hearing the explosions, and tasting the dirt and mud while hunkering down under fire. You can't get the story by sitting on a barstool.

A war correspondent acts as an observer, but bullets and shrapnel can't distinguish between combatants and reporters. I have not been seriously wounded in the five years

**My lack of military training prompted SOF publisher Bob Brown to have me attend the Naval Commando course in El Salvador with these recruits. I was the first gringo to complete the course.**

I have been a war correspondent. Still, I have had far too many close calls. Some journalists have not been so lucky.

About a dozen foreign correspondents have been killed in El Salvador alone since 1980. Yet with all the death and destruction there is a price to be paid beyond that of physical injury. There is an emotional toll as well.

It is tough seeing the victims of war. I will never forget the shock and disgust I felt when I first saw mutilated and bullet-riddled bodies. Now that I've seen dozens of slaughtered people, I have become desensitized. Seeing the dead has become all too routine. But I can never get used to seeing a dead child, or the grief of a family crying over the loss of their loved ones.

One of the most difficult parts of my job is photographing such scenes of sadness. But it's a part of the war that needs to be





shown if people are to understand the true suffering behind the sterile casualty statistics we read in newspapers.

Still, guilt always plays a part, particularly when I photograph the dead and wounded of the combatant forces I accompany. After establishing a sense of camaraderie, it is hard to stay detached if they're wounded and harder still to photograph them in their agony. I remember an incident that tested my ability to remain on the sidelines. It happened last November when I joined a patrol of Guatemalan soldiers in search of communist guerrillas in the northern Petén jungle.

Lieutenant Enrique Lopez (I've changed the name at the lieutenant's request) was the commander of the patrol and he and I hit it off the moment we met.

"Don't worry," he told me in the morning with a confident grin. "We'll find ac-

**A government patrol moves through a Salvadoran village. Accompanying these small patrols gives me opportunities for first-hand combat coverage.**

tion and you'll get good photos." He was right. That afternoon I shot some of the best photographs of my career — of Lt. Lopez and some of his men blown apart by a land mine.

We came across the still-smoldering cooking-fire of a guerrilla encampment. I followed Lt. Lopez and a couple of troops as they inspected the area when BOOM. . . . Lt. Lopez had stepped on a crude pressure detonated mine. The shock waves of the blast staggered me. I dropped to my knees, feeling my body to make sure everything

**Soldiers and reporters often become close after sharing the hardships of combat.**

was intact. I would have been severely wounded had it not been for a hapless soldier walking a few meters ahead of me. He acted as my shield, catching a face full of shrapnel. He held his hands to the bloody pulp that had been his face and ran screaming hysterically in and out of the creek before his comrades could subdue and attend to him.

But Lt. Lopez had absorbed most of the blast. He was howling uncontrollably in agony. "Come and get me! Come and get me!" I rushed to where he lay in the arms of one of his corporals, horribly wounded. The blast had almost blown off his foot. Blood flowed from a silver dollar-sized hole in his ankle. Shrapnel had shredded his legs into bloody hamburger and ripped into his arms, torso and face. A finger that would later be

*Continued on page 100*





## SF Hits the Silk in Panama

Text & Photos by Sam Bendman

### IN THE CHUTE

Sam Bendman is a former Special Forces NCO and a frequent contributor to SOF and other Omega Group publications.

**ABOVE:** A CH-47 troop helicopter prepares to land at White DZ in preparation for the morning's jump.

**RIGHT:** Water landings aren't quite like hitting concrete ... but they're close. At least it beats landing on rocks.



# AIRBORNE S

**P**ARACHUTING into combat is a serious undertaking. So why do those ordinarily somber tough guys known as Green Berets occasionally don shorts, T-shirts and sneakers and gleefully run up the ramp of a CH-47 for a trip through the sky?

Why, a water jump, of course. Jumpers have even been known to *fight* for a spot on the manifest, and some call it the best jump in the U.S. Army. But there is a serious side to all these festivities.

United States involvement in El Salvador and Honduras has made it necessary to continually upgrade jungle warfare training for troops assigned to that general area of op-

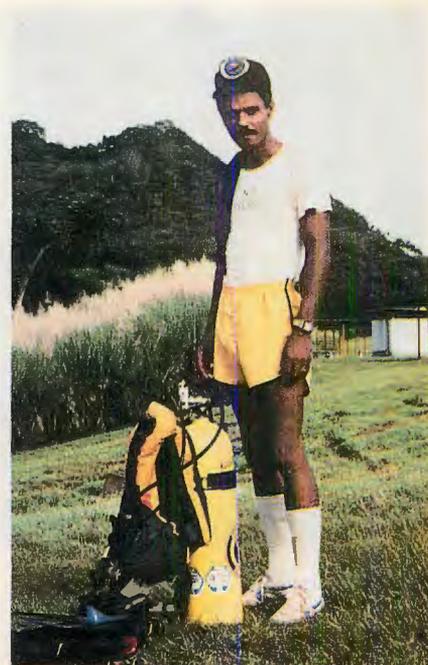
erations. Central America is a lush land crisscrossed with languid rivers and bordered by thousands of miles of ocean coastline. Panama in particular is a patchwork of rivers and streams, and any airborne trooper worth his wings Down South had better be able to handle water jumps if he wants to keep on wearing that beret.

Normally, paratroopers jump into combat wearing full uniform, helmet, rucksack and weapon. Depending on the assigned mission, troops may also hump along special equipment such as demolitions, radio gear and crew-served weapons. But if you find yourself over your head in some unex-

pected puddle that didn't show up on the map, all that equipment becomes just that much extra ballast — unless you know how to get out alive and carry on with the mission. And that's what this little exercise is all about.

Water jumps sound like fun, but they can be every bit as demanding and dangerous as jumping into a combat zone at night. But there is something about parachuting into water wearing shorts and a T-shirt that belies its serious nature.

The ritual begins with manifest call. All jumpers are required to attend so the jumpmasters will know exactly who's coming on



**ABOVE:** 3rd Bn, 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) Captain Gil Nelson acts as safety swimmer. Capt. Nelson later died in a helicopter crash.

**BELOW:** In a flurry of T-shirts and shorts, jumpers prepare to hit the silk.



# PLASHDOWN

board and who'll be jumping out.

After manifest, jumpers are organized into jump sticks, then given a basic refresher in the nuts and bolts of water jumping. The jumpmaster rehashes all the techniques they have heard before but can never hear enough: how to avoid obstacles, how to land properly, what to do in case of malfunctions, and all the little precautions that can mean the difference between a good jump and a crash and gurgle. Then it's off to the chart board for a briefing on the drop zone, the type of aircraft to be jumped, wind speeds and obstacles on the ground. Time to head for the DZ.

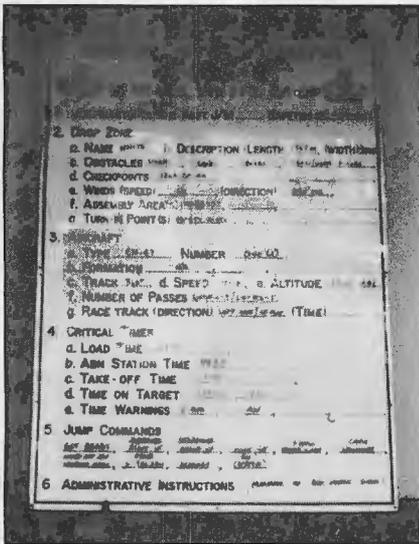
Upon arrival, everyone is issued chutes, reserves and B7 life preservers. Gear is packed in waterproof bags and stuffed into the rucks with empty canteens in the outside pockets to keep the package afloat.

Once jumpmaster checks are completed, the sticks receive a pilot's briefing to familiarize them with in-flight emergencies, actions of crew and passengers and aircraft emergency equipment. This is all SOP, but pre-jump briefings are absolutely necessary in order to keep training accidents to a minimum.

There's more than just jumpers and pilots involved in this production. Support personnel have to establish communications

with the aircraft, rescue boats and the rear area. Teams of men in Zodiac rubber boats move into position on the DZ to aid in recovery of parachutes or any jumpers who get into trouble.

During water jumps weapons are left at home, and for anyone who's ever been involved in one, the reason is obvious. If a weapon accidentally gets deep-sixed, SCUBA teams have to scour the bottom until it's recovered. That creates a lot of hassle; sometimes it's far worse than simply misplacing a weapon on dry land. There, at least, the entire platoon can form up on line and search. Underwater, on-line searches



ABOVE: Jumpmasters' briefing board includes information on aircraft type, winds, direction of approach and obstacles on the drop zone.

RIGHT: Radio communication is established between ground control, the aircraft and safety boats.

BELOW: On-the-ground briefing begins. Safety is number one, and everything from aircraft to SCUBA gear is checked and doublechecked.



are a bit less than feasible.

One final check and the sticks shuffle aboard the Chinook for the ride to the DZ. Everybody is loaded and ready for the fun. After a few bumps and shudders the chopper breaks free from the pad and struggles for altitude. Each stick jumpmaster searches the terrain passing below for his checkpoints and relays the standard jump commands to those in the stick.

Lumbering through the Panamanian sky on the way to the drop zone, the jumpers gaze down from their Chinook on the Gatun Locks, which open their metal maws to let ships pass through on their shortcut from Atlantic to Pa-

cific. The placid water of the Atlantic looks perfect for a splash in the surf.

There it is. The last checkpoint slides beneath the green belly of the Chinook and the JM motions for the lead jumper to stand in the door. The command comes and he's on his way.

After feeling the chute's opening tug, the jumper checks his canopy for malfunctions and runs through the rest of his jump drills. If everything's in order, he activates his B7s. They insure that if the jumper lands in water (which he will) his equipment and body will not be dragged under by the waterlogged parachute. Add a little water

and that filmy piece of nylon can quickly become a deadly, destined-for-Davy-Jones weight.

Drifting down toward the blue sea, the jumper waits until he is about 100 feet from impact and releases the rucksack. It tumbles 18 feet before it's jerked up short by the tether, where it will ride suspended until the big splash.

Now comes the fun part — splashdown. Many people equate water landings with a short leap onto a waterbed: soft, enveloping, cushioned. Take a foot-first jump off a high dive board, though, and you'll get an idea of what it's like to smack into the deep



ABOVE: First CH-47 lift heads for the sky.



LEFT: Safety boat crews stand by for the jump.

BELOW: Chute issue: "What you take out, you will turn in!"



blue. Nonetheless, it beats the hell out of landing on a rockpile.

Amid splashes and yells of delight, the jumpers disappear into the brine. Like little green corks, helmeted heads pop out of the ocean and look around for the Zodiacs. The boats quickly reach the bobbing men and take harnesses and chutes so troops can begin the hard part — the long swim.

Towing or pushing rucksacks, the jumpers-turned-swimmers strike out for shore. The minimum distance for a swim is 300 meters. And don't try taking a short cut — you'll only have to swim back out and do it again.

All personnel new-to-country are required to attend water-refresher training prior to making any jumps in Panama. Currently, measures are being considered that would combine water jumps and extended field training exercises that would include land navigation and other various tasks to be completed enroute to the objective. Realism in training equals potential success in battle, and that's what these guys prepare for on a daily basis.

The benefits of one of these exercises are clear. Any soldiers facing the possibility of combat in Central America have to know how to handle water landings. They might

be dropped intentionally into the ocean or they might accidentally find themselves landing in a river. Either way, they had better know their stuff.

It may be fun and games during practice, but when it comes down to the wire, the training takes on a whole new meaning. It saves lives. After all, what good is a combat jump if some unexpected river swallows up your body and washes it out to sea? That won't help anybody... except maybe the guerrillas. ✕

# BURMA'S BATTLE OF THE BOX

## British Bayonets Bleed Imperial Japan

by Lt. Col. P.E.X. Turnbull

“**T**HE Jap is *not* invincible,” Lieutenant General William Slim, commander of XV Indian Corps, insisted. “He can and *will* be defeated.”

That was easier said than done. In March of 1943, Slim took command of a British/Indian force which had been ordered to capture Akyab Island and port. Though at one time brought up to a strength of six brigades, the 14th Indian Division had, on four occasions, failed to break through Japanese defenses. Counterattacked by the 55th Japanese Division, the whole operation had been a disastrous, costly failure.

Now Slim was faced with a return match in the Arakan to destroy Japanese forces in the area and again try to seize the island and port of Akyab.

But Slim was not affected by the wave of pessimism which swept India. He knew it was a matter of completely revising their approach to warfare in the China/Burma/India theater — it was the infantryman, not the tank who won battles in the jungle. Until the British copied the Japanese and made the infantry the *corps d'élite*, there could be little hope of victory.

Determined to put his theory into practice, XV Corps' two divisions, the 5th and 7th Indian, were subjected to an intensive series of realistic battle exercises during the 1943 monsoon. Every man, including non-combatant personnel such as clerks, storemen and wireless operators, had to play an active part in the training. “In the jungle, no matter what his job, an individual is likely to find himself fighting hand-to-hand with the enemy,” Slim stressed.

In late October, as the rain clouds vanished, XV Corps' “New Model Army” left for the Arakan, and the first operational HQ was set up at Bawli Bazar. But as the

(Left to right) 5th Div. Maj. Gen. Briggs, 7th Div. Maj. Gen. Messervy, Southeast Asia Commander Lord Mountbatten and XV Corps Lt. Gen. Christison tour the battlefield after the Arakan victory. The Box area is seen in rear. Photo: author's collection

### SOLDIER-SCHOLAR

Born in South Africa, Lt. Col. P.E.X. Turnbull attended the Royal Military College at Sandhurst, England. After graduation, he traveled to India as a second lieutenant with the 2nd Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment.

When WWII broke out, Turnbull was part of the British Expeditionary Force sent to France in 1940 and evacuated from Dunkirk. When Japan entered the war, he was attached to the Indian Army and saw service in the Burma campaigns.

Turnbull has published 31 works, including *One Bullet for the General*, *The Battle of the Box*, *Solferino: The Story of the 1859 Italian Campaign*, and several books about the French Foreign Legion. His account of Dien Bien Phu appeared in the June '86 issue of SOF (“Dien Bien Phu: Vietnam's Maginot Line”).





The aggressive Lt. Gen. Tadashi Hanaya, commander of the Japanese 55th Div. Photo: author's collection

advance was about to get under way, Slim was recalled to India and given command of the newly formed 14th Army. He was replaced by Lieutenant General Philip Christison.

While their plans were being formulated, the Japanese, too, had been making active preparations for the dry season. To offset the defeats sustained at American hands in the Pacific, they hoped to win a spectacular success by destroying British/Indian forces in Burma, followed by the invasion of India itself. The main thrust, code name U-GO, was to be delivered on the central front in March 1944. But in late 1943 it was decided that U-GO would be preceded by a preliminary offensive in the Arakan in February 1944, code name HA-GO, to annihilate XV Corps — thus depriving the central front of any possible reinforcements — and then advance up the coast to capture the Bengal port of Chittagong. HA-GO was to be carried out by the 55th Div., commanded by the aggressive General Tadashi Hanaya, with a regiment of the 54th Div. in reserve.

The area of the Arakan over which the battle was to be fought, the Mayu Peninsula, is a narrow strip of land bounded on the east by almost trackless jungle-covered hills





**Artillery Hill.** Photo: author's collection

and by the Bay of Bengal on the west. What flat ground there is consists of rice paddies and swamps furrowed by fast-flowing rivers and tidal creeks. The peninsula, which tapers to a pencil-tip point opposite Akyab Island, is bisected by a dragon's-back spine of hills, the Mayu Range, with precipitous jungle-covered slopes that rise to a height of 2,500 feet. It is crossed in only three places — the Goppe and Ngakjedauk passes, little better than mule tracks, and the Tunnels Road, which links the port of Maungdaw on the Bay of Bengal with Buthidaung. The Tunnels Road, capable of taking mechanized traffic, had been the track of a narrow gauge railway. During the closing months of 1943, 55th Div. had converted the road into a heavily defended area which Gen. Hanaya named "The Golden Fortress."

In December 1943 Major General Harold Briggs of the 5th Division moved down the western seaside while Major General Frank Messervy of the 7th Division followed the line of the Kalapanzin River to the east, brushing aside light opposition. By 1 January 1944, 5th Div. was poised for the first phase of the assault on the western bastion of the Golden Fortress, near Maungdaw. When its 161st brigade began to probe the defenses, it ran into such ferocious resis-

tance (the Sikh company of the 2/1st Punjab Regiment was reduced to 21 men) that Christison decided to switch the main weight of his attack to the 7th Div. front and ordered his armored unit, the 25th Dragoons, to move across the Mayu Range via the Ngakjedauk Pass.

By 3 February the redeployment was complete and 7th Div. stood ready for its primary objective — the attack on Letwedet, the Golden Fortress' eastern bastion. It happened, however, that the night of 3 February was the moment Hanaya had set as H Hour for HA-GO.

Looking back it seems amazing that Hanaya could ever have imagined that HA-GO had even the faintest hope of success. Planned to follow a rigidly set timetable, failure to adhere to it could prove fatal. It was to be "a headlong attack that will sweep all before it." And Hanaya decreed that it would succeed and solemnly advised both army and Imperial HQ of that fact.

Hanaya was fully cognizant of the odds facing him. Japanese attempts to regain mastery of the sky had been a total failure. And his single division, the 55th, with only one regiment from the 54th Div. in reserve, and no armor, faced the 5th and 7th Indian Divs., 26th Indian Div. in reserve at Chittagong, and 36th Indian Div. standing by in Calcutta.

Hanaya's trouble was that he was suffering from an acute attack of superiority complex fanned by previous triumphs, giving him an unshakable belief in Japanese battlefield invincibility. HA-GO was based on the experiences of the earlier Arakan campaign. They concluded that once the enemy found their lines of communication cut or threatened, they would either fall back in precipitous retreat or surrender.

In fact, Hanaya was so confident of success that the attacking troops were issued only 10 days' rations. Afterward, they were expected to exist on captured stores. Captured transports were to serve to speed their advance on Chittagong.

For the initial strike Hanaya split his division into three columns. The Sakurai column, under the command of Colonel Tanahashi, consisted of the 112th Infantry Regiment, an artillery and an engineer regiment. His task was to advance up the east bank of



the Kalapanzin River to the village of Taung Bazar, wipe out the garrison, then, crossing to the west bank, fall on the rear of 7th Div. in the administrative area, severing the link between Briggs and Messervy. Colonel Kubo, with only one battalion, was to cross the Mayu Range near Goppe Pass and establish a road block across the road from Bawli Bazar, XV Corps' only supply line. The third column of two battalions under Colonel Doi was to put in a series of holding attacks against every forward unit fronting the Golden Fortress, preventing the dispatch of any form of reinforcement to the admin area.

On the night of 3 February, men of 114th Brigade (7th Div.) of the Somerset Light Infantry and 4/14 Punjab Regiment were in position on ridges flanking a narrow valley near Taung Bazar on the east bank of the Kalapanzin River. Around midnight both regiments reported hearing noises in the val-

ley, but brushed them off as an Indian mule company which had lost its way in the inky blackness.

They were wrong. The noises came from the Sakurai column. Taking an almost suicidal risk, Tanahashi had formed his men into a solid phalanx, 16 abreast. Counting on the element of surprise, he marched them as if on parade between the British and Indian ridge positions.

The incredible gamble paid off. Marching undisturbed through the night, Sakurai column fell on — and wiped out — the Taung Bazar garrison at dawn. By evening they held the west bank and Tanahashi moved fast on the Ngakjedauk Pass and the administrative area. Meanwhile, Kobo and his battalion had reached the coastal road

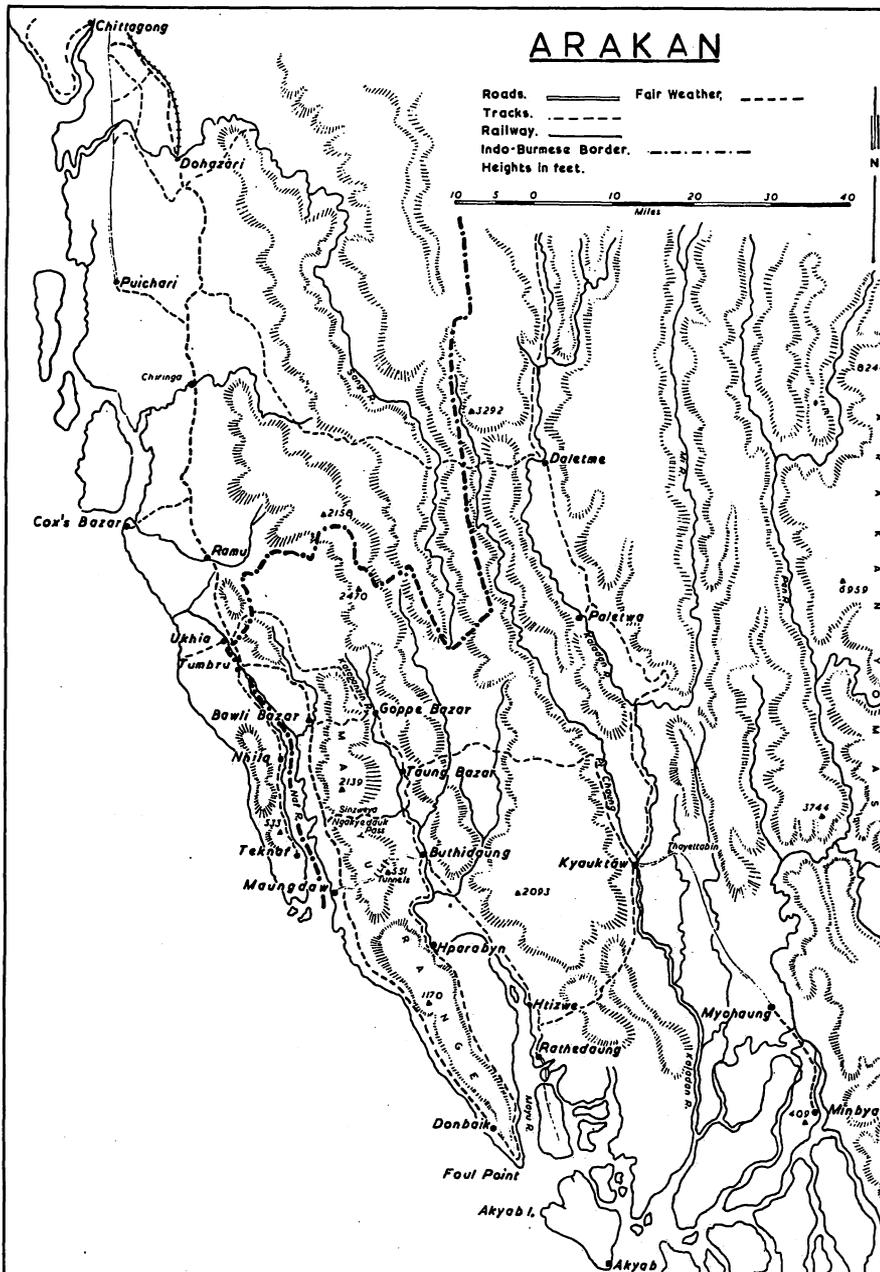
**LVT crosses a *chaung*, tidal creeks common in the Burma theater. Photo: author's collection**

near Biasco Bridge. All the material found was destroyed and the storemen and engineers killed before a counterattack by a Rajput battalion forced Kobo to pull back to the cover of the jungle, where his men dug in. In addition, Doi's units were pinning down advanced elements of both 5th and 7th Divs.

There could be no denying the fact that XV Corps had been taken by surprise, nor that the initiative was in Japanese hands. Hanaya was in a triumphant mood. He was convinced that his predicted victory was in sight. What he did not anticipate was the spirit and determination pervading the "New Model Army."

When news of the Japanese move reached Christison, he called for the reserve 26th Div. to move up to the battle area. Knowing that the retention of the administrative area was vital, Christison instructed 9th Brigade Commander Geoffrey Evans to





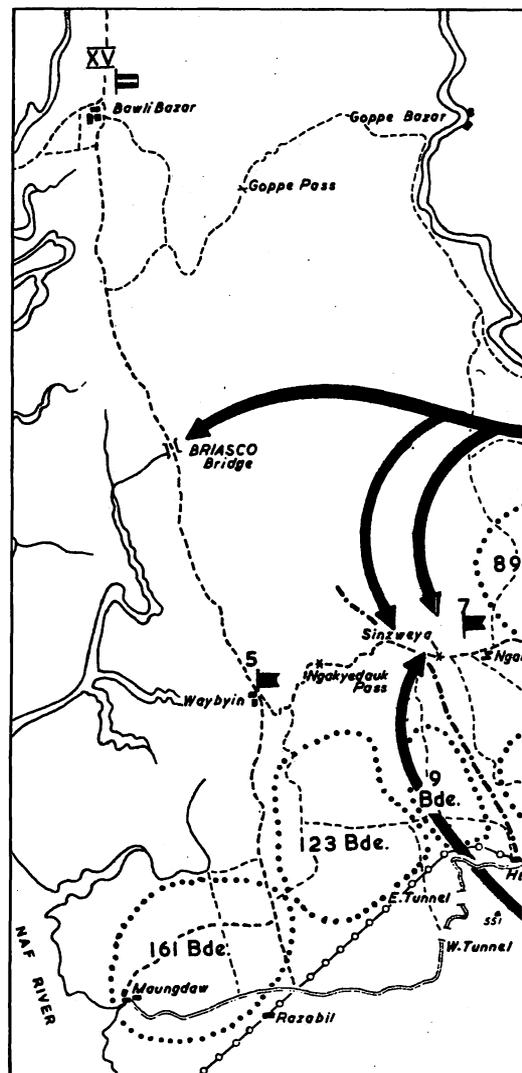
enjoyed one great stroke of fortune. Before the Japanese had time to concentrate around the perimeter, two squadrons of the 25th Dragoons came rumbling in from the west. Throughout the siege the Lee Grant tanks were to render invaluable service as mobile batteries, rushing at a moment's notice to any threatened point.

The actual direction of the defense remained in Evans' capable hands. His orders to the senior officers were singularly uncomplicated — "Stay put and keep the Japanese out!"

The first Japanese attack launched was not pressed home with any determination. The principal thrust was aimed at a sector held by an Indian mule company. The muleteers held their fire until the Japanese were almost on top of them. Not expecting to encounter serious opposition, the Japanese appeared confused, fell back, and for the rest of the night resorted to sporadic bursts of machine-gun fire and lobbing over an occasional mortar.

The situation deteriorated in the next few days, however. A patrol of West Yorks, feeling its way up the Ngakjedauk Pass, ran into heavy fire. It was clear now that the Box was cut off from 5th Div., and the pass was firmly in enemy hands.

Two companies of the 4/8th Gurkhas



move with all speed to the "Admin Box" or simply, the "Box," and organize its defense.

Evans set off in a jeep, ordering the 2nd Battalion of the West Yorkshire Regiment and the 24th Mountain Artillery Regiment to follow him. Unseasonable rain had made the Ngakjedauk road so slippery, however, that the jeep stuck in the slime, obliging him to complete the journey on foot. Upon arrival, Evans found that Col. Cole had already issued non-combatant troops rifles. Warnings had been received in the Box that attack might be imminent. Every available man was likely to find himself at grips with the Japanese.

The organization of such a defense presented a grave problem. Never imagining that it was likely to be the scene of a major battle, the Box had been selected for its flatness and absence of scrub or jungle. The area measured a bare 1,200 yards across at any given point and was almost entirely ringed by steep-sloped, jungle-covered

hills. The defenders would always be in full view, while the attackers enjoyed the protection of the jungle. Surrounding crests, enemy guns, mortars, automatic weapons and rifles could keep every square inch of the Box under constant fire. Roughly in the center rose a hillock some 130 feet high, known as Ammunition Hill because of the considerable stocks of shells and small arms ammunition piled around the western side of its base. It was to prove a tempting target for the besiegers, and a constant source of anxiety for the besieged.

Studying Cole's plan, Evans saw that, even with non-combatant troops taking their place on the perimeter, and after the arrival of the West Yorks and gunners, there would still not be enough men available to hold a continuous line. Concentrating on what seemed the most likely lines of enemy approach, he was obliged to leave sectors of the east and west dangerously open, counting on a mobile reserve force to deal with any possible break-in. Fortunately, Evans

were ordered to occupy a low hillock dominating the Box's eastern gate, known as Point 315. Running into concentrated fire before they reached their objective, they fell back, their retreat followed up by the Japanese, who stormed into the perimeter only to be halted by the 75mm guns of the Dragoons. Finally, the Japanese were thrown back to their original positions with a bayonet charge by "D" Company of the West Yorks. Later, the Gurkhas renewed their attack and were able to seize part of Point 315.

The situation was described as critical. The Box was completely surrounded and cut off from supplies and reinforcements. Stocks of ammunition within the perimeter were plentiful but dangerously vulnerable to enemy fire.

Fortunately, the starving defenders had another weapon — the air drop. Without the mastery of the air, the Box might have succumbed to the legend of Japanese invincibility on the ground. For the first few days the hazardous task of flying these aircraft was handled mostly by the American Army Air Force. To ensure that the loads fell accurately in such a restricted area, the Dakotas and Curtis Commandos executed a series of tight circuits at reduced speed and at a height of only 200 feet, exposing them-

selves to near point-blank fire from the Japanese on the surrounding crests. Fortunately the Japanese possessed no AA artillery and proved to be such poor marksmen that not a single aircraft was shot down.

The sight of these low flying aircraft cruising overhead, the parachutes falling from their bellies like giant snowflakes in slow motion, was a real booster to our often jaded morale.

The 7th of February was a comparatively quiet day, but just before midnight gusts of rifle and light-automatic fire, accompanied by screams and cries for help, were heard coming from the hospital — a small jungle-covered hump known as MDS Hill. As protection the hospital had been allotted a Bren gun section of the West Yorks and some 20 walking wounded with rifles.

Under cover of night a Japanese patrol had infiltrated the perimeter and dropped into the hospital, bayonetting a number of wounded on stretchers. Six medical officers were lined up and shot. At daybreak, when it was possible to organize an attack to regain the hospital, the raiders protected their retreat by using the survivors as body shields.

On the night of the 8th, the Japanese manhandled their 70mm guns to the summit of the crest overlooking Ammunition Hill, and at first light they bombarded the ammunition dumps. At the same time the surrounding open ground was swept with small-arms fire and a 105mm gun joined in the chorus. Soon fires blazed and crates of shells and .303 ammunition exploded uncontrollably.

Enemy guns were promptly engaged by the Grants and the AA battery, and an extraordinary artillery duel followed. It was not long before the Japanese had been blasted from their positions.

The evening held no respite for the defend-

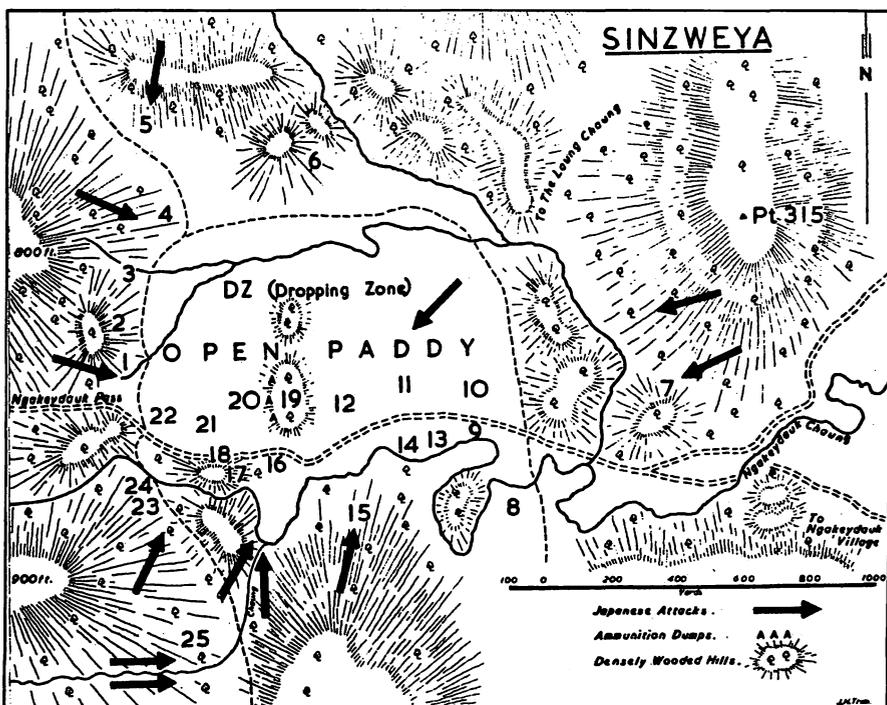
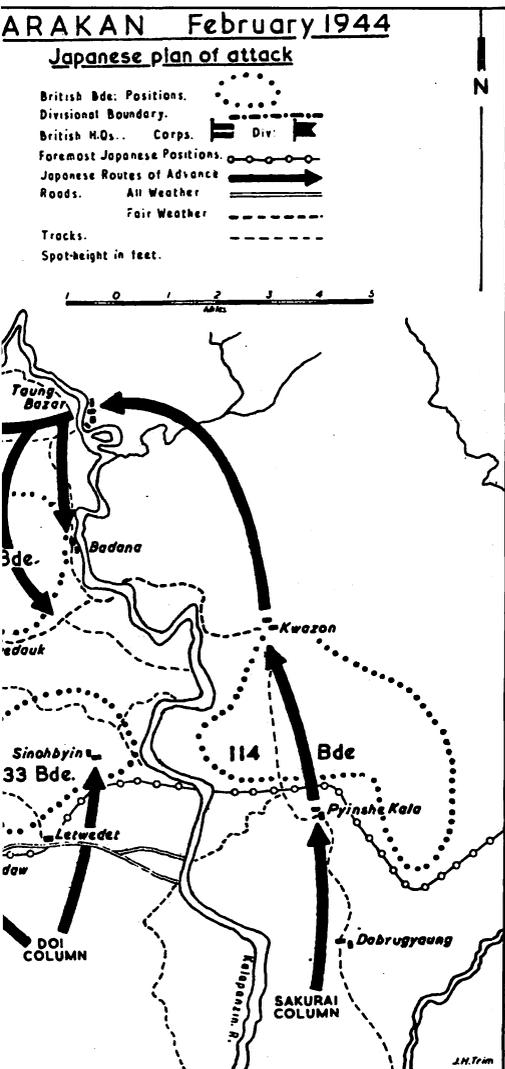
ers. Two of the posts held by the West Yorks were heavily shelled, then attacked by a yelling mass of Japanese making no attempt to make use of the jungle's cover. In spite of enormous casualties some of them broke through into the Box itself. It was not until dawn that the last Japanese was killed, the West Yorks counting over 100 dead.

On the perimeter's southern fringe, "B" Echelon of 9th Brigade was dug in along the steep bank of a deep, dried-up creek bed. The trench was occupied by Regimental Sergeant Major Maloney and a handful of clerks from the Quartermaster's stores. When a party of 50 Japanese rounded the creek bed, Maloney held his fire till they were almost level with the trench. Then a volley of grenades followed by Sten bursts killed the party within seconds.

Over the rest of the front the position was stabilizing. Isolated units of 7th Div.'s 114th and 33rd Bdes. had each formed their own mini-Box and were successfully beating off attacks, though 123rd Bde.'s drive up the Ngakjedauk Pass to open communications with the Box had been halted.

Common sense should have dictated a withdrawal of Sakurai and Kubo columns to the Golden Fortress. But Hanaya still remained pathologically incapable of either revising his original plan or admitting partial failure. To do so would involve a total loss of face. Instead of recalling his depleted columns, he issued orders that the offensive must be pursued "with increasing vigor no matter what the cost." Never a man to question orders, Tanahashi responded to this suicidal instruction by subjecting the Box to a series of ferocious assaults over the next eight days.

The first of these was hurled at the position known as Artillery Hill, held by a detachment of Cole's 24th Anti-Tank Regt., which overlooked much of the Box's south-





Lt. Gen. Philip Christison, commander of XV Indian Corps, Maungdaw, 1943. Photo: author's collection

ern sector, including ammunition dumps, the track to the only water point, and Evans' command post. Incessant attacks had prevented the tired men from obtaining any proper rest. And on the morning of the 12th, the Japanese took Cole's men completely by surprise. Within moments the position was overwhelmed.

By then Evans and his commanders had worked out a well-coordinated counterattack plan. Evans immediately ordered the Dragoons and "A" Company of the West Yorks to restore the situation. As the infantry moved off from their starting point, the tanks saturated the objective with high explosive. When they were within assaulting distance, the infantry commander fired a flare, signalling the tank gunners to switch from HE to solid shot. To quote Evans: "As far as the Japanese were concerned the guns were still thundering away, the shells still crashing down all around them so they continued to keep their heads down. But the change in the shells made a big difference to the advancing infantry; they could now approach much closer without fear of casualties. They could advance with every confidence because the 75mm gun is so accurate it can be used to place its shells with quite remarkable precision. . . ."

It was behind such a barrage that "A" Co. was able to push on to within 15 yards of the enemy and then make a determined charge to retake Artillery Hill. Repeating these tactics to the letter, "C" Co. of the West Yorks was able to drive the Japanese from their position. After 10 days of continuous fighting not a single major feature of the defense had fallen. Nevertheless, casualties were mounting, especially with the West Yorks, who bore the brunt of the battle. General fatigue was increasing, and

the Japanese were showing themselves masters of "jitter" tactics by night, effectively preventing the garrison from obtaining sleep and causing an enormous expenditure of precious ammunition.

Strict orders had been given out that fire was to be held till "you can see the yellow of their eyes." But nothing could stop the more inexperienced troops from firing wildly into the darkness in the direction of menacing sounds, and such catcalls as "We are coming to kill you, Johnny."

On the 17th, a determined attempt to destroy the tanks was made by the Japanese. The attack was launched at dawn but not a single Japanese ever reached his objective.

At night the tanks would be withdrawn to

the center of the Box, putting maximum distance between them and the jungle. The machine guns were dismantled and laid on fixed lines covering the approaches. When the Japanese stormed out of the jungle they ran into the concentrated fire of the 75mms and the machine guns. It was a slaughter.

As 26th Div. was preparing to attack Point 315, 123rd Bde. was about to assault the strong point on Hill 1070, which dominated the column. As early as the 12th the Hill had been stormed by a company of the 1/18th Garwhal Rifles, but realizing the strategic necessity of the pass, the Japanese put in a counterattack on the night of the 12th to drive the Garwhalis out. They continued to resist all attempts to dislodge until a determined onslaught was made by the 2/1st Punjab Bn., backed by a company of Garwhalis and 4/7th Rajputs.

The Japanese clung to their positions till late afternoon, but in the end a bayonet charge by the Punjabis drove the few survivors into the jungle. The Hill was reoccupied by the Garwhalis, leaving the Punjabis to continue their advance to storm the last Japanese position on the column — Sugar Loaf. Making a wide detour over steep, difficult ground, they appeared unexpectedly on the undefended north side of the enemy trenches. This had a demoralizing effect. As the Punjabis regrouped for the final charge, the Japanese hastily abandoned their positions rather than face up to Indian bayonets.

On the 19th, Hanaya was forced to realize that HA-GO had failed. Later, as a prisoner of war, he told Evans that it was "your tank brigade which wrecked my plans." He

Portion of the Box showing Brigadier Evans' command post and Hospital Hill. Photo: author's collection



finally gave the order which should have been issued several days earlier — for the Sakurai and Kubo column survivors to fall back on the Golden Fortress.

A feeling of victory was in the air. The survivors of Sakurai and Kubo columns who staggered back to the Golden Fortress were exhausted and starving. Yet the defenders of the Box were to live through a number of anxious moments during the last 48 hours.

Ninth Bde.'s B Echelon positions were harried from dusk till dawn by a small Japanese party which managed to infiltrate to within 20 yards of the shelter used as the officers' mess. There was confused fighting in pre-dawn darkness before the perimeter was finally cleared and 30 Japanese dead counted.

The next day one of the most dangerous attacks of the entire siege was staged, and like so many Japanese assaults could only be described as suicidal. It was delivered in two thrusts from south and west of Artillery Hill, and with such fury that Cole's HQ was almost overrun. Japanese came within 100 yards of Messervy's command post before being shot down. It was to be the last major effort on the part of the besiegers.

On the 23rd, advanced elements of the

123rd Bde. attempted to link up with a strong detachment of the Scottish Borderers moving down from the column of the Ngak-jedauk. It had barely left the perimeter when it ran into strong resistance. In such close country the tanks' maneuverability was severely limited. Unable to make any headway, the force was obliged to turn back after suffering heavy casualties.

No further sortie was attempted. Nor was it necessary. Once Hill 1070 and Sugar Loaf had fallen, all resistance to the advance ceased. Soon the Punjabis and the Rajputs were looking down into the Box.

Within the Box the morning stand-to of the 24th was quiet for the first time since the siege had begun. Then just after dawn a lone Lee Grant tank rattled through the western entrance and stopped in front of Messervy and Evans. Briggs emerged from the turret holding a bottle of whisky, which he thrust out to Messervy.

"Messervy grinned," one officer remembers, "and took it, and the two men shook hands, and the siege was officially at an end."

It is almost impossible to exaggerate the

**Overlooking Point 315, seen from Ammunition Hill. Photo: author's collection**

boost to morale resulting from Hanaya's defeat. It was not only that the British, *Jawan* (Indian), and Gurkha soldier became confident that logistic support could turn the scales, he now felt that he was as good, if not better, than his ruthless opponent.

But though a historic victory had been won, it had been defensive, and the ultimate goal — Akyab Island and port — was not even in sight. And Corps HQ reminded everyone, "No victory is won without pursuit."

The Corps was ready to take the offensive. The Japanese, however, demonstrated their remarkable powers of recovery. All renewed attacks were met with the same fanaticism.

Toward the middle of the month operation U-GO was launched on the central front and both 5th and 7th Divs. were flown out from the Arakan to take part in the battles for Imphal and Kohima. They were replaced by 25th Indian Div., newly raised and without previous battle experience. Nevertheless, in just under two months of continuous fighting, the Japanese had been cleared from the whole of the Golden Fortress, with the exception of the village of

*Continued on page 109*



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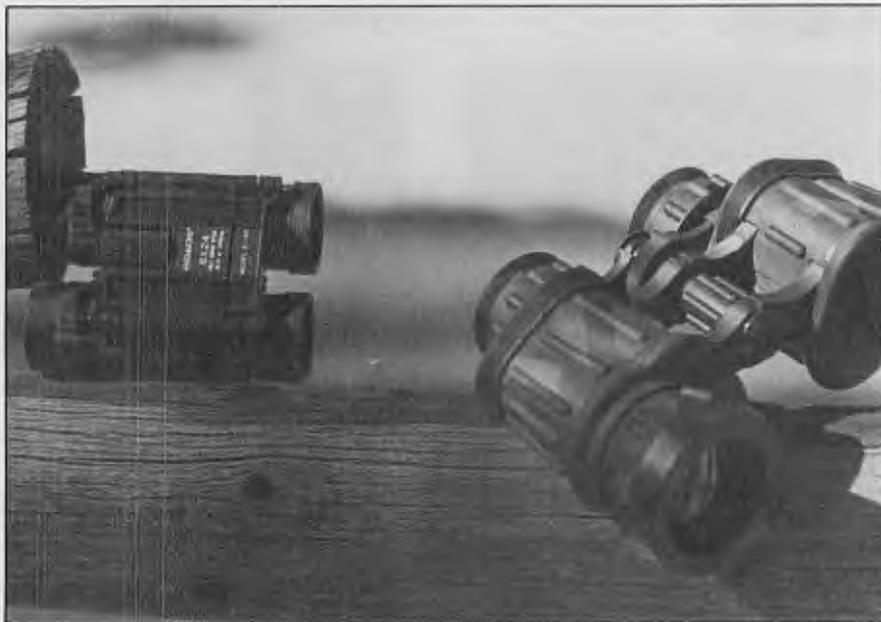
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# SIMMONS OUTDOOR OPTICS

by George Nyfeler



Two of Simmons' popular models. Right, the 8x24 pocket-sized model 1140, and left, the 8x40 wide angle, rubber armored model 1120.

**F**OR the serious outdoorsman, hunter or soldier, good optics are an essential part of the kit. Choosing one to fit your needs must be taken seriously. Quality comes first, but it's also nice when you can combine a superior product with a modest price.

Simmons Outdoor Corporation (Dept. SOF, 14205 S.W. 119th Ave., Miami, FL 33186) has developed and markets an extensive line of optics that utilizes several efficient computerized manufacturing processes that translate into value for your money.

All Simmons binoculars and scopes have coated lenses to increase light transmission. A magnified target is useless if it's too dim to be seen. The coating cuts down on unwanted reflections off the surface of the lens elements (flare) when looking toward a light source, and gives an amber-colored cast to the sight picture, which tends to cut through haze or fog.

With the exception of the small, folding 8x20, all Simmons binoculars are center-

focus models. Center focus usually means less expense in manufacture — which means less expense for the consumer as well. But the down side is that they have difficulty in keeping moisture out. Simmons claims that their center-focus models are totally waterproof. This was an invitation to put several models through SOF's rigorous paces.

We started with the 6x40 rubber armored model. After an hour and a half in a bucket of water, we can say without fear of contradiction that these binoculars are definitely waterproof.

Next, we threw the remaining center-focus models on the ground and left them for a two-hour exposure under a lawn sprinkler. It wasn't a real test under monsoon conditions, but a fair representation of

the exposure your gear might receive in the field. Even after these torture tests we didn't even have to dry the outside of the ocular or objective lenses to obtain a perfect visual image.

My favorite binoc was the 7x42 rubber armored model, which has especially clear and superior light gathering as well as magnifying qualities. The rubber armor protects against rough use — like being thrown in the back of a jeep, banged against a rock or any of the other bumps and dings likely to be received during routine field use.

Depending on your mission, there is a Simmons binoc for your purpose — and the price is usually right.

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Simmons probably has the most extensive line of rifle and pistol scopes on the market today: pistol, rifle, target, hunting or service; bright, dull, blued or rubber armored; fixed power or variable power; low power or high power. Reticles include the duplex (often called 4-plex) or FCH-dot (fine cross hair dot).

All scopes have coated optics and armor-coated models are waterproof and meet the high standard requirements of all Simmons products. But all these qualities don't mean a thing if the scope won't hold a zero.

SOF's firing tests were performed by mounting the scopes on a particularly accurate 64 Winchester Model 70 .30-06 match rifle which will consistently put five shots of match ammo into 1½ inches at 300 yards. Firing was done at a range of 100 yards to minimize any errors caused by wind drift or shooter error.

The first test was to fire several shots without adjustments to ensure that the reticle did not move as the piece was fired. It passed. The group was the sub minute of the angle expected. Next, the power was cranked from 8X up to 24X. Again, all shots fell into the original group on the target.

For the next test, we moved to a clean Redfield sight-in target to test the repeatability of the scope adjustments. Off came the adjustment screw caps, and one shot was sent downrange into one of the several aiming points on the target. Next we turned the adjustment screws 10 clicks right, fire; then 10 clicks up, fire; 10 clicks left, fire; and finally, 10 clicks down and fire the final check shot. A perfect adjustment on a scope will put the fifth bullet hole in the same spot as the first. In this case, I was presented with a two leaf cloverleaf on the target. Not bad.

Simmons scopes and binoculars are well designed, well made, and worth the money. But all this would be for naught if the manufacturer will not stand behind his product and repair or replace the occasional glitch in manufacturing, which happens to the best of them. According to Ron Regan, who runs Pro-Arms, a Rocky Mountain cop shop in Murray, Utah, "The factory support is fantastic. They have repaired or replaced every scope that we have sent back to them."

Simmons stands by their limited lifetime warranty. And that's satisfaction guaranteed. ☒

**G**URKHAS, Pathans, Bedouin of the Arabian desert and Filipino tribesmen don't have much in common. But one thing they all share is knives, each made for a different purpose, and each reflective of their owner's cultural heritage.

In the past, many cultures developed distinctive blades, a few of which have survived in one form or another to the present day. Although relegated mostly to ceremonial roles, these knives still see occasional use — even in battle. Both Argentines and Soviets have faced fear in the form of blades wielded by Gurkhas and Pathans on the battlefields of the Falkland Islands and Afghanistan.

With only a few exceptions, knives that reflect the past of primitive cultures have retreated into the pages of history books. But recently they have all come together again in the Atlanta Cutlery catalog.

The Georgia company has spent the last 15 years searching the world for military knives they could make available to the American public. They found a gold mine of blades out there and they offer knives you probably couldn't get without a trip to Katmandu or Riyadh.

Among the more interesting examples of Atlanta Cutlery's product line are the khyber, the choora, the kindjal and the kukri from the Indian subcontinent, the kris from the East Indies and the Arab jambiya.

The kukri, the most popular exotic knife offered by Atlanta Cutlery, had its origins in the hills of Nepal. Originally used as an agricultural tool, it has gained attention as the weapon carried by the Gurkhas in the British and Indian armies. The kukri has been used with gruesome effectiveness for 170 years in the service of the Crown.

Atlanta Cutlery offers three models of the kukri: the standard kukri, the officer's kukri and the ceremonial kukri. The standard model is useful as a field knife and will take all the punishment you can dish out. The officer's model is a little smaller, but especially useful for small hands. For the real kukri aficionado there is the ceremonial model. This four-and-a-half pound kukri is used in the traditional Gurkha ritual of *dushera*, the beheading of a calf. The task requires a heavy blade, since failure to sever the calf's head with a single stroke is said to bring bad luck to the regiment for an entire year. All Atlanta Cutlery kukris are made in India and come with documents attesting to their authenticity.

The khyber knife has been popular for hundreds of years in India, Persia and what is now Pakistan. Also available, at about half the length, is the choora. Most battle knives started out as farming tools, but the khyber and the choora were originally made to be used as fighting knives. The design originated when blades were needed to penetrate chain mail. Even after armor disappeared from the battlefield, these knives were not an uncommon sight among Afghan and Pathan tribesmen fighting the British for control of the Northwest Frontier. Along with the kindjal, another of Atlanta Cut-

# AROUND THE KNIFE WORLD

by G.B. Crouse



Fighting knives of the Gurkhas — the officer's model (right) and the standard kukri.



The Arab jambiya, Filipino kris and the choora.

lery's offerings, these types of knives are occasionally carried by the mujahideen fighting the Soviets in Afghanistan. Although limited for everyday use, these three fighting knives make an interesting addition to anyone's blade collection.

The kris, a knife that originated in Indonesia and spread throughout the South

Pacific, can still be found in the Philippines and elsewhere. Americans encountered the knife while suppressing the Moro rebellion in the Philippines earlier this century.

The knife is easily recognizable with its distinctive snake-like blade. The nine curves are capable of inflicting a particularly vicious wound. The kris is of limited value as a bush knife, and other practical uses for the knife are hard to find. Nonetheless, the kris is a great collectible.

The Arab jambiya has become a symbol of a young man's rite of passage in many parts of the Middle East. Along with his rifle, the jambiya is still one of the most prized possessions of the Bedouin. If a warrior breaks his blade and cannot afford to replace it, he will still carry the useless knife in his belt; it would be a great humiliation to be without one. Although now mostly a badge of status and largely ceremonial, this crescent-shaped blade is no stranger to war. It has slain infidels as well as other Arabs for nearly a thousand years.

Whether you're a collector or just out looking for a new kind of knife to carry in the field, Atlanta Cutlery's unusual and hard-to-find knives will probably fill the bill. For prices and further information write to Atlanta Cutlery, Dept. SOF, 911 Center Street, Conyers, GA 30207. ✕



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## FA MAS BULLPUP

Continued from page 65

Each FA MAS is equipped with a cleverly designed, ambidextrous web sling. The rear portion attaches, in the conventional manner, to either of the sling swivels on the buttstock. The front clips mount on either of the bipod legs' axis pins, which permit rotation of about 220 degrees and a wide variety of carrying positions.

A spare parts and cleaning kit is also included and it consists of an ejector and spring, extractor, dummy extractor plug, bolt-head retaining pin, plastic cleaning rod with brass tip, bore and chamber brushes, camel's hair brush and a really useful prismatic bore scope.

While bayonets have certainly become an anachronism on today's battlefield, armies continue to issue them. Little time was wasted on designing a bayonet for the FA MAS. What is essentially the MAS 49/56 (French army rifle which preceded the FA MAS) bayonet was adopted. Blade shape resembles that of the U.S. M4-M7 series of knife bayonets. Grip panels are black, uncheckered plastic. There are two muzzle rings. One fits over the flash suppressor, the other on the barrel collar. The rear muzzle ring diminishes the bayonet's value as a fighting or utility knife. The black plastic, locking scabbard has been riveted to a web frog in the U.S. manner.

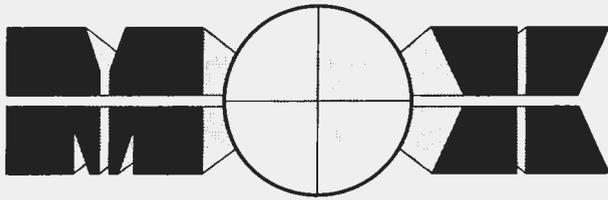
Firing the FA MAS, or any bullpup assault rifle for that matter, can be somewhat unsettling the first time around. With your face directly over the action, fleeting thoughts of what might happen if the weapon self-destructs are bound to occur. They are but fantasies of course, and nothing we stuffed into the FA MAS brought us anywhere close to red-lining its engine.

Most of the firing sequences were conducted with Portuguese M193-type ball ammunition of 1982 manufacture (head-stamped 'FNM 82-17'). What a pleasure it is to fire an assault rifle in this caliber and not have to contend with bolt-over-base stoppages such as those induced by an M16 magazine. There were no malfunctions of any kind.

Accuracy potential was more than acceptable. With winds gusting at 25 mph, 3 MOA, with horizontal dispersion only, was the best we could do at 100 yards.

Felt recoil was quite low, but the perceived muzzle blast, because of the bullpup configuration, was loud. Ejection patterns, which are either to the right or left in direction, varied from 10 to 20 feet from the rifle with a high trajectory for the empty cases. Some cases spun back to scuff the stock slightly.

While they have no heat shields, the handguards are far enough from the barrel to permit a substantial volume of air to circulate. Neither handguard overheated at any time during the test. Balance and handling characteristics are excellent and the rifle can be shifted quickly to engage multiple



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targets.

The more I shoot it, the more this grotesque hunchback grows on me. Its unsightly geometry becomes quickly muted by its superb performance. Regardless of the U.S. military's antipathy toward them, bullpup designs will continue to proliferate as the quest for ever more compact individual weapons marches forward. Fit for anyone's front line, the FA MAS should give both the Austrian Steyr AUG and the British Enfield SA 80 a stiff run for the money.

Semiautomatic-only versions of the FA MAS are available directly from Century Arms to FFL holders for \$999. This includes the rifle complete with bipod, sling, two magazines and the spare parts and cleaning kit. A French military carrying case can be obtained for \$99. The bayonet and scabbard cost \$37.95.

Military organizations and law enforcement agencies can obtain versions with scopes integrated into the carrying handles, training rifles firing 4.5mm pellets by means of CO<sub>2</sub>, and short-barreled models with 16.5-inch barrels. A new carrying handle that will accept any NATO STANAG scope is also under development. ✕

## COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Continued from page 81

amputated dangled from his hand. The lieutenant's swollen face contorted into a tight knot and he tossed his head, on the verge of shock.

As I instinctively photographed the bloody scene, contradictory feelings of opportunism and guilt passed through my mind. On the one hand, it was a rare opportunity for me to take extraordinary photographs. Yet, I felt as if I was using the agony of my new friends for the sake of a story. I tried to photograph them without being noticed. I did not want the soldiers to think I was cold-hearted, making a living from the images of torn bodies and suffering. I doubt the wounded would have noticed me; they were in too much pain for that.

I felt sick. I could no longer stand by shooting photos. I handed the corporal my canteen, then helped clear a path through the jungle to evacuate the wounded, who were eased onto improvised stretchers made of branches and rain ponchos. I swore at the time it would be my last patrol. I would stick to writing analyses or find another job. But good job offers don't come overnight. Besides, I was addicted to the excitement of being a combat correspondent.

I have been asked if I am afraid of joining Central America's growing body count. Of course. But there are things I fear more than death. Everybody has to die someday. What I fear most is being disfigured, dismembered, or paralyzed. Only a fanatic searching for martyrdom has no fear or anxiety when bullets are flying inches from his body. But it is a question of doing my job despite the fear. To deal with fear on the killing grounds, I developed a fatalistic attitude of *que sera sera*— what will be, will be—and tried to be careful. Oftentimes, complete concentration on doing your job in the heat of battle is enough to block out fear.

Still, I recall the times I've almost been killed, and my reaction wasn't so blasé or accepting. "What am I doing here? No story is worth this," I would think as the bullets or shrapnel landed around me. Other war correspondents have told me they felt the same way when facing death.

And in the midst of confusion and death, war correspondents still have to remain neutral and report the facts. I have tried to follow the guiding principle of journalism and not let my emotions or convictions distort the facts. I always try my best to report a story accurately. I believe in what I am doing and call the shots as I see them.

Working for SOF adds a unique dimension to my role as war correspondent. SOF makes no bones about its commitment to

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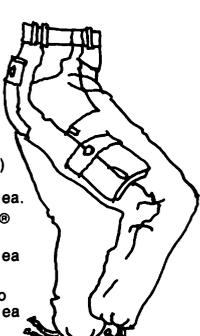
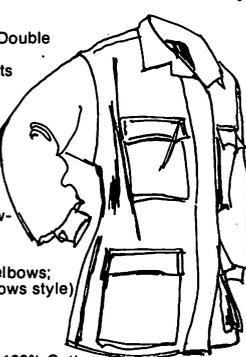
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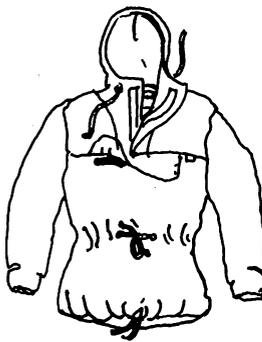
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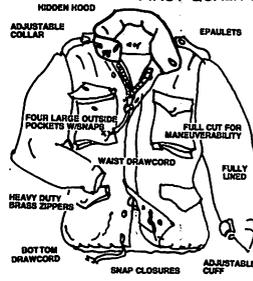
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resisting communism and supporting America's allies. I am often asked if working for an organization such as SOF, with its conservative editorial policies, compromises my objectivity. In response, I usually remind them of the words of the late war photographer Robert Capa. He said that to truly understand war you have to choose sides; you have to love someone and hate someone else.

If a journalist truly understands war, his reporting of it is much more powerful. ✂

## COPYCAT COLTS

*Continued from page 53*

primer's firing pin indentation with every round fired, but still functioned perfectly. However, Federal's 115-grain jacketed hollow point bullet will just not feed through this pistol.

If you must have the hollow-point placebo, then you'll have to pay your pistolsmith to polish the feed ramp and throat the barrel. Best accuracy was obtained with the Hirtenberger ammunition (distributed by Hansen Cartridge Co., Dept. SOF, 244 Old Post Road, Southport, CT 06490), which produced 2.5-inch 8-round groups at 35 feet, shooting to the point of aim with some vertical stringing. Perceived recoil is very soft in this 35.6 oz. pistol.

Springfield Armory's .45 ACP M1911A1 will apparently consume any bullet configuration without modification. Our test included both standard and match-grade military ball with its 230-gr. FMJ bullet, Winchester's excellent 185-gr. Silvertip hollow point with an aluminum alloy jacket, Remington Targetmaster ammunition containing 185-gr. wadcutter bullets and reloads consisting of medium-hardcast, round-nose bullets, assorted cases, CCI Large Pistol primers and 6.3 grains of Hercules Unique assembled on the Dillon RL 1000 progressive reloader. There were no stoppages. Best accuracy was obtained with 1969 Remington manufactured match ammo, which grouped seven rounds into 3.5 inches at 35 feet, 4 inches above the point of aim. When the proper Weaver stance is employed, hammer bite will start to cut through the web of your hand after about 50 rounds. You'll need a grip safety with a beavertail tang or lots of band-aids if you want to become proficient with this .45.

These fine handguns deserve the very highest recommendation and, in fact, have been adopted by Jeff Cooper's American Pistol Institute at Gunsite, Arizona. Especially attractive are the prices. In either caliber, phosphate versions carry a suggested retail of only \$362 (blued: \$383). They are packed with one magazine, a solid brass cleaning rod and bristle bore brush. You can purchase an unassembled complete kit for \$325 in phosphate or \$356 blued. Pistolsmiths can obtain frame and slide kits for \$180 (blued \$195) or frames alone at \$101 (blued: \$108) and slides at \$89 (blued: \$96).

Best of all, you won't be plagued with Colt's collet bushing or abominable Series 80 firing-pin lock. Demand has been heavy and until recently Springfield Armory has been back ordered for several months. With good reason. ✂

## YANK IN AFGHANISTAN

*Continued from page 69*

ambush along the concrete road leading to the airport. At first light, Ibrahim placed three men and his RPG-7 in an abandoned house about 300 meters from the road. It was a poor position. A Soviet T-62 tank was parked only 200 meters away and 300 meters was a long shot for untrained RPG gunners.

I convinced Ibrahim to move closer to the road. We ended up in a stream about 70 meters from the road and right next to a hotel used as a Soviet base. Initially I was angry that Ibrahim put us so close to the hotel, but I wouldn't hold a grudge against someone so willing to fight.

The three other mujahideen stayed hidden in the vineyard behind us. So this would be another two-man show. Ibrahim said that he knew how to use the RPG-7, but when I checked the sight, it was set for 500 meters — our kill zone was only 70 meters away. I decided to fire the RPG and told Ibrahim to load another round immediately after the first was fired. Most RPG first shots are misses and I wanted a second chance.

The first BRDM came by before we were loaded, but we were ready for the second one. It had soldiers hanging all over it (I think they were Afghan) and was traveling at about 40 kph. I gave the target a lead, aiming over fixed sights (the RPG's telescopic sight is a piece of garbage), and gently squeezed the trigger — nothing. The damn safety was on. Cursing, I quickly pushed the button to red, re-aimed and fired.

The smoke and dust obscured everything. I turned to Ibrahim for another round, but he was sitting with his fingers in his ears and his eyes closed. I reloaded myself and strained to see the target through the dust. It was gone.

The 12.7s in the hotel opened up all around us. To get to the safety of the village, we had to run a gauntlet of open fields punctuated by relatively safe vineyards. The Soviets are lousy shots. Our entire party made it back unscathed.

I apologized for my poor marksmanship, but the mujahideen quickly corrected me. The men in the vineyard had seen the whole thing and said that I scored a direct hit about the rear wheel. They saw a hat blown 20 feet into the air and three soldiers blown off the vehicle. I didn't get a second shot because it continued to roll after being hit. Informants who removed the bodies later told us that six men were killed.

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On the way back we were harassed by a mujahideen who lived near the road. He was angry because the ambush would cause the enemy to bomb his village. I tried to explain to him, as I did to all the mujahideen, that they must either fight or surrender. If the fear of retribution keeps you from fighting, the enemy will win.

#### A Lucky Defector

I returned to Abdul Ahmad's committee when I heard that he was planning an attack. A couple of militiamen wanted to defect and offered to help us capture their post by letting us in during their guard shift.

We arrived at 2200 hours. Our men didn't have guard until midnight, so we sat on the sidewalk and waited. I felt a little strange just sitting there in the open, but the communists stayed locked in their posts at night. The mujahideen in Herat control the night far more than the Viet Cong ever did in Vietnam.

At midnight, three of us crawled to the roof and the guard led us to three small rooms. Each room contained about four sleeping militiamen. I entered one of the rooms and woke each man in turn, warning him to be quiet. The last man refused to stand up, so I hit him a couple of times. I was just about to shoot him — if I buried the muzzle deep into his stomach, the sound would have been negligible — but a mujahideen came in and told me that the man was a defector to our side. Oops.

We loaded at least 20 Kalashnikovs, a

7.62mm machine gun, two boxes of grenades, a pair of Soviet walkie-talkies and a lot of ammunition into pushcarts that we found in the street. We had the prisoners haul all of this booty to our headquarters.

Back at the committee, everyone was ecstatic. We had captured more weapons than we knew what to do with and we didn't have to fire a shot — just the type of battle the mujahideen liked. I preferred a little more action, but it was better than sitting around.

Abdul Ahmad decided to visit his family who lived in a village about 40 kilometers from Herat. When he left, his committee lost all discipline. No operations were planned and weeks passed when we did nothing but sleep and loiter around our headquarters. I tried to teach the mujahideen basic tactics and hygiene — how to aim their rifles and bury their garbage — but their attention span and initiative were negligible.

#### A Running Board Raid

I returned to Ibrahim's committee in search of more combat. We received word that a militia commander was going to take a taxi to the airport around noon. So we decided to kidnap him. One young mujahideen was going to hide a Tokarev 9mm pistol in his vest, stop the taxi and bring the prisoner across 100 meters of open field to where the rest of us were hiding.

This was ridiculous. A militia commander was bound to have an armed bodyguard

with him. Our boy would be heavily out-gunned.

I asked Ibrahim to help me. We covered ourselves with dead brush within spitting distance of the road. When the man with the pistol stopped the taxi, we would jump out and help. Getting under my camouflage I couldn't help wondering how obvious two mounds of dead brush in the middle of a green field would be from the road.

The road was busy with BRDMs, BTRs and BMPs, all overflowing with Afghan and Soviet troops. When I realized that they didn't see us, I stuck my head out of the camouflage to get a good look at the passing equipment. It was like a game of hide-and-seek, only in this game the loser dies.

After an hour, I figured that the taxi wasn't going to show up. I sent the man with the pistol back to get the RPG-7 from the other mujahideen. We could at least ambush some of these vehicles. He returned empty-handed. The mujahideen had no stomach for a fight that day.

The next vehicle down the road was a large truck full of fuel drums, blankets and shoes. The mujahideen with the pistol jumped on the running board and forced it onto a dirt road. I stood on the other running board and pointed my rifle at the driver. The mujahideen treated the two Afghans in the cab like friends, but I thought differently. The truck had been heading to the Soviet compound near the airport. It was obvious to me that the drivers were collaborators

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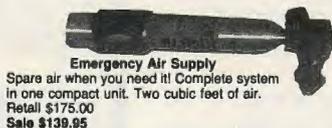


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with the enemy.

Back at the committee, the mujahideen continued to treat the drivers like allies. Hell, they even gave them back some of their cargo. I tried to convince them to take the drivers prisoner, but they let them go. Two days later we found out that they were long-time Communist Party members. You can't be too trusting in a civil war.

### Heading Home

After the hijacking, the Herat mujahideen seemed to go on vacation. For a month it was the same story in every committee — brave talk but no action. Even though I'd been in Afghanistan for nine months, I was willing to stay indefinitely if we were fighting, but I had no desire to waste away in inactivity. I decided to return to Pakistan.

I joined a group of mujahideen who were going to a village east of Herat. We forded the Hari Rud River and hired some *karachis* to bring us to a village near the airport. With our weapons in plain view and in broad daylight, we openly rode right under a huge grain elevator the Soviets use as an observation tower.

Someone had tried to blow up the pipeline leading to the airport so the communists increased security along the road we had to cross to get out of Herat. We decided to wait until things calmed down before crossing. We stayed in a house so close to the airport that we could hear the wheels of Soviet transports touch down. When I asked why they didn't mortar the airport, the mujahideen gave the familiar reply. They feared retaliatory bombing.

On the fifth night, we crossed the road, so close to an enemy parking complex that we were illuminated by its floodlights.

### Close Encounter

The next day we were buzzed by three SU-7 jets as we crossed an open field. They flew barely 100 meters off the ground and I could clearly see the pilots looking at us. I was about to jump into a gully with the rest of the mujahideen when I noticed their commander just standing in the open looking at the jets. My pride forced me to do likewise. The jets, painted in green camouflage with a red star clearly visible on their tails, circled once and flew away. I guess we weren't worth wasting ordnance on.

Later we caught a bus that took us eastward along the Hari Rud valley. Twenty fully armed mujahideen sitting in the open waiting for the bus must have been a strange sight — but then Afghanistan is a strange place.

After I said good-bye to the mujahideen, the remainder of my journey consisted of trying to convince each local chieftain to guide me to the next village. The Herat mujahideen gave me a letter of introduction that helped a great deal. Most of the time I was helped, but sometimes I found myself walking alone through the countryside trying to find the correct trail.

### The Man From BBC

Farmers I met along the way always thought that I was a Soviet. They didn't understand "American" or "Reagan," so I

told them I was from BBC. (They think BBC is a place.) Since everyone listened to the BBC on the short wave, I was made an honored guest. After traveling for a month I finally arrived at a village supplied by truck. I paid a driver 1,000 Pakistani rupees (about \$62) to take me to the village of Musa Qal'eh. The mujahideen commander there tasked one of his men to bring me to the town of Sangin on the Hilmand River.

We doubled up on an Indian-manufactured motorcycle. I held on for dear life because it wasn't easy staying on the bike with a 50-pound rucksack, given the poor road conditions. When it got dark my guide refused to go any farther. He wanted to leave me in the middle of nowhere and return to Musa Qal'eh. I drew my knife and forced him to continue. His commander ordered him to take me to Sangin and that's where we would go.

As soon as I was deposited at a Sangin tea shop, my guide disappeared. Sangin was a mujahideen town and I explained my situation to some local merchants. They directed me to two Pakistanis who made a business of moving refugees to Pakistan.

After days of waiting, innumerable false starts and 3,000 rupees, I was riding in a convoy of three jeep pickup trucks headed to Pakistan. Each truck contained more than 50 people. The women and children sat in the center atop their belongings and the men, including myself, sat with their feet over the side and tried to maintain their balance by clutching onto tie-down ropes.

We traveled only at night to avoid being spotted by helicopters out of Kandahar. Many people fell off in the more mountainous areas. The vehicles wouldn't stop, so you just had to run like hell to get back on. Remarkably, we didn't lose anyone.

We passed into Pakistan in about four days. We didn't even see a Pak checkpoint. I jumped into the first bus that I saw. I wanted to avoid contact with Pak authorities and I knew that refugees would draw their attention.

I entered Quetta traveling like just another European hippie headed for India — a strange end to a remarkable adventure. ✂

## FROM LEFT TO RIGHT

*Continued from page 31*

Auschwitz and Buchenwald. Between 30 and 40 million people were killed in peacetime in the daily routine of socialist rule. While Leftists applauded their progressive policies and guarded their frontiers, Soviet Marxists killed more peasants, more workers, and even more communists than all the capitalist governments combined since the beginning of time.

And for the entire duration of this nightmare, the William Buckley's and Ronald Reagan's and other anti-communists went on telling the world exactly what was happening. And all that time the pro-Soviet Left

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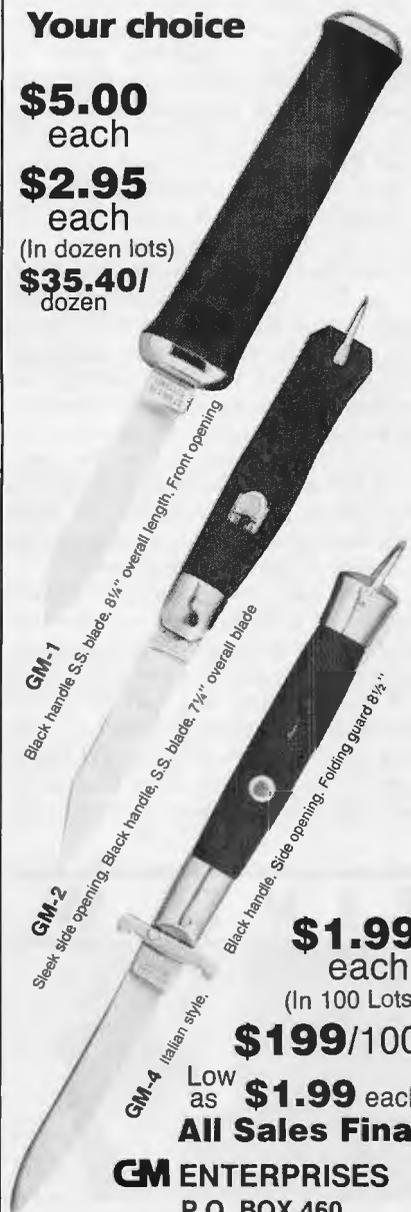
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went on denouncing them as reactionaries and liars, using the same contemptuous terms with which the Left attacks President Reagan and his supporters today.

The Left would still be denying the Soviet atrocities if the perpetrators themselves had not finally acknowledged their crimes. In 1956, in a secret speech to the party elite, Khrushchev made the crimes a communist fact; but it was only the CIA that actually made the fact public, allowing radicals to come to terms with what they had done.

Khrushchev and his cohorts could not have cared less about the misplaced faith and misspent lives of their naive supporters on the Left. The Soviet rulers were concerned about themselves: Stalin's mania had spread the slaughter into his henchmen's ranks; they wanted to make totalitarianism safe for its rulers. In place of a dictator whose paranoia could not be controlled, they instituted a dictatorship by directorate — which (not coincidentally) is the form of rule in Nicaragua today. Repression would work one way only: from the privileged top of society to the powerless bottom.

But the truth had been admitted at last and the Left all over the world was forced to redefine itself in relation to the Soviet facts. In Europe and America, a new anti-Stalinist Left was born. This New Left, of which I was one of the founders, was repelled by the evils it was now forced to see, and embarrassed by the tarnish the Soviet totalitarians had brought to the socialist cause. It turned

its back on the Soviet model of Stalin and his heirs.

But the Sandinista vanguard was neither embarrassed nor repelled. In 1957, Carlos Fonseca, the founding father of the Sandinista Front, visited the Soviet Union, with its newly efficient totalitarian state. To Fonseca, as to Borge and his other comrades, the Soviet monstrosity was their revolutionary dream come true. In his pamphlet, *A Nicaraguan in Moscow*, Fonseca proclaimed Soviet communism his model for Latin America's revolutionary future.

This vision of a Soviet America is now being realized in Nicaragua. The *comandante* directorate, the army and the secret police are already mirrors of the Soviet state — not only structurally but in their personnel, trained and often manned by agents of the Soviet axis.

But the most important figure in this transformation is not a Nicaraguan at all. For 20 years, from the time the Sandinistas first arrived in Havana, they were disciples of Fidel Castro. With his blessings they went on to Moscow, where Stalin's henchmen completed their revolutionary course. Fidel is the image in which the Sandinista leadership has created itself and is the author of its strategy. Its politburo, the *comandante* directorate, was personally created by Fidel in Havana on the eve of the final struggle, sealed with a pledge of millions in military aid. It was Fidel who supplied the arms with which the Sandinistas waged

their battles, just as he supplied the Cuban general — Zenen Casals — who directed their victorious campaign (just as the Soviets supplied the general who directed Fidel's own victory at the Bay of Pigs). *Without Castro's intervention, Arturo Cruz and the other anti-Somoza and pro-democratic contras would be the government of Nicaragua today.*

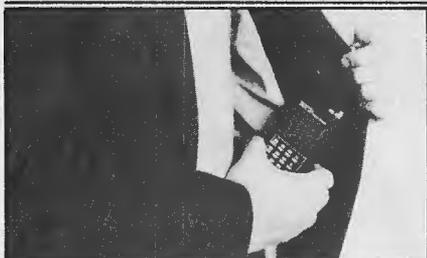
And it was Fidel who showed the Sandinistas how to steal the revolution after the victory, and how to secure the theft by manipulating their most important allies: the American Left and its liberal sympathizers.

Twenty-five years ago Fidel was also a revolutionary hero to us on the New Left (as he was at one time to Robert K. Brown). Like today's campus radicals, we became "coffee-pickers" and passengers on the revolutionary tour, and we hailed the literary campaigns, health clinics and other wonders of the people's state.

When Fidel spoke, his words were revolutionary music to our ears: "Freedom with bread. Bread without terror." "A revolution neither red nor black, but Cuban olive-green." And so in Managua today: "Not [Soviet] communism but Nicaraguan *Sandinismo*" is the formula Fidel's imitators proclaim.

All the fine gestures and words with which Fidel seduced us and won our support — the open Marxism, the socialist humanism, the independent path — turned out to be calculated lies. Even as he proclaimed

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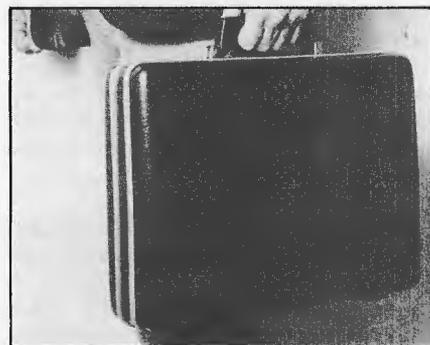
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his color to be olive-green, he was planning to make his revolution Moscow red.

So cynical was Fidel's strategy that at the time it was difficult for many to comprehend. One by one Fidel began removing his own comrades from the revolutionary regime and replacing them with Cuban communists.

Cuba's communists were then a party in disgrace. They had opposed the revolution; they had even served in the cabinet of the tyrant Batista while the revolution was taking place.

But this was all incidental to Fidel. Fidel knew how to use people. And Fidel was planning a new revolution he could trust the communists to support: he had decided to turn Cuba into a Soviet state. And Fidel also knew that he could no longer trust his own comrades, because they had made a revolution they thought was going to be Cuban olive-green.

Although Fidel removed socialists and the Sandinistas removed democrats, the pattern of betrayal has been the same.

To gain power the Sandinistas concealed their true intention (a Soviet state) behind a revolutionary lie (a pluralist democracy). To consolidate power they fashioned a second lie (democracy, but only within the revolution), and those who believed in the first lie were removed. At the end of the process there will be no democracy in Nicaragua at all, which is exactly what Fonseca and the Sandinistas intended when they began.

When Huber Matos saw Fidel's strategy unfolding in Cuba, he got on the telephone with other Fidelistas to discuss what they should do. This was a mistake. In the first year of Cuba's liberation, the phones of revolutionary legends like Huber Matos were already tapped by Fidel's secret police. Huber Matos was arrested.

In the bad old days of Batista oppression, Fidel had been arrested himself. His crime was not words on a telephone, but leading an attack on a military barracks to overthrow the Batista regime. Twelve people were killed. For this Fidel spent a total of 18 months in the tyrant's jail before being released.

Huber Matos was not so lucky. Fidel was not Batista, and the revolution that had overthrown Batista was no two-bit dictatorship. For his phone call, Huber Matos was tried in such secrecy that not even members of the government were privy to the proceeding. When it was over, he was sentenced to solitary confinement, in a cell without sunlight, for 22 years. And even as Fidel buried his former friend and comrade alive, he went on singing his songs of revolutionary humanism and justice.

Milan Kundera reveals the meaning of this revolutionary parable of Huber Matos and Fidel. Recalling a French communist who wrote poems for brotherhood while his friend was being murdered by the poet's comrades in Prague, Kundera said: "The hangman killed while the poet sang."

Kundera explained: "People like to say

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revolution is beautiful; it is only the terror arising from it which is evil. But this is not true. The evil is already present in the beautiful; hell is already contained in the dream of paradise. . . . To condemn Gulags is easy, but to reject the poetry which leads to the Gulag by way of paradise is as difficult as ever."

Words to bear in mind today as we consider Nicaragua and its revolution of poets.

To believe in the revolutionary dream is the tragedy of its supporters; to exploit the dream is the tragedy of its dictators. Revolutionary cynicism, the source of this talent, is Fidel's most important teaching to his Sandinista disciples. This is the faculty that allows the *comandantes* to emulate Fidel himself: to be poets and hangmen at the same time. To promise democracy and organize repression, to attack imperialism and join an empire, to talk peace and plan war, to champion justice and deliver Nicaragua to a fraternity of inhumane, repressive, militarized and economically crippled states.

"We used to have one main prison, now we have many," begins the lament of Carlos Franqui, a former Fidelista. "We used to have many plantations; now we have only one, and it belongs to Fidel. Who enjoys the fruits of the revolution, the houses of the rich, the luxuries of the rich? The *comandante* and his court."

To this grim accounting must be added the economic ruin that Fidel's Marxism has wrought. Among the proven failures of the Marxist promise, this is the most fateful of all. The failure of Marxist economies to satisfy basic needs, let alone compete with the productive capitalisms of the West, has produced the military-industrial police states which call themselves socialist today. Nicaragua, with its Sandinista-created economic crisis and its massive military buildup, is but the latest example of this pattern.

The idea that Marxist revolution will mean economic benefit for the poor has proved to be the most deadly illusion of all. It is *because* Marxist economies *cannot* satisfy economic needs — not even at the levels of the miserably corrupt capitalisms of Batista and Somoza — that Marxist states require permanent repression to stifle unrest, and permanent enemies to saddle with the blame.

This is also why Castro has found a new national product to supply to the Soviet market (a product his Sandinista disciples are in the process of developing in their turn). The product is the Cuban nation itself, as a military base for Soviet expansion.

The event that sealed the contract for this development was the moment of America's defeat in Vietnam in April 1975. This defeat resulted in America's effective withdrawal from the crucial role it had played since 1945, as the guardian of the international status quo and the keeper of its peace.

To the Soviet imperialists, America's loss was an opportunity gained. In 1975 the Kremlin began what would soon be a tenfold increase in the aid it had been providing

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to Cuba. Most of it was military aid. Toward the end of the year, 36,000 Cuban troops surfaced in Africa, as an interventionary force in Angola's civil war. Soviet aid to Cuba tripled and then quintupled as Castro sent another 12,000 Cuban troops to provide a palace guard for Ethiopia's new dictator, Mengistu Haile Mariam, who had thrown himself into the Soviet embrace with a campaign which he officially called his "Red Terror." A year after his henchmen had murdered virtually the entire graduating classes of the high schools of Addis Ababa — merely the most poignant of Mengistu's 100,000 victims — Fidel presented him with a Bay of Pigs medal, Cuban socialism's highest award.

Ethiopia's dictator is only one of the international heroes who regularly pass through the Cuban base to be celebrated, trained and integrated into a network of subversion and terror that has come to span every continent of the globe. And in the Sandinista revolution, Fidel's colonial plantation has produced its most profitable return: an opportunity for Moscow to expand its investment to the American land mass itself.

Nicaragua is now in the grip of utterly cynical and utterly ruthless men, exceeding even their sponsors in aggressive hostility to the United States. The Soviets may be the covert patrons of the world's terrorist plague, but not even they have had the temerity to embrace publicly the assassin Khadaffi as a "brother" the way the Sandinistas have. The aim of the Sandinista revolution is to crush its society from top to bottom, to institute totalitarian rule, and to use the country as a base to spread communist terror and communist regimes throughout the hemisphere.

The Sandinista anthem, which proclaims the Yankee to be the "enemy of mankind," expresses precisely the revolutionaries' sentiment and goal. That goal is hardly to create a more just society — the sordid record would dissuade any reformer from choosing the communist path — but to destroy the societies still outside the totalitarian perimeter, and their chief protector, the United States.

Support for the contras is a first line of defense. For Nicaraguans, a contra victory would mean the restoration of the democratic leadership from whom the Sandinistas stole the revolution in the first place, the government that Nicaragua would have had if Cuba had not intervened. For the countries of the Americas, it would mean a halt in the communist march that threatens their freedoms and their peace.

As for my former comrades and successors of the Left — the so-called peace movement which condemns Reagan's Central America policy and lauds the Sandinista government and the Marxist guerrillas in El Salvador: They are self-righteous and blind in their belief that they are part of a movement to advance human progress and liberate mankind. They are in fact in league with the darkest and most reactionary forces of

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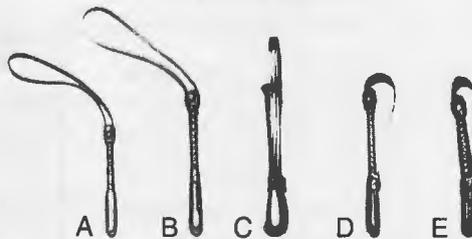
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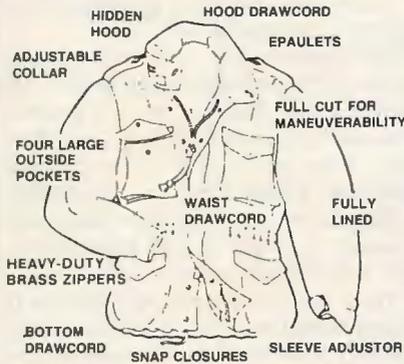
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the modern world, whose legacies — as the record attests — are atrocities and oppressions on a scale unknown in the human past. It is no accident that radicals in power have slaughtered so many of their own people. Hatred of self, and by extension one's country, is the root of the radical cause.

As American radicals, the most egregious sin committed is to betray the privileges and freedoms ordinary people from all over the world have created in this country — privileges and freedoms that ordinary people all over the world would feel blessed to have themselves. But the worst of it is this: they would betray all this tangible good that they can see around them for a socialist pie-in-the-sky that has meant horrible deaths and miserable lives for the hundreds of millions who have so far fallen under its sway. ✕

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*Continued from page 12*

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*Continued from page 93*

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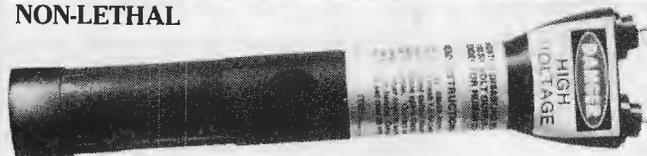
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was far more important than territorial gain. In the first five months of 1944, XV Corps had not only won the Battle of the Box, but had virtually wiped out the crack Japanese 55th Div., which during the campaign lost 9,628 men and was never again capable of fighting a coherent action.

The Japanese 54th Div. was no more successful in the final campaign than had been 55th Div. Rangoon fell to a seaborne invasion by 26th Indian Div. on 3 May 1945. Prior to this, XV Corps, 26th and 25th Divs., and the 82nd West African Div. had cleared the west coast of Burma as far as Taungup, by which time the Japanese 54th Div. had virtually ceased to exist.

There can be no doubt that the war in Burma hinged on those days between 4-24 February 1944. Until then the Japanese had never lost a battle. From then on they never registered even a minor local victory. ✕

## OPERATION APACHE SNOW

Continued from page 77

Still, their hold on the mountain was hardly final. North Vietnamese were dug in all over the top, and as Charlie Company attempted to move forward from the edge of the mountain, they were pinned down by sniper fire coming from their left flank.

In the meantime, Alpha Company had run into a buzzsaw just below the crest of the mountain. North Vietnamese were swarming in the area: fighting from bunkers, from behind rocks, fallen trees, spider holes and shell craters. Alpha paid for every foot of advance with more and more wounded. When at one point the enemy stopped the company's advance, Specialist 4th Class Johnny Jackson, a machine gunner, grabbed his M60 and ran right through the enemy position, firing from the hip, spraying bullets in all directions. It was a suicidal move but unbelievably Jackson wasn't hit. On the crest of the mountain, he stuck the barrel of the M60 in the firing aperture of a bunker and blasted the NVA inside. The rest of his squad followed after him and together they topped the mountain.

By 1246 hours both Alpha and Charlie companies had linked up on top of the mountain and started their sweep. They moved through a surreal landscape of gaunt, jagged tree trunks and churned-up mud. Only a few trees remained standing, their limbs stripped of leaves and festooned with pieces of flesh and parts of bodies. Enemy dead were everywhere and the air was thick with the gagging smell of rotting corpses, cordite, excrement and tree sap.

Overhead in his observation helicopter, Honeycutt saw groups of North Vietnamese soldiers running in all directions off the mountain, though most were heading into the draw that led toward Laos. It was like watching rats escaping from a sinking ship, Honeycutt thought, as he called in volley after volley of artillery fire on the retreating

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enemy.

Again the draw became a scene of slaughter, but this time it was complete. Bravo Company, 1/506th had finally set up a blocking position across the draw and the retreating NVA, in an attempt to avoid the artillery fire, ran right into a wall of rifle and machine-gun fire and was stopped cold.

The NVA quickly regrouped, pounded Bravo's line with RPGs and then once again tried to punch through, but were again beaten back. In the end, only a few enemy soldiers would make it out of the draw alive.

About 1215, Alpha Company, 2/506th also topped the mountain and quickly linked up with Charlie Company and an element of the ARVN battalion. The encirclement was now nearly complete — all that was left was the mopping up, which would take the rest of the afternoon.

The hardest part of the fighting was over. There is no exact figure on North Vietnamese casualties during the battle. There were 630 enemy dead left on or around Dong Ap Bia, but there is no telling how many enemy soldiers were wounded or killed and carried into Laos. Some in 3rd Brigade intelligence believed that there may have been as many as 2,000 NVA soldiers entrenched on Dong Ap Bia at the height of the fighting and that 1,500 of them were likely casualties. American casualties stood at 56 killed and 420 wounded.

Although the 1/506th would continue mopping up the area around Dong Ap Bia for the next 10 days, the battle was over for the 3/187th. Behind them the Rakkasans left a meat-grinder battle and a scarred, blasted mountain that they had once called Dong Ap Bia, but now referred to simply as Hamburger Hill. ☒

## BULLETIN BOARD

Continued from page 10

### KAMPALA'S PLO OFFICE REOPENS...

The Palestine Liberation Organization was ignominiously kicked out of Uganda when Idi Amin was overthrown in 1979. As a sign of the times in that tortured African nation, a Radio Uganda broadcast recently revealed that the PLO office in Kampala is reopening. And the Arab terrorist organization apparently will have close relations with Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni, who personally made the announcement following a series of meetings in the African capital with a PLO delegation.

The PLO formerly served Amin as an *ex officio* Praetorian Guard and special intelligence agency. In return, the gang of outlaws and murderers was allowed to use Uganda as a secure base of operations in East

Africa. Hundreds of PLO troops fought alongside Amin's forces in their unsuccessful effort to defeat an army of Ugandan exiles led by former president Milton Obote and backed by Tanzania.

Museveni, a former Amin follower who led a successful coup early this year, apparently wants to make an agreement with the PLO similar to that made under the Amin regime.

## AIN'T THAT TOOOO BAD?...

Nicaragua's President Daniel Ortega's 10 July letter to Hanoi expressing his sympathy in the death of Le Duan, secretary general of the Vietnamese Communist Party, was conveyed by one of Ortega's press officials, Maribel de Rosas. The transmission, monitored at 0300 GMT 11 July, said among other things that "all the international revolutionary movements have lost one of the historical . . . builders of national liberation and of economic and social progress in Southeast Asia, and one of the foremost strugglers for peace and solidarity among peoples." Ortega's letter, which said Nicaragua's flags would be lowered to half-mast for three days, also lauded Le Duan for his "struggle . . . to make an independent and more beautiful Vietnam."

Beauty in this case is *definitely* in the eye of the beholder. And if you think the communist governments of Vietnam, Cuba and Nicaragua act independently of their Kremlin comrades, we have some political philosophy we'd like to sell you just west of San Francisco Bay.

## AUSSIE EXPIRES...

Martin Donnelly, a veteran of the Australian Special Air Service, died 28 February 1986, after a lingering illness resulting from wounds he received assisting Karen freedom fighters in their independence struggle against Burma's socialist government (see SOF, February 1986, Bulletin Board, "Karen Update"). Donnelly and a Frenchman, Jean Philippe Maurice Clerq, were aboard a Karen boat in the Moei River when it was hit by Burmese mortar fire. Clerq died in the attack. Donnelly suffered severe wounds which led to hepatitis A, ultimately resulting in peritonitis, kidney failure and death. ☒

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## FLAK

Continued from page 6

### EXTRA ROUNDS OR EXTRA POWER...

Sirs:

Regarding Harry Clafin's article on high capacity automatics in the September '86 Combat Weaponcraft. I have watched proponents of large caliber, heavy bullet weapons fall by the wayside one by one — it seems Clafin has become the most recent defector.

Anytime you are faced with an enemy who vastly outnumbers and outguns you, withdrawal is the only tactic likely to ensure survival. In the incident Clafin relates concerning his friend in El Salvador, I don't see where high capacity 9mm offered any real advantage. Under those circumstances, the ballistic superiority of the large caliber round becomes even more significant. I don't believe it would have been necessary for his friend to shoot any of his attackers three times with a .45. Even if he gave each of the first two a couple of rounds apiece, he would have had four left for the third assailant. As the only shots that count in a firefight are the ones that hit, accurate shooting with the remaining four rounds should have dispatched the last bad guy with more certainty than spraying the car with your 20-round magazine.

As a police officer with nine years experience, I fully appreciate any advantages my equipment can give me. In the instances where a handgun must be employed, I prefer to rely on accurate shooting with a large caliber round. Experience has shown again and again that this combination wins when it counts the most.

Bruce VanBuskirk  
Indianapolis, Indiana

Harry Clafin sounds like a 9mm salesman. His reasons for using a 9mm over a .45 are full of crap. The .45 was used for nearly a century, not because of its extra firepower, but the knockdown power. The larger the bore, the greater the shock, the quicker the death. If you need extra rounds try the Desert Eagle .357 10 rounder. With a multiple projectile that would be 30 shots.

Frank Lilley (USN Ret.)  
South Point, Ohio

The battle between the proponents of .45 cal. versus those of 9mm will go on as long as there are weapons to fire them. We welcome all debate on the issue. ✕



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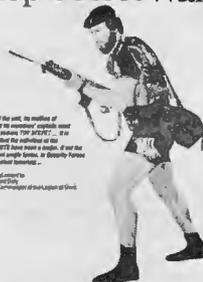
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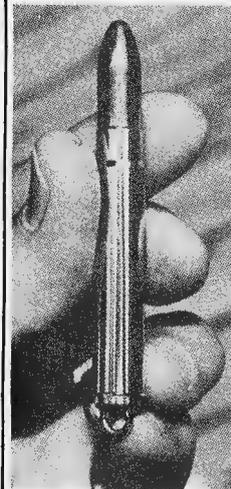
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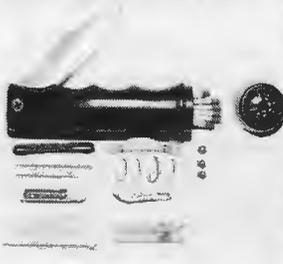
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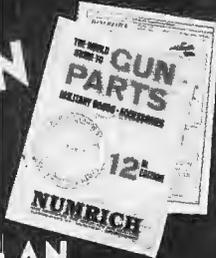
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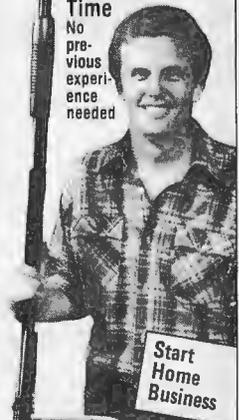
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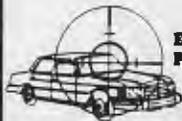
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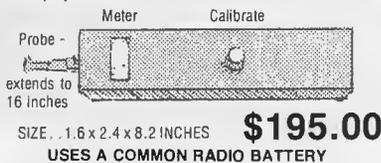
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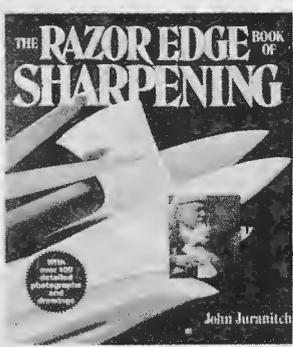


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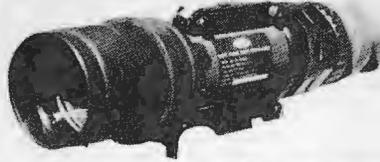
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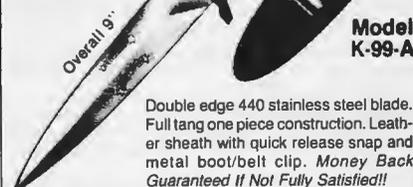
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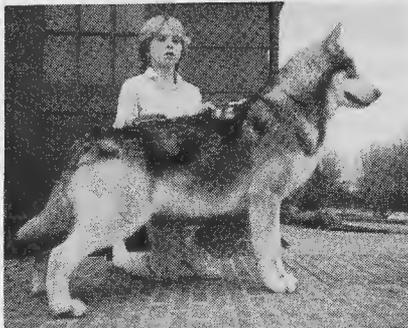
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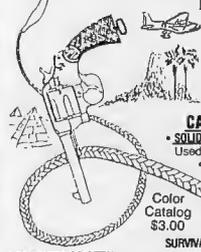
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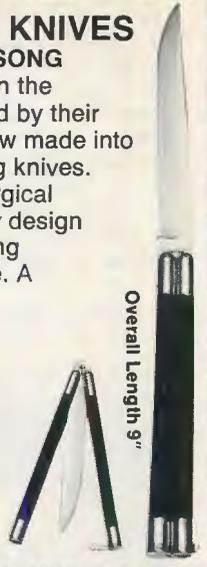
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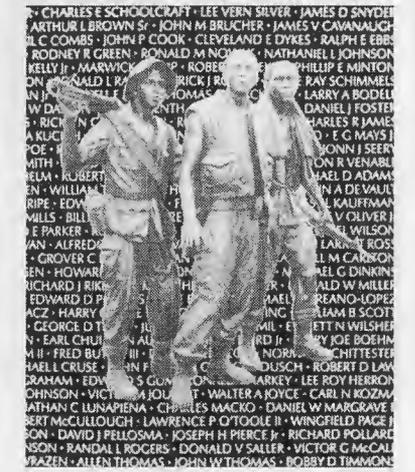
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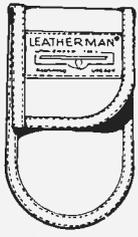
● **ERITREAN PEOPLE'S LIBERATION FRONT** — A little-known conflict has been raging on in Africa for over 25 years. Yet the bleeding and dying are done in the shadows of worldwide indifference. SOF goes out with the guerrillas to view first-hand Eritrea's civil war against the despotic government of Ethiopia's Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam.

● **INSURGENCY IN SRI LANKA** — The island of Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon), 22 miles off the southern coast of India, is involved in a brutal and misunderstood war. The Marxist guerrillas, whose ranks are drawn from the country's largest minority — the Tamils — are pitted against the predominately Sinhalese government forces. Tom Marks goes out with the troops — lying in ambush positions and trudging for miles on patrols to get the story for SOF.

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● **TESTS & EVALUATIONS** — SIGARMS, Inc. has just released a new version of its SIG-Sauer P220 .45 ACP pistol with an improved magazine release. But will Peter Kokalis pack this "new and improved" pistol? Don't miss this review in the February '87 *Soldier of Fortune* — on sale January 13. ✕

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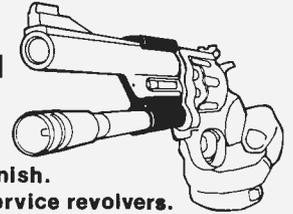
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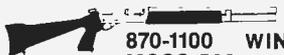


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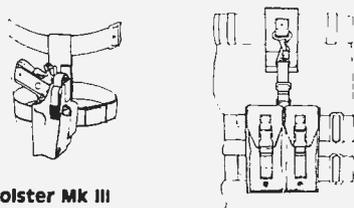
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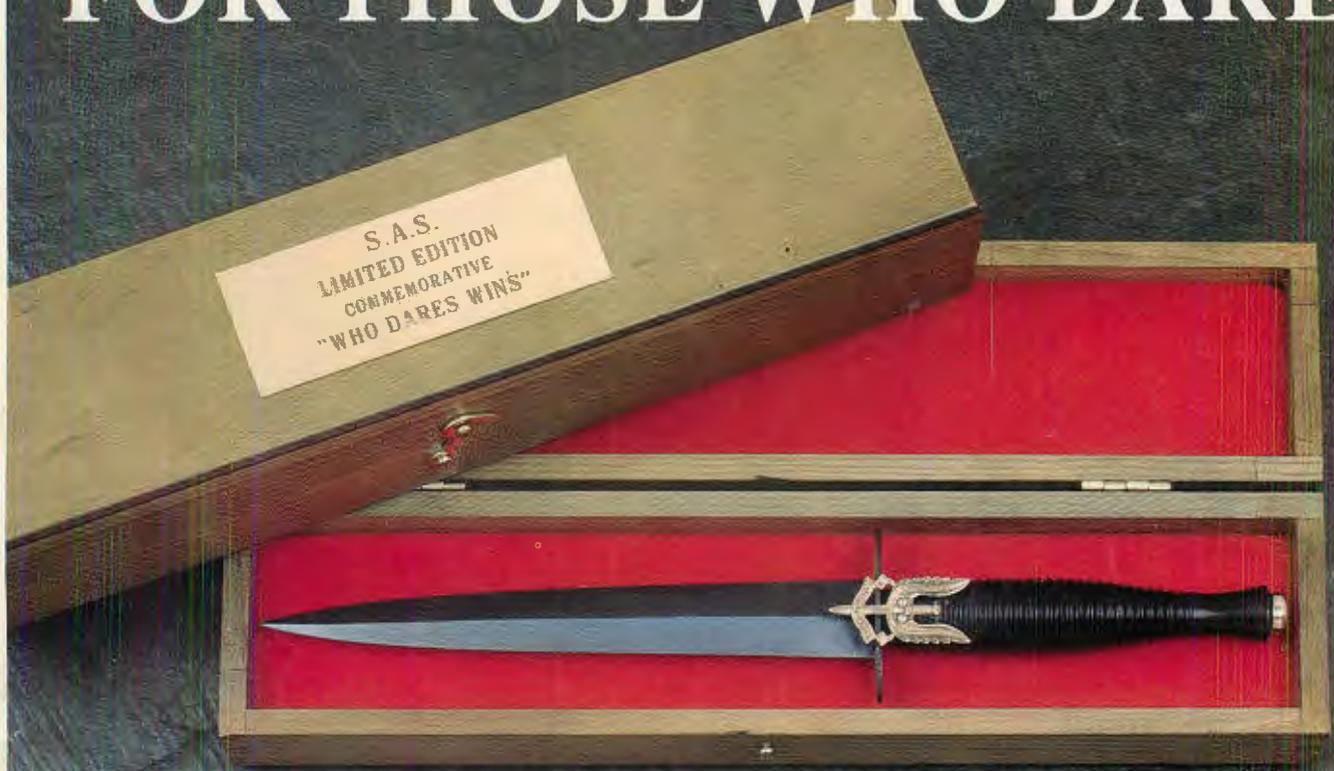
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